



PASTORS TO PASTORS

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Priest's Job Description

OR

"Why Does Father Always Look So Tired?"



Ask some of our retired clergy what they miss *the least* about active parish life. Chances are, you'll get a sheepish grin accompanying the response, "Annual Meetings." With few exceptions, pastors approach these perennial powwows with as much anticipation as a root canal. Why is this?

Sure, it's an opportunity for loose cannons to fire; for normally subdued parishioners to vociferously vent their real feelings about "what's wrong with this place" or to air some dirty laundry in the interest of "the welfare of the parish." Perhaps agendas have sufficiently evolved beyond the bygone days of free-for-alls but they still provide a welcome forum for demons to do some sniping.

More specifically, however, the trepidation of pastors toward Annual Meetings would seem to boil down to essentially one issue: *justifying their work*. As normally the only "paid employee" of the parish "corporation", the priest's work falls under intense scrutiny, especially around budget time as his compensation constitutes a lion's share. In the heat of negotiation, the spiritual nature of his work becomes muddled when measured against dollars that must come from parishioners' pockets. All but lost is the fact that the priest's work is not of his own choosing.

This is, of course, an ancient dilemma. We can imagine the jealousy of the Israelites as they offered the prescribed sacrifices and watched the priests take their appointed shares and lead rather comfortable lives. We can understand why folks historically would be a bit reluctant to financially support those pastors who conscientiously followed the admonition, "As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all" (1 Timothy 5:20). Face it; if a priest just publicly rebuked you for some sin, how eagerly would you kick in to support his "ministry?"

Equally ancient is the scriptural foundation for "clergy compensation" taught by Our Lord. At the commissioning of both the twelve and the seventy, Christ clearly stated that "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (Matthew 10:10, Luke 10:7). St Paul emphatically told the Corinthian Church "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor 9:14). Quoting the Lord, the great apostle further cites the Deuteronomy allegory to strengthen Timothy's position in advocating fair wages for well-ruling elders: "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain" (1 Tim 5:18). And we have yet to scratch the surface of our Patristic tradition that supports this scriptural foundation.

This brings us to 21st century America; where the clergy compensation debate is further fueled by secularism, relativism, denominationalism, and consumerism in an intensely mobile society; where to rebuke a sinner can easily result in his "forsaking the assembly", motivating a search for a friendlier church that better serves his needs and doesn't challenge his pride, and, among other things, a loss of revenue necessary to support the ordained "rebuker!"

Though according to the OCA Statutes, the rector "...teaches and edifies the People of God entrusted to his spiritual care 'with no partiality' (James 2:1)" he often finds himself walking on eggshells with any mention of sin that is invariably taken personally by every sinner who substantially contributes to his wages. Wise indeed, and idealistic is the statute that reads; "To be free from material preoccupations and wholly committed to his sacred ministry, the priest must be compensated by the parish, the amount of compensation being clearly agreed upon at the time of his appointment" (Art 10, Sec 4). The practical reality, however, is

that, like pretty much every American wage-earner today, "material preoccupations" is an inherent occupational hazard.

Moreso where a parish provides a rectory. It's hard enough to bear rapidly escalating costs for clergy medical insurance and other normal expenses that increase beyond the control of parish leadership. When the priest (usually at the urging of his wife!) daringly requests a new washing machine, a fresh coat of paint, or the services of a plumber, that's frequently viewed as sheer audacity! Coming home after Liturgy to find the toilet overflowing, the furnace pilot light out, or an aged parishioner crawling under the sink trying to fix a leak doesn't make for much freedom from material preoccupations! (I wonder how St Paul would handle a housing allowance.)

All this brings us back to *job justification*; of somehow convincing *(over)*

A "TYPICAL" MONTH

Activity / Hours per month

- Sunday worship & Fellowship: 20
- Council meetings: 3
- Banking: 3
- Correspondence: 5
- Education, study & teaching: 15
- Pastoral Visits: 13
- Ecumenical work: 6
- Outreach: 5
- Feast Day worship: 4
- Generating reports: 4
- Church bread: 5
- Office appointments: 5
- Altar maintenance: 5
- "Auxiliary" activities: 10
- Supplies: 4
- Public Relations: 6
- Newsletter prep & mailing: 9
- Sacrament prep: 4
- General secretarial: 5
- Bulletin prep: 5
- Sermon prep: 16
- Printing: 4
- Saturday worship & fellowship: 6
- Diocesan / Deanery: 6
- TOTAL MONTHLY HOURS: 168**
- Divided by four weeks: 42
- CONTINGENCIES: add 23-58+**

the People of God entrusted to our spiritual care, and perhaps even ourselves, that we are actually "worthy of our wages." Here is where the scrutiny occurs, because prevailing opinions suggest that priests only "work" a couple, easy hours a week, in ornately-appointed churches, in front of richly-adorned altars, wearing elaborate, generously-donated vestments, using top-of-the-line liturgical apparatuses, and spending the rest of their time in their plush, parish-provided homes and fully-equipped offices with well-stocked bookcases waiting for parishioners to call to ask them to expound on Trinitarian theology. (Regretably, this may also be an opinion shared by some seminary students!)

Since attempts to establish and/or implement any uniform clergy compensation package are normally avoided like a plague by those in authority, pastors are compelled to face their material preoccupations largely on their own. So in an effort to, at least in some measure, help us to justify our work and express the worthiness of our wages, we have generated some hard data based upon the contemporary experience of a number of seasoned pastors. The data is "hard" because it is predicated on real, logged time. (We invite readers to concur and/or correct, based on personal experience.) Here it goes....

Work Week:

Though there is no such thing as a "typical" work week, generally-speaking, to adequately accomplish the

many and varied duties expected of him on a regular basis, a priest's *average work week of seven days* includes **42 hours** (see page 1 inset for detail).

Contingencies:

Added to this "normal pastoral activity", the priest is also *expected* to "work" respective hours in connection with any and all of the following...

► During **Great Lent**, an Orthodox priest will spend an additional **6-15** hours per week in worship-related work.

A priest involved in ALL of these contingencies simultaneously, together with his "normal pastoral activity," may conceivably "work" in excess of 100 hours per week!

► **Parishioner emergencies** -- those anxiously anticipated, ultimately much-dreaded, parishioner phone calls -- may consume anywhere from a few hours of one day to *several* "work days", including extensive travel, referrals, consultations, conferences, etc (and there are far more of such emergencies when pastors are called to leave the 99 to seek and save the one lost, than most parishioners can ever imagine!).

► **Funeral-related "work"** accounts for an additional **5-10** hours in a given week.

► **Hospital/institutional** visits may consume **4-12 additional** hours per week (above "normal activity") in parishes with largely elderly populations.

► **Theophany Home Blessings:** No average time can be offered here due to varieties in both duration and compensation. Some priests spend ten minutes in each home and earn "tips". Others will spend hours after the service in a pastoral visit for which they will take nothing.

► **Special events** -- parish anniversaries, celebrations, festivals, dinners, fund-raising, etc, that lay leadership is quick to plan but slow to staff -- may account for an additional **4-8** hours of "pastoral work(?)" per week. The "Who's gonna do it" question invariably comes to rest on the parish desk.

► **Building/renovation** projects may account for **4-20** additional hours per week depending on the extent of the project (and the time-consuming inconveniences of working around it). "The contractor wants to finish today, even though it's Good Friday!"

Bottom Line:

Here's a "hard saying" for those who would most carefully scrutinize the priest's work. **A priest involved in ALL of these contingencies simultaneously, together with his "normal pastoral activity" may conceivably "work" in excess of 100 hours per week!**

Any secular corporation would jump at the chance to hire an employee willing to invest such an inordinate amount of time for the sake of the company. And based on the required education and training, they would see the contributions of such an employee to be of inestimable value. Compensation packages for comparable "professionals" in secular society based on age, experience, and academic achievement currently range in *six figures!* On value alone, our parishes are (forgive the rather crude analogy) "paying bargain-basement prices for high-level, top-quality personnel!" The figures prove it!

Perhaps if the clergy salary line item in a typical parish budget was further refined and detailed, the value of such investment would become more apparent to the "shareholders of the corporation." What is, after all, the value of mending one shattered life, of restoring one wanderer from the Truth, of healing one broken heart, of comforting one grieving spirit, of bringing one soul to the abundant life in Christ, of effectuating the return of one prodigal, of evoking repentance in one sinner? If, as a disciple of the Lord, even giving one a cup of cold water has a reward (cf Matthew 10: 42) let's urge our parishes to attach prices to these "pastoral activities" -- if they dare!

No soldier engaged in battle provides his own rations. One who plants and cultivates a crop is entitled to share in its harvest. Indeed, the reward of a man should be proportionate to his toil. Hopefully, we have made the case for the hours of our toil, now have data to account for those hours, and will humbly share this information with others ... so they will understand the reason for our sheepish grin as Mildred takes the floor at the next Annual Meeting and says "**Father is already paid plenty for an hour a week! I don't know why he always looks so tired!**" □

-- Fr Dan Kovalak

PASTORS
TO PASTORS

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"Thoughts and Recollections"

"Pastors to Pastors" looks to our "chief elder" for guidance and inspiration. We are pleased herein to share our interview with...

Metropolitan HERMAN

Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Q: Your Beatitude, next year (2004) will mark the fortieth anniversary of your ordination to the holy priesthood. Over thirty years of that time were devoted to hierarchical ministry. What reflections can you offer on the distinctive relationship between bishop and priest?

A: The relationship of bishop and priest, from the very dawn of the Church to the present day, is the same. It is one of spiritual father and spiritual son. The bishop's role is to be mentor and advisor, confidante and supporter, father and friend. As he represents Christ in presiding and celebrating, teaching and administering, he must also love sacrificially and admonish paternally in His name. This has not changed from the apostles Peter and John to the great hierarchs Ignatius of Antioch and Clement of Rome, Basil, John and Gregory, Mark of Ephesus and Gregory Palamas, Tikhon of Zadonsk and Theodosius of Chernigov, Innocent of Moscow and Tikhon of Moscow.

What has changed are the circumstances in which that relationship is ongoing. Our world is so different from times past, even since I became a bishop thirty years ago. We are living in a pluralistic, materialistic and post-Christian society -- where our Church is competing with so many things, on so many different levels. The things of the world draw our faithful away from services -- shopping and vacations, sports and other school activities, television and the internet. Society's views and values challenge the teachings of our Faith: abortion, divorce, modern lifestyles and pornography were hardly rampant decades ago. Science has presented new issues to which the Church must respond: euthanasia, test tube babies, cloning, etc. And there is the ecumenical movement -- with its complexities and our meeting with new innovations: invitations of inter-communion, women priests, gay marriages and the like. Amid all this the bishop must help his priest deal with whatever confronts him and his flock. And he must support him in the

face of such challenges as parochialism, anti-clericalism, rising costs of health insurance, shifts in parish population, declining church attendance and reluctance in giving... not to mention the threat of terrorism since 9/11 and the nightmares of war in the Middle East. The bishop must always be spiritual father to his sons, loving and guiding them from the day of their ordination to the very day that he himself falls asleep in the Lord.

Q: Early in your priesthood you served as rector of several parishes (St John the Baptist, Dundaff PA and SS Peter and Paul, Uniondale PA). What particular memories do you have about parish life?

A: As I look back forty years, I have fond memories of two special parishes and hundreds of wonderful parishioners. I recall the baptisms of infants who have now grown into exemplary Orthodox Christians; couples I have married who are now grandparents; pious men and women whose faces were ravaged by age but whose souls were strengthened in faith, to whom I was privileged to give the final blessing before they closed their eyes to this world and opened them to eternity.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa tells us;
"One cannot give another what one does not possess oneself."

I remember parish dinners and dances, FROC conventions and district gatherings. But the memory that I perhaps treasure the most is the sight of a church "packed" with faithful who loved the services, came with conviction, and participated in the faith with their heart and soul. It was a

more innocent era, I realize that; but in being a simpler way of living, it bred a purer practice of the faith. It was a joy to be a part of that, and I am grateful to God for enabling me to have shared in that experience. That memory continues to give me hope that we can return to that way of living our faith here in this country, in spite of all the "things of the world" that our people enjoy.

Q: Your Beatitude has been a vocal proponent of seminary education. What are some of the specific reasons for pastors to have some experience of the seminary? Do you have some special memories of your own seminary experience?

A: Our Lord Himself spent three years, nurturing the seeds of the vocations of His apostles... having them pray with Him, teaching them, guiding them, sometimes correcting them... and strengthening their relationships with one another as they lived together. In a real sense, that was the first seminary education. What did it produce -- the likes of Peter, the chief of the apostles, and John the theologian, the beloved disciple. The twelve -- and the seventy as well -- worked together, often in pairs, always in close collaboration. Their training and their labor of love, guided by the Holy Spirit, enabled Christ's Holy Church to bring to the faith Jews and pagans all over the world.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa tells us; *"One cannot give another what one does not possess oneself."* The experience of liturgical celebration, the teachings of the Scriptures and the Fathers, the praxis of homiletics and field education cannot be shared with our faithful if they have not first been learned by our clergy. For these reasons, as well as the brotherhood that is built up by living and praying, studying and working together in the seminary -- a brotherhood that our priests need to draw upon so often -- I am that vocal proponent of theological education.

(over)

Metropolitan HERMAN, continued

My own priesthood and episcopacy was shaped by my mentor, Archbishop Kiprian of blessed memory, and the wonderful professors that taught me in the classroom and by their example. My ministry has been enriched and sustained by the classmates that I met in the seminary who became my life-long friends and coworkers. Our experiences together are the most cherished of my memoirs of my seminary education.

Q: What advice can you offer to the priests in the parish ministry today?

A: First and foremost, be a man of prayer. Before every event in Our Lord's ministry, the Gospel depicts Him in prayer. Secondly, after the example of the Savior, love your people. That is the only way that we will ever overcome the "employer-employee" mentality that has plagued some of our parishes -- by our priests coming to be seen as what they truly are: spiritual fathers. Finally, I would say, remember that before you were a priest, you were a deacon: *diakonia* is the foundation of your ministry -- serve the Lord, serve His people, serve your brethren -- all for the glory of God and the building up of Christ's Holy Church. After all, was that not the essence of Our Lord's ministry? "*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45).

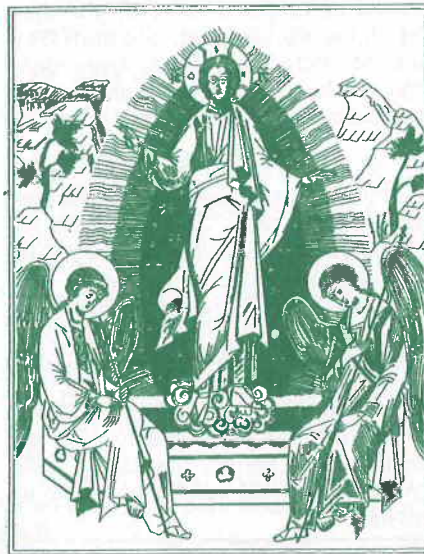
Please know that I and all the hierarchs of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America pray daily for you, our spiritual sons. Please, pray for us as well... so that together we may worthily serve the Lord and build up Christ's Holy Church. □

Abba Philemon was asked by a brother how to overcome evil thoughts. Abba replied, "Always meditate inwardly and say the daily prayers laid down by the holy fathers. And, so far as you can, do nothing simply to gain the esteem of others, and never bear ill will towards your brother, lest you separate yourself from God. Strive to keep your mind undistracted, always being attentive to your inner thoughts. When you are in church, and are going to partake of the divine mysteries of Christ, do not go out until you have attained complete peace."

When Abba Philemon himself was going to partake of the divine mysteries, he supplicated God with prayers, chanting and confession of sins. During the service, he was full of fear when the priest intoned the words, "Holy things for the holy." For he used to say that the whole church was then filled with holy angels, and that the King of the celestial powers Himself was invisibly celebrating, transformed in our hearts into body and blood.

It was on account of this that he said that we should dare to partake of the immaculate mysteries of Christ only when in a chaste and pure state, as it were outside the flesh and free from all hesitation and doubt; in this way we would participate in the illumination that comes from them.

From the "Discourse on Abba Philemon"



"Let us go with lamps in hand to meet Christ, Who comes from the tomb like a Bridegroom. And with the festive ranks of angels, let us celebrate the saving Pascha of God."

*Christ is Risen!
Indeed,
He is Risen!*

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