

Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America: A Study Report

A Survey of the Parish Clergy of the Greek Orthodox Metropolises of San Francisco and Chicago, and of the Dioceses of the West and Midwest of the Orthodox Church in America

Introduction

Very little has been done so far to study systematically broad patterns and trends in the American Orthodox priesthood. The various “case studies” and church expert opinions on different aspects of priestly work in American Orthodox parishes provide some valuable insights, but they do not allow for the definite and data-backed conclusions on what is persistent, typical and long-lasting or what is simply a local or short-lived phenomenon. The research project “Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America” accomplished by the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute is a first step in overcoming the lack of reliable and comprehensive information on what does it mean to be an Orthodox Christian priest in America in the beginning of the third millennium. This study is unique in several ways.

First, it is based on a nationally representative data on the priests in two largest American Orthodox jurisdictions: the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America (GOA) and the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). The questionnaires were sent to **ALL** parish clergy in the Greek Orthodox Metropolises of Chicago and San Francisco and in the OCA’ Dioceses of the West and Mid West. Out of 258 mailed questionnaires, 226 were completed and returned – a response rate of 88%

	GOA -San Francisco	GOA - Chicago	OCA-West	OCA – Mid West	Total
Number of surveys sent to parish clergy	64	65	51	78	258
Number of surveys completed and returned	58	57	41	70	226
% of surveys returned	91%	88%	80%	90%	88%

GOA – Priests of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

OCA – Priests of the Orthodox Church in America

Second, rather than gathering formal statistical parish data (size and demographic composition of the parishes, variety of the parish based programs, etc.), our survey examined clergy’ opinions, attitudes and approaches to the various Church related and social issues which are commonly debated in American Orthodox communities.

In particular, this study focused on four aspects of priesthood:

- the sources of joy and satisfaction in the work of an Orthodox priest in America;
- the challenges and problems that the Orthodox clergy are facing;

- the sources of support and help that the Orthodox priests can rely upon;
- the various matters and issues in the life of the Church that the Orthodox priests believe should be urgently and openly discussed.

Third, the survey data allow not only for the comparisons of the Greek Orthodox and OCA priests, but also for the analysis of the differences among the priests in various age groups and among the cradle Orthodox and the convert clergy. The following study report shows: in many cases the approaches to and the notions of the priestly vocation of the “fathers” and “sons” and of those who were born into Orthodox Church and those who were raised in the other Christian traditions are very distinct.

Fourth, our survey was developed in co-operation with scholars studying American Roman Catholic priests. Therefore, the obtained comparable data allow to look at American Orthodox priesthood in the context of the broader picture and to discern trends that are unique for the Orthodox community and those which are similar with the Roman Catholic Church in this country.

Part 1. Who Are American Orthodox Clergy? Personal Backgrounds of GOA and OCA Priests

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 59% of the OCA priests are converts in the comparison with only 14% in the GOA. Both in OCA and GOA, former Roman Catholics form the largest group of the converts while the second largest group are former Evangelical Christians.
- One quarter of the Greek Orthodox priests are not American born in comparison with only 10% among OCA clergy. 60% of Greek Orthodox priests older than 65 are born overseas.
- About half of the wives of American Orthodox clergy are working and about half of them stay home. However, proportion of the non-working clergy’ wives is greater in GOA than in OCA: 55% and 40% respectively.
- The parishes of GOA and of OCA differ dramatically in size: an average OCA parish has 182 persons participating regularly or occasionally in the church life in comparison with 1099 persons in an average GOA parish.
- Both in GOA and OCA the parishes headed by convert clergy are much smaller than the parishes of the cradle Orthodox priests.

- The “reform oriented” group among American Orthodox clergy is much smaller than the group of the clergy who are keen to “keep the things the way they are:” only 27% of the priests said they are either “liberal” or “moderate,” in comparison with 73% who identified themselves as “traditional” or “conservative.”
- The most “conservative” wing among American Orthodox clergy (21%) is much more numerous than the group of most radical “liberals” (5%).

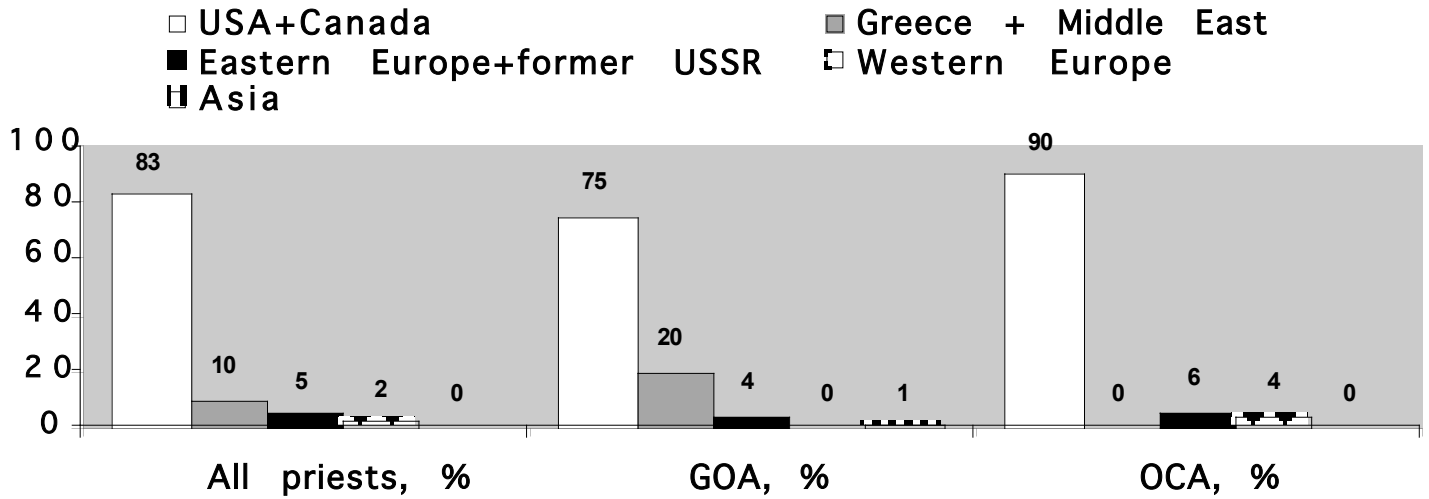
Two major American Orthodox jurisdictions – the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America (GOA) and the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) – are very distinct by the extent of the presence of the converts among their clergy - those who were born and raised in the other non-Orthodox Christian traditions. A dominant majority (59%) of the OCA priests are converts in comparison with only 14% in case of GOA. At the same time, both in OCA and GOA, former Roman Catholics form the largest group of the converts and the second largest group - again in both cases - are former Evangelical Christians.

What was your Church affiliation before you became an Orthodox Christian? (% of priests)

	I have always been Orthodox Christian	I am a convert, including:	Former Catholics	Former Liberal Protest.	Former Moderate Protestant	Former Evangelical Protestant	Former Agnostics
GOA, %	86	14	6	0	3	4	1
OCA, %	41	59	20	3	12	18	6
Total, %	65	35	13	1	7	11	3

GOA and OCA also differ significantly by proportion of the priests who were born overseas - outside of USA and Canada. One quarter of the Greek Orthodox priests are not American born in comparison with only 10% among OCA clergy. Predictably, the majority of immigrant clergy in GOA are persons born in Greece and Middle East (18%). In the OCA (with its Slavic/Russian roots), the priests from Eastern Europe and former USSR (6%) dominate among foreign born clergy.

Where you were born? (% of priests)



In the OCA, the proportion of immigrant clergy is nearly the same among priests in all ages. Quite differently, in GOA, the immigrant clergy form dominant majority (60%) among the senior priests who are 65 years and older, but only 11% of the GOA clergy younger than 45 are not American born..

Accordingly, 36% GOA priests say that their first “mother” language was not English in comparison with only 16% in the case of OCA clergy.

What was your first “mother” language that you spoke at home as a child? (% of priests)

	English	Any other than English language
GOA, %	64	36
OCA, %	84	16
Total, %	74	26

It should be noted, that both in GOA and OCA the proportion of priests who report not-English language as their mother language (36% and 16% respectively) is much greater than the share of the GOA and OCA clergy who are not-American born (25% and 10% respectively). The same phenomena was found in my earlier studies of American Orthodox Christianity (see for instance <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/krindatch.pdf>, p. 14). This fact suggests that in American Orthodox churches the clergy are more likely (but not necessarily) recruited from the persons who have stronger ethnic heritage and identity. More research is needed to confirm or disprove this thesis.

Age-wise, the priests were divided in three categories: the “youngsters” (under 45 years), the “matures” (45-64 years old) and the “seniors” (65 and older).

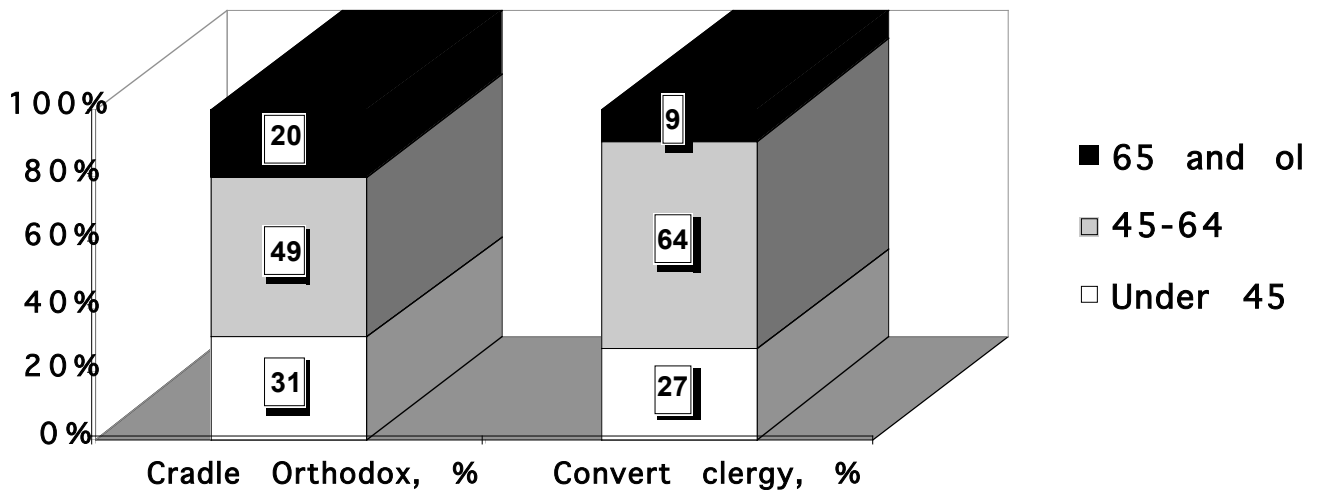
The data in below table show that the age composition of American Orthodox clergy is quite healthy: about one third are “youngsters,” more than half are “matures,” and only 16% are “seniors” who still serve full time as the parish priests. The average age of the Orthodox clergy is 51 years, and there is little difference in this respect between GOA and OCA.

What is your age? (% of priests)

	Younger than 45	45-64	65 and older	Average age, years
GOA, %	31	52	17	50
OCA, %	28	58	14	52
Total, %	30	54	16	51

There is also no significant differences in the average age of the cradle Orthodox (51 years) and the convert clergy (52) and in the proportion of the “young” priests: 31% among the cradle Orthodox and 27% among the converts. However, there are much more “seniors” in the case of the cradle Orthodox clergy (20%) than among convert clergy (9%).

The Age of the Cradle Orthodox and Conv



In the Orthodox Church the parish clergy are divided in two major categories: the married and unmarried celibate priests. Some of the celibate priests would also take monastic vows. The proportion of married and celibate priests vary from country to country, but in America married clergy (93%) clearly dominate over celibate (6%). There is not much difference in this respect between GOA and OCA

You are: (% of priests)

	Married Priest	Celibate Priest who are not monks	Celibate Priest who took monastic vows	Widower
GOA, %	95	2	2	1
OCA, %	91	5	3	1
Total, %	93	4	2	1

At the same time the number of celibate clergy or monk priests is significantly higher among converts (13%) than among cradle Orthodox priests (3%).

You are: (% of priests)

	Married Priest	Celibate	Priest Monk	Widower
Cradle Orthodox, %	96	2	1	1
Convert clergy, %	87	8	5	0
Total, %	93	4	2	1

Traditionally, in many Orthodox parishes the priests’ wives (called “presbytera” in Greek-Byzantine or “matushka” in Slavic tradition) play a significant role and they share informally various – not sacramental and not liturgical – functions and duties with their husbands. As we will see later in this report, the American Orthodox priests consider their wives to be the major source of support in their daily parish ministries. Therefore, it was important to examine to which extent in the US, clergy wives are potentially available for the various parish chores if they would decide to get involved with their husbands ministries. In particular, do they have full or part-time secular jobs or do they stay home? The survey revealed that about half of clergy wives work (52%) and about half of them stay home (48%). However, proportion of the non-working clergy wives is greater in GOA than in OCA (55% and 40% respectively). This fact can be partially explained by the much lower salaries of the OCA clergy – the circumstance which probably does not permit their wives to stay home.

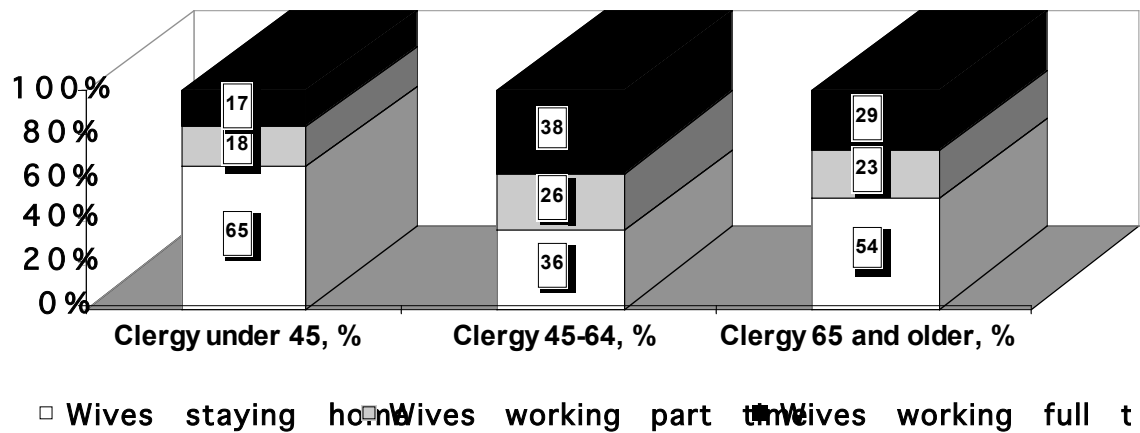
The work status of the wives of the Orthc



□ Wives staying home ■ Wives working part-time ■ Wives working full-time

There is no difference between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in the work status of their wives, but the distinctions among various age groups of priests are significant. 65% of the wives of the young clergy (under 45 years) stay home, while 64% of the spouses of the priests in the age 45-64 are working part or full time. A possible explanation is that the wives of the younger clergy tend to stay home to be able spend time and rear their children. Another remarkable finding of the survey was that almost quarter (23%) of the wives of the senior priests (65 years and older) still work full-time.

The work status of the wives of the Ortho

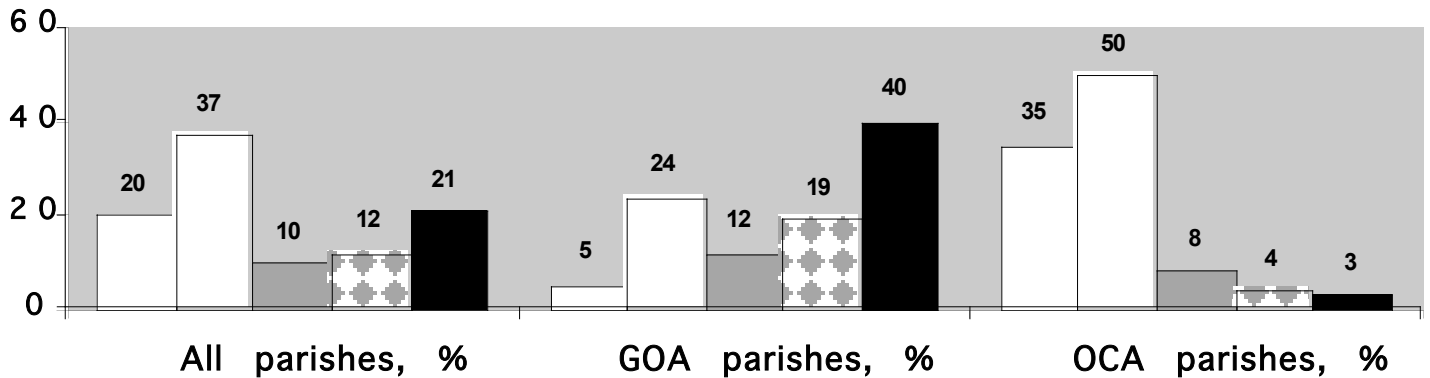


The size of a parish is one of decisive factors that has strong impact on how church life is organized. The number of parishioners determines the financial and human resources available and the range of the parish based programs. At the same time, it influences the degree of pressure put on the priest and the varieties of duties which he has to perform as well as the way the parish is administered. The major problem in estimations the size of the American Orthodox parishes is the absence of the clear and universal criteria for measuring membership. First, various American Orthodox jurisdiction use different definitions of parish membership. Second, and most importantly, in most cases the total number of persons associated with and participating in the Orthodox parish life is much greater than the number of those who are formally listed in parish records as “full members” (whatever it means in any given case). In order to evaluate the size of the parishes headed by the clergy participating in our study, the survey asked question: “Approximately how many persons *total* are associated *in any way* with the life of your parish: counting both adults and children, both regular and occasional attendees?” Several findings deserve particular attention.

First, the parishes of GOA and of OCA differ dramatically in size. 57% of OCA parishes have less than 300 persons associated with the parish in comparison with only 29% in the case of GOA. On the contrary, 40% of the Greek Orthodox parishes have more than 1000 persons participating in the parish life, but only 3% of the OCA parishes belong to this category. An average OCA parish has 182 persons in comparison with 1099 persons in an average GOA parish.

Question: Approximately how many persons *total* are associated *in any way* with the life of your parish: counting both adults and children, both regular and occasional attendees? (% of parishes)

less than 100 persons
 100-299 persons
 300-499 persons
 500-999 persons
 1000 and more persons



Second, the parishes headed by convert clergy tend to be much smaller than the parishes of cradle Orthodox priests. This pattern is evident both in GOA and OCA. An average GOA parish headed by a cradle Orthodox priest has 1190 persons in comparison with only 382 persons in the average parish presided by the convert priests. In OCA, an average parish with cradle Orthodox priest numbers 239 persons in comparison with only 134 persons in an average parish headed by convert clergy.

The average number of persons in the parishes headed by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy

	GOA parishes	OCA parishes	All parishes
Parishes headed by Cradle Orthodox priests	1190	239	903
Parishes headed by convert clergy	382	134	184
Cradle Orthodox and convert clergy combined	1099	182	656

Third, the relationship between the age of a priest and the size of a parish is different in GOA and in OCA. Generally speaking, in OCA, the “youngsters,” “matures,” and “seniors” are equally likely to minister to the smaller or to the larger parishes. Quite differently, in GOA, the older priests are much more likely to be in charge of the bigger parishes. Further, this relationship between age of a priest and the size of a parish is the same for the GOA parishes with the cradle Orthodox clergy and for the Greek Orthodox parishes presided by the convert clergy. Hence, an average GOA parish presided by the priests younger than 45 has 923 persons, by the priests in the age 45-64 – 1139 persons, and by the senior clergy older than 65 – 1369 persons.

The average number of persons in the parishes headed by the clergy in various age categories

	GOA parishes	OCA parishes	All parishes
Parishes headed by priests younger than 45	923	192	597
Parishes headed by priests 45-64 years old	1139	164	623
Parishes headed by priests 65 years and older	1369	186	888
All ages combined	1099	182	656

All American Orthodox jurisdictions share the same theology and doctrine, but the actual approaches of Orthodox priests to various aspects church life as well as to various social issues vary greatly from parish to parish. Based on their personal varied understandings of Orthodox doctrine and traditions, clergy (and laity alike) organize the social and religious lives of their parishes, and interact with the outside non-Orthodox community in very different ways. So far, little research has been done to examine how Orthodox parishes and individuals appropriate and “live out” Orthodox faith and tradition. In other words, we know very little how wide is the gap between “liberal” and “conservative” wings in American Orthodox Christianity and how influential each of these wings are.

In order to approach the issue of “conservatism – liberalism” among American Orthodox priests in our survey we used the hypothesis proposed by Anton Vrame (Vrame, 2005). This hypothesis suggests four types of “orthopraxy” - the way Orthodox individuals and communities live out their religious values and behave socially being influenced by their religious attitudes. These four types of religiously motivated behavior are generally based on the degree of willingness to accept or, to the contrary, reject changes and innovations.

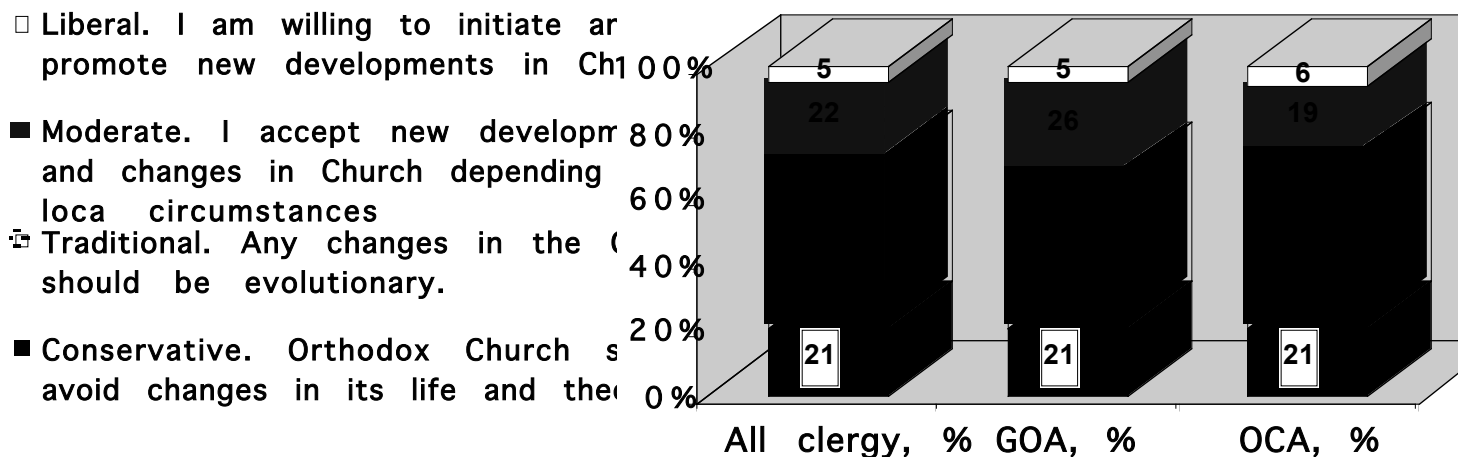
- *Conservative (Fundamentalist) Orthopraxy.* It rejects changes and emphasizes the exactness of once and forever developed practices in spite of changing local contexts. It also separates itself deliberately and eagerly from the mainstream American culture.
- *Traditional Orthopraxy.* It strives to observe Orthodox tradition and cherishes church heritage immensely, but also accepts evolutionary changes, permitting praxis to evolve slowly over time.
- *Moderate (Reform) Orthopraxy.* It supports intentional changes and is willing to “fit in” and be “accepted” by the wider American society and by mainstream American religious life.
- *Liberal (Reconstructionist) Orthopraxy.* It seeks to introduce “innovative” practices, to generally “rethink” orthopraxy and to develop a new expression for America.

The survey asked question “When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand?” The priests were given choices to identify themselves as “conservative,” “traditional,” “moderate,” and “liberal.” The survey results for all clergy and for GOA and OCA priests separately are presented below. First, it is clear that a “reform oriented” group among American Orthodox clergy is relatively small in comparison with the much stronger group of the clergy who are keen to “keep the things the way they are.” Indeed, only 27% of the priests identified themselves as either liberal (5%) or moderate (22%) in comparison with almost three quarters (72%) of respondents who said they are traditional (51%) or conservative (21%).

Second, we know from practical experiences, that in the church life and politics the most radical groups (on both sides of the spectrum) are usually the most vocal ones. In this context, the survey results show that today radical “conservative” wing among American Orthodox clergy (21%) is much more numerous than the group of radical “liberals” (5%).

Third, two major American Orthodox jurisdictions - GOA and OCA – are very similar in terms of how present are these four groups of the priests.

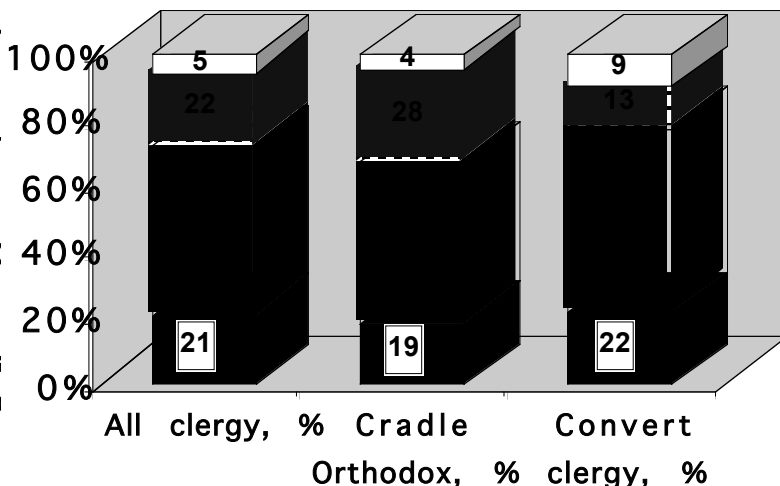
When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand? (% of priests)



The survey allowed also to address a subject which has been long time debated in American Orthodox churches – the theory that American converts to Orthodoxy tend to be more conservative and “Orthodox” than the cradle Orthodox Christians. Generally, the survey data speak in favor of this thesis. 32% of cradle Orthodox clergy identified themselves as either liberal or moderate in comparison with only 22% among convert priests. On the contrary, there are more converts than cradle Orthodox priests who said that they are either conservative or traditional (78% and 68% respectively). At the same time, it should be noted that these differences in numbers are not dramatic and that there are more converts than cradle Orthodox in the case of the most “liberal” group of the priests.

When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand? (% of priests)

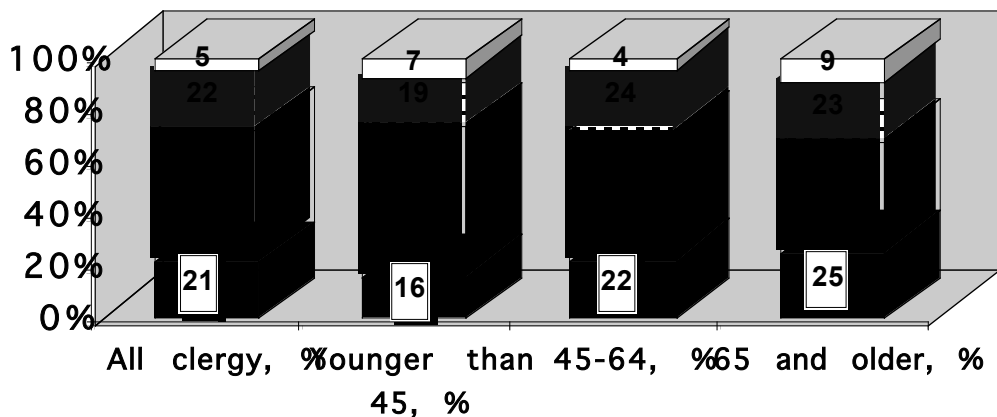
- Liberal. I am willing to initiate and promote new developments in Church life.
- Moderate. I accept new developments and changes in Church depending on local circumstances.
- ▣ Traditional. Any changes in the Church should be evolutionary.
- Conservative. Orthodox Church should avoid changes in its life and theology.



The “liberal – conservative” differences among various generations of the priests are rather subtle. Two patterns, however, seem to be present. First, the proportion of the most conservative clergy is growing with the age of the priests. 16% of “youngsters” called themselves “conservative” in comparison with 22% among “matures” and 25% among the “seniors.” Second, the highest proportion of both opposite groups – e.g. of “liberals” and of “conservatives” – is among senior priests who are 65 and older. This can be explained by the fact that based on their long life and church experiences the senior priests are more likely to make their final and definite choices in where they stand in relation to the various church matters.

When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand? (% of priests)

- Conservative
- ▣ Traditional
- Moderate
- Liberal



Part 2. What Keep Them Working? Sources of Joy and Satisfaction in Orthodox Priesthood

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Nine out of ten of both Greek Orthodox and OCA parish clergy would enter priesthood again if they would have to make their life choice anew;
- Nine out of ten of the GOA and OCA priests say that they would encourage young men who are considering priesthood as their vocation;
- The older (over 65 years) and the cradle Orthodox priests are more convinced about the rightfulness of their choices to become priests and feel more enthusiastic about encouraging young people to enter priesthood than the younger (under 45 years) and convert clergy;
- All categories of clergy – GOA and OCA, cradle Orthodox and convert, the younger and older priests - are similar in their four top-choices of what has “great importance” for them as the source of satisfaction in the ministerial work. These four top-choices are: “Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments,” “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel,” “Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel,” and “Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives.”
- All categories of clergy are also united in what are the least important sources of satisfaction in their lives and works. The three items that received highest proportions of responses “little or no importance for me” are: “Business aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects, etc.,” “Engaging in efforts at social reform,” and “Respect that comes to the priestly office.”
- The cradle Orthodox and the older priests feel more enthusiastic about their works: they select more frequently - than the convert and younger clergy - the answer “great importance for me” as the source of satisfaction with regard to almost all items included in the survey.
- In comparison with the priests younger than 45, twice as many of the priests who are 65 and older said that “Respect that comes to the priestly office” has “great importance” for them as the source of satisfaction
- 63% of clergy would be unhappy if their parish work will be restricted to only liturgical and sacramental duties.

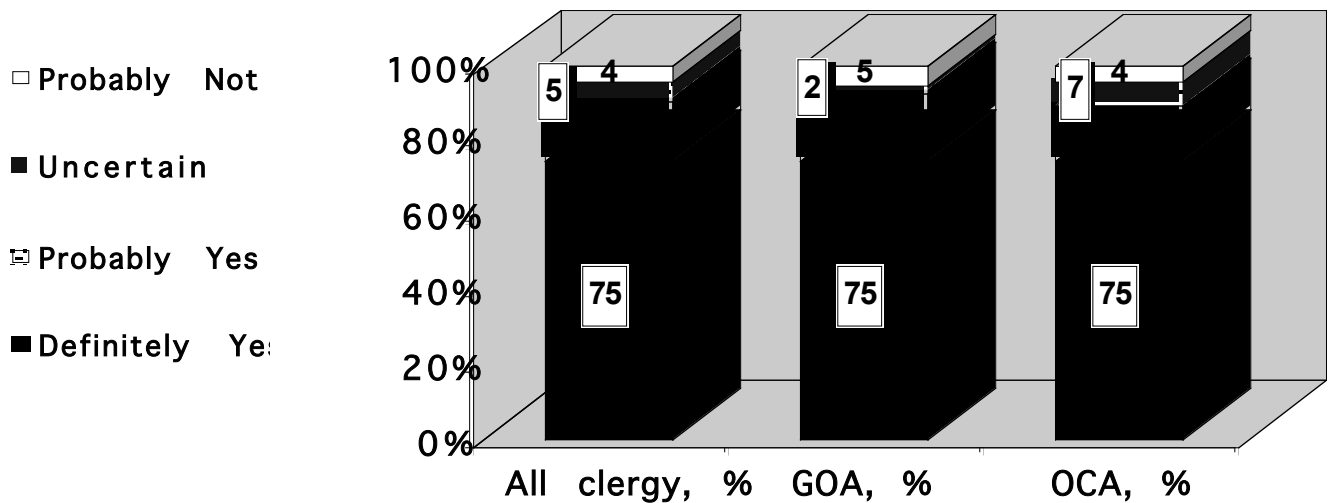
There is little doubt that in today’s America, being professional clergy is not a “dream choice” of occupation for most of the people and not something which is associated with a prestigious social position in the society. The salaries of dominant majority of clergy in most Christian churches are very modest (in comparison with the business community or with the qualified professionals in other sectors of economy) while the emotional pressure put on them is high. This is especially true in the case of American Eastern Orthodox Churches

Therefore, our survey investigated two issues:

- Are American Orthodox parish clergy satisfied with their life choices or do they regret they decision to become a priest?
- What are major sources of satisfaction and joy in the work of an Orthodox priest?

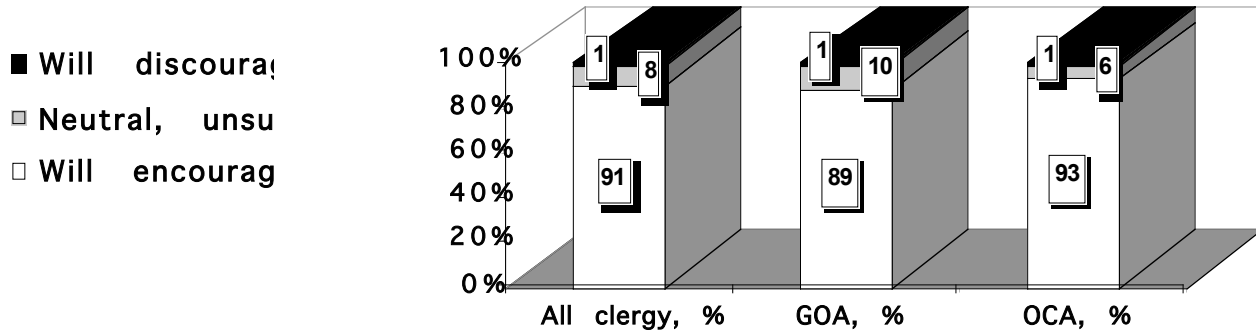
The answer on first question is definite: a vast majority of American Orthodox parish clergy would enter priesthood again if they would have to make their choices anew. Answering question “If you had your choice again, would you enter the priesthood?” three quarters of both Greek Orthodox and OCA priests answered “definitely yes” and 14-18% said “probably yes.” Only 4-5% of clergy responded “probably not.”

If you had your choice again, would you enter the priesthood? (% of clergy)



Further, nine out of ten of the GOA and OCA priests say that they would encourage young men who are considering priesthood as their vocation. Only 1% of clergy in both jurisdictions would discourage such a life choice made by the young people.

Would you rather encourage or rather discourage young men considering priesthood as their vocation? (%)



There are, however, some differences among the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy and among priests in various age categories in how certain they feel about their personal choices to enter priesthood and how readily they would encourage young men to become priests. The general pattern is that the older (over 65 years) and cradle Orthodox priests are somewhat more convinced about the rightfulness of their choice and feel also more enthusiastic about encouraging young people to enter the priesthood. To the contrary, a higher proportion of younger priests and of convert clergy are less sure in their past decisions to be ordained (they are more likely say “probably yes” or “uncertain” instead of “definitely yes”).

If you had your choice again, would you enter the priesthood? (% of priests)

	%, Definitely Yes	%, Probably Yes	%, Uncertain	%, Probably Not
All clergy	75	16	4	5
Younger than 45	73	15	8	4
45-64	68	20	6	6
65 and older	97	3	0	0

	%, Definitely Yes	%, Probably Yes	%, Uncertain	%, Probably Not
All clergy	75	16	5	5
Cradle Orthodox	81	13	3	3
Convert clergy	63	21	8	8

Similarly, the younger and convert clergy are slightly more likely to choose the answer “Neutral, unsure” responding to the question “Would you rather encourage or rather discourage young men who are considering the priesthood as their vocation?”

Generally speaking, would you rather encourage or rather discourage young men who are considering the priesthood as their vocation? (% of priests)

	%, Will encourage	%, Will discourage	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	91	1	8
Cradle Orthodox	93	0	7
Convert clergy	88	1	11

Generally speaking, would you rather encourage or rather discourage young men who are considering the priesthood as their vocation? (% of priests)

	%, Will encourage	%, Will discourage	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	91	1	8
Younger than 45	88	0	12
45-64	91	1	8
65 and older	100	0	0

Yet, the message is clear: only tiny proportion of GOA and OCA priests, of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy and of the clergy in various generations regret their life choices to become priests (those who said they would not enter priesthood again) and also no more than 1% of priests in all above categories would discourage young men considering priesthood as their vocation.

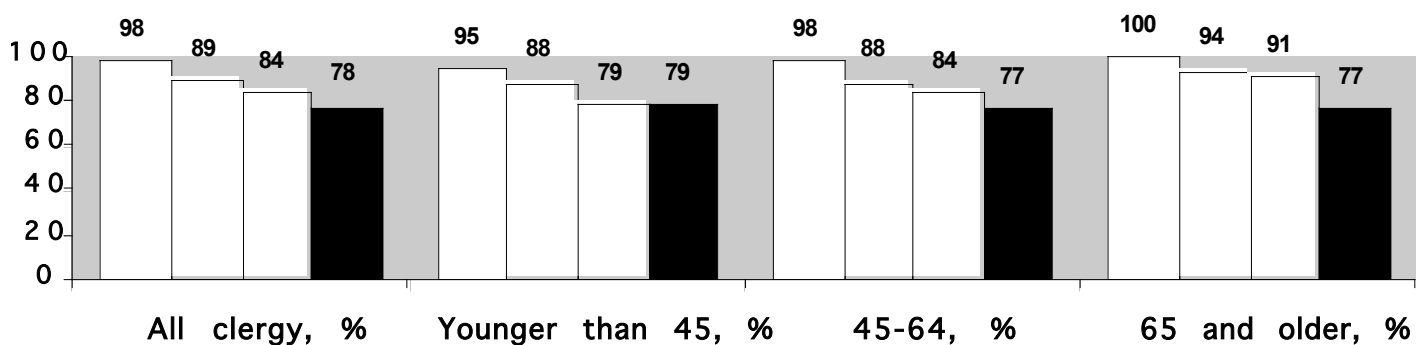
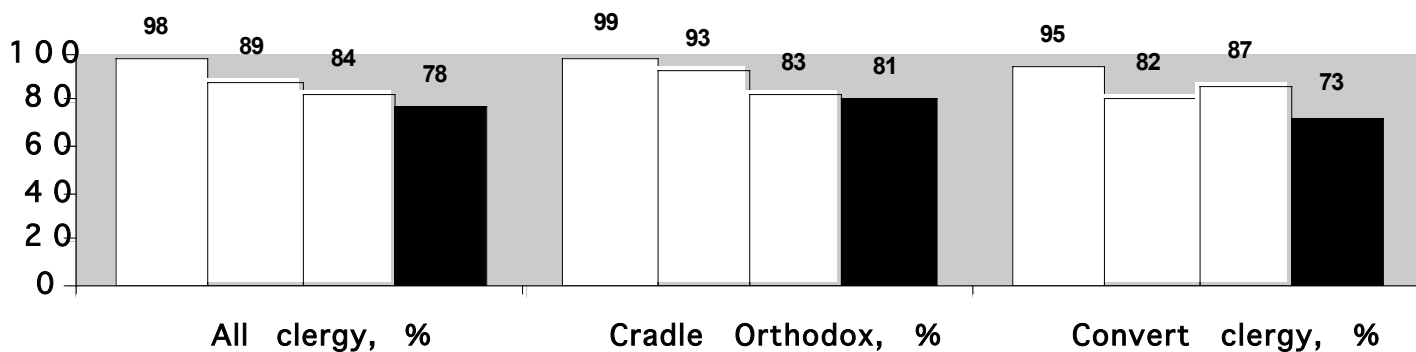
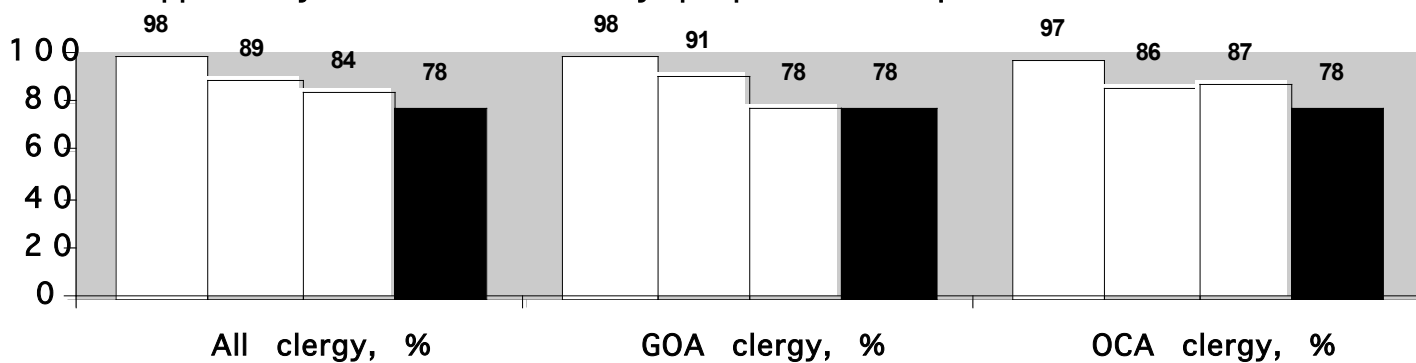
The next question is: what exactly do Orthodox priests enjoy and cherish in their ministerial work? Our survey asked the question: “There are many sources of satisfaction and joy in the life and work of a priest. Please, indicate how important each of the following is as a source of satisfaction to you.” The clergy were given 11 choices (ranging from purely liturgical functions to the business aspects of church life) and they could respond to each of the choices as “great importance for me,” “some importance for me,” and “little or no importance for me.”

The most significant lesson from the clergy’ answers was that ALL CATEGORIES of clergy – GOA and OCA priests, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, the “youngsters” and the “matures” and the “seniors” – were unanimous in their four top-choices of what is “very important” for them as the source of satisfaction in the ministerial work. These four top-choices are: “Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments” (selected by 98% clergy as “very important” source of satisfaction), “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel” (89%), “Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel” (84%), and “Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives” (78%). Further, these same four choices not only scored highest proportions of “very important” responses by all categories of clergy, but they were also ranked in the same order by all clergy with only one small exception (the convert clergy ranked higher “Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel” than “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel”).

Four Most Important Sources of Satisfaction in the Life and Work of American Orthodox Clergy:

% of clergy who said that the following is “very important” for them as source of satisfaction

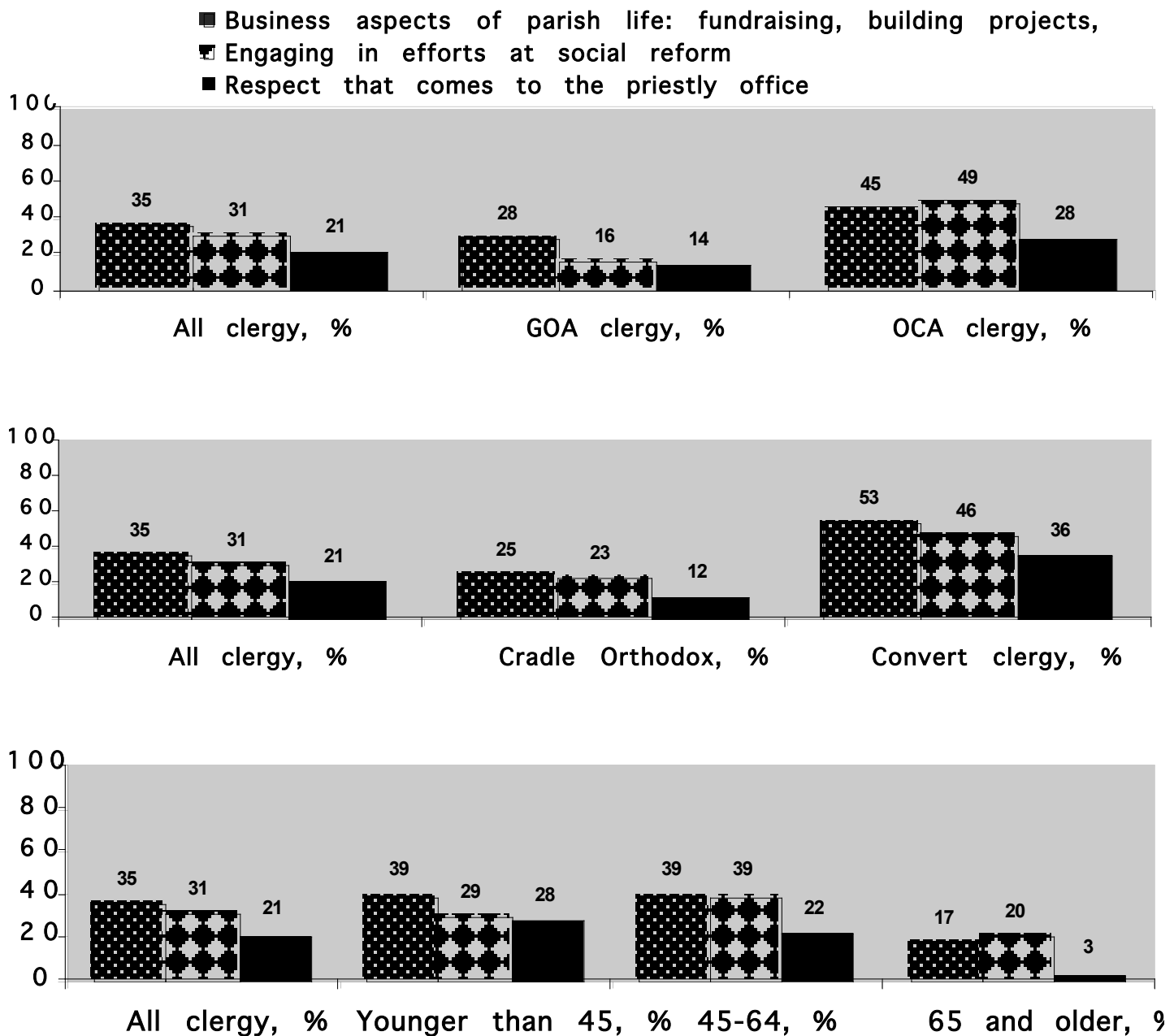
- Celebrating liturgy and administering sacraments
- Preaching Gospel
- ▨ Being part of community of Christians working together to share good n
- Opportunity to work with many people and be part of their lives



The second lesson was that - again – ALL CATEGORIES of clergy were united in what are least important sources of satisfaction in their lives and works. The three items that received highest proportions of responses “little or no importance for me” were: “Business aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects, etc.” (35% priests said “little or no importance” as source of satisfaction), “Engaging in efforts at social reform” (31%) and “Respect that comes to the priestly office” (21%). There was only one small exception from clergy’

full unanimity on what are least important sources of satisfaction. The senior priests (65 and older) have chosen more frequently “Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community” (6% said “not important” for them) and “Opportunity to work with many people and be part of their lives” (6%) than “Respect that comes to the priestly office” (3%). Out of three least important items chosen by the Orthodox clergy, the selection of “Respect that comes to the priestly office” raises an important further question: does the survey tell us that for 21% of priests the issue of social respect is simply not an important one or does this mean that 21% of priests feel that no respect is actually paid today to the work of a priest? More research is needed to respond this challenging question.

**Three Least Important Sources of Satisfaction in the Life and Work of American Orthodox Clergy:
% of clergy who said that the following has “little or no importance” for them as source of satisfaction**



The data on the proportion of GOA and OCA clergy who selected the answer “great importance for me” with regard to all sources of satisfaction included in questionnaire are in the chart below.

Question: There are many sources of satisfaction and joy in the life and work of a priest. Please, indicate how important each of the following is as a source of satisfaction to you.

% of clergy who said that the following has “GREAT IMPORTANCE” for them as a source of satisfaction in their ministry

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments	98	98	97
Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel	89	91	86
Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel	84	78	87
Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives	78	78	78
Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call	58	74	43
Opportunity to exercise intellectual and creative abilities	56	58	53
Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community	54	63	44
Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church	49	58	38
Respect that comes to the priestly office	33	45	20
Engaging in efforts at social reform	21	24	16
“Business” aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects...	17	20	12

The major distinction between Greek Orthodox and OCA clergy is that the GOA priests select more frequently the answer “great importance for me” with regard to almost all items included in the survey. These differences are especially pronounced in case of “Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call” (74% GOA clergy said “very important” source of satisfaction in comparison with only 43% OCA priests), “Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church” (58% versus 38%) and “Respect that comes to the priestly office” (45% versus 20%).

This fact can be – at least partially - explained by the much higher proportion of the convert priests among OCA clergy. Indeed, the differences between the answers of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy show similar pattern: the cradle Orthodox priests select more frequently than the convert clergy the answer “great importance for me” with regard to almost all items included in the survey.

% of clergy who said that the following has “GREAT IMPORTANCE” for them as a source of satisfaction in their ministry

	Cradle Orthodox, %	Convert clergy, %	Total, %
Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments	99	95	98
Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel	93	82	89
Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel	83	87	84
Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives	81	73	78
Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call	70	38	58
Opportunity to exercise intellectual and creative abilities	56	56	56
Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community	62	39	54
Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church	59	30	49
Respect that comes to the priestly office	42	17	33
Engaging in efforts at social reform	23	17	21
“Business” aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects, etc.	22	7	17

The differences in “what matters” in priestly work among various generation of clergy are not as pronounced as distinctions between cradle Orthodox and convert priests. Generally, the “seniors” (65 years and older) feel somewhat more enthusiastic about their vocation and they answered more frequently – than the “youngsters” or “matures” – that this is “very important” source of satisfaction for me with regard to almost all items included in the survey.

% of clergy in various age who said that the following has “GREAT IMPORTANCE” for them as a source of satisfaction in their ministry

Priests in the age:	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %	Total, %
Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments	95	98	100	98
Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel	88	88	94	89
Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel	79	84	91	84
Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives	79	77	77	78
Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call	47	62	69	58
Opportunity to exercise intellectual and creative abilities	59	56	48	56
Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community	44	54	71	54
Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church	45	47	62	49
Respect that comes to the priestly office	26	31	51	33
Engaging in efforts at social reform	21	21	20	21
“Business” aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects, etc.	14	16	26	17

One of the most striking – and also warning – distinctions between the “youngsters” and “seniors” is the fact that twice as many of the priests 65 and older said that “Respect that comes to the priestly office” has “great importance” for them as the source of satisfaction (51% of “seniors” in comparison with 26% of “youngsters”). Conversely, 28% of the priests younger than 45 said that “Respect that comes to the priestly office” has “little or no importance for them” in comparison with only 3% among the priests older than 65.

One final notice on the sources of satisfaction in the work of an American Orthodox priest has to be made. Indeed, “Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments” and “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel” were chosen by all clergy as two most important sources of satisfaction, but the survey also indicated clearly: the dominant majority of clergy would be unhappy if their parish work will be restricted to only liturgical and sacramental duties.

63% of clergy said that they will be dissatisfied with such situation and only 25% reported that they would be satisfied if they parish work would be restricted to celebrating liturgy and providing sacraments (12% were neutral or unsure). There was little difference in the answers on this question among GOA and OCA priests and among the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy.

In the future if you would be offered to restrict your parish work to only liturgical and sacramental duties, would you be satisfied or dissatisfied? (% of priests)

	%, Satisfied	%, Dissatisfied	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	25	63	12
GOA	29	58	13
OCA	21	67	12

	%, Satisfied	%, Dissatisfied	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	25	63	12
Cradle Orthodox	28	61	11
Convert clergy	20	67	13

The only category of clergy who feel relatively more comfortable with the situation if they ministerial work will be limited to the sacramental and liturgical functions are the “senior” priests who are 65 years or older. 40% of them said that they would be satisfied with such situation in comparison with only 17% among “youngsters” and 25% among the “matures.”

In the future if you would be offered to restrict your parish work to only liturgical and sacramental duties, would you be satisfied or dissatisfied? (% of priests)

	%, Satisfied	%, Dissatisfied	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	25	63	12
Younger than 45	17	67	16
45-64	25	65	10
65 and older	40	49	11

Part. 3 With What Do Orthodox Clergy Struggle? The Challenges of Priesthood in America

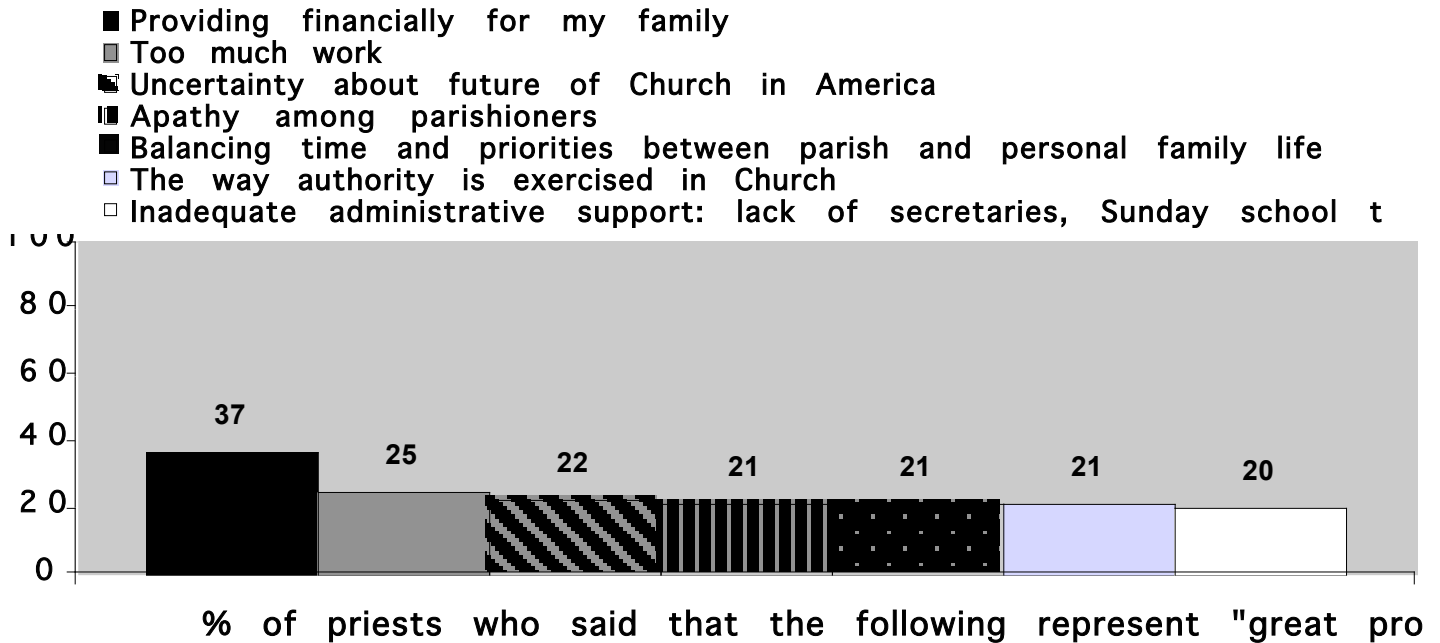
HIGHLIGHTS:

- Seven major challenges of being an Orthodox parish priest in America are: “providing financially for my family,” “too much work,” “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America,” “apathy among parishioners,” “balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life,” “the way authority is exercised in the Church,” and “inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, etc.”
- Out of seven major challenges, only one is equally important for the different categories of clergy: “the way authority is exercised in the Church.” This issue was equally frequently chosen as “great problem to me” by GOA and OCA clergy, by the priests in various ages, and by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy.
- The significance of various problems in priestly work depends on the age of the clergyman, whether one is a cradle Orthodox or a “convert” priest, and on the size of the parishes. At the same time, the greatest distinctions are between the clergy of two jurisdictions themselves, that is GOA and OCA clergy face quite different problems.
- The major challenge for OCA clergy is being “underpaid” (in particular, “providing financially for my family”), whereas GOA priests are struggling with the number of problems connected to feeling of being “overworked” (“too much work,” “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life,” “lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development,” and “unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners.”
- In comparison with OCA clergy, twice as many Greek Orthodox priests report “apathy among parishioners” as “great problem to me.”
- More cradle Orthodox than the convert priests feel that “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” represent a “great problem.” Conversely, more convert than cradle Orthodox clergy say that “difficulty of really reaching people today” is a “great problem to me.”
- In both GOA and OCA, “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life” and “social isolation and loneliness of priestly life” are most frequently reported as “great problem” by the younger priests under 45 and least frequently – by the clergy who are 65 and older.
- In both GOA and OCA, there is a strong relationship between size of a parish and proportion of clergy who said that “providing financially for my family” represents a “great problem to me.” The smaller parish is the more likely priests say that “providing financially for my family” is a “great problem to me.”
- The clergy in the smallest parishes (less than 100 persons) are much more exposed than those in the medium (100-499 persons) or in the large (500+ persons) to the three particular problems: “inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.,” “difficulty of really reaching people today,” and “inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.”

As noted in the second part of this study report, a vast majority of both GOA and OCA clergy, both younger and older priests, and both cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, are convinced in the rightfulness of their life choice to enter priesthood. Further, all categories of clergy are also uniform in their opinions on the major sources of satisfaction and joy in the work of an Orthodox parish priest. Quite differently, there are significant distinctions among various groups of clergy in what is perceived as the major problems and challenges in their priestly work.

The survey asked question “There are many problems which priests face today. Please, indicate how important the following problems are to YOU on a day-to-day basis.” The clergy were given 26 choices of possible problems and they can respond to each choice: “great problem to me,” or “somewhat of a problem to me,” or “little or no problem to me.” Out of all possible problems, one was chosen by far more frequently than any other as “great problem:” more than one third (37%) of survey participants said that “Providing financially for my family” is a great problem for them. Six further items have been indicated as “great problem to me” by 20-25% of clergy. These six problems are: “too much work” (selected by 25% priests as “great problem”), “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” (22%), “apathy among parishioners” (21%), “balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life” (21%), “the way authority is exercised in the Church” (21%), and “inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, etc.” (20%).

Seven Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy
% of priests who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



Further analysis revealed that out of the seven major challenges selected by more than 20% of respondents as “great problem to me,” only one is equally important for all categories of clergy: “the way authority is exercised in the Church.” This issue was equally frequently chosen as “great problem” by GOA and OCA clergy, by the priests in various age, and by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy. This should be a warning message for the leadership of two major American Orthodox churches as it indicates that there is a significant concern on the matter of “authority in the church.”

The data on the proportion of GOA and OCA clergy who selected the answer “great problem for me” with regard to all possible problems and challenges included in questionnaire are in the chart below. We will discuss most remarkable findings only on those items which scored more than 10% of responses “great problem to me.”

Question: There are many problems which priests face today. Please, indicate how important the following problems are to YOU on a day-to-day basis.

% of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	37	29	45
Too much work	25	33	20
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	22	24	17
Apathy among parishioners	21	28	15
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	21	25	17
The way authority is exercised in the Church	21	21	20
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	20	20	19
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	14	21	5
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	13	19	7
Difficulty of really reaching people today	13	15	12
For married priests only: Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	11	12	10
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	11	12	11
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	10	13	7
Disagreements with parishioners about life of the parish	8	11	5
Lack of foreign language skills	8	4	12
Change in the concept of priesthood in modern society	8	11	4
Relationships with the lay leadership of the parish	7	11	4
Relevance of the work that priests do	6	7	5
Challenges of working with youth	6	5	9
Relationship with the diocesan bishop	5	6	5
Being expected to represent the church teachings and policies that I have difficulty with	3	5	2
Challenges of working with converts to Orthodoxy from other Christian churches	2	4	1
Lack of a clear idea what a priest is	2	3	1
Absence of challenge in priestly work	1	1	2
Difficulty of working with women	1	1	0
Difficulty in sharing authority	1	0	1

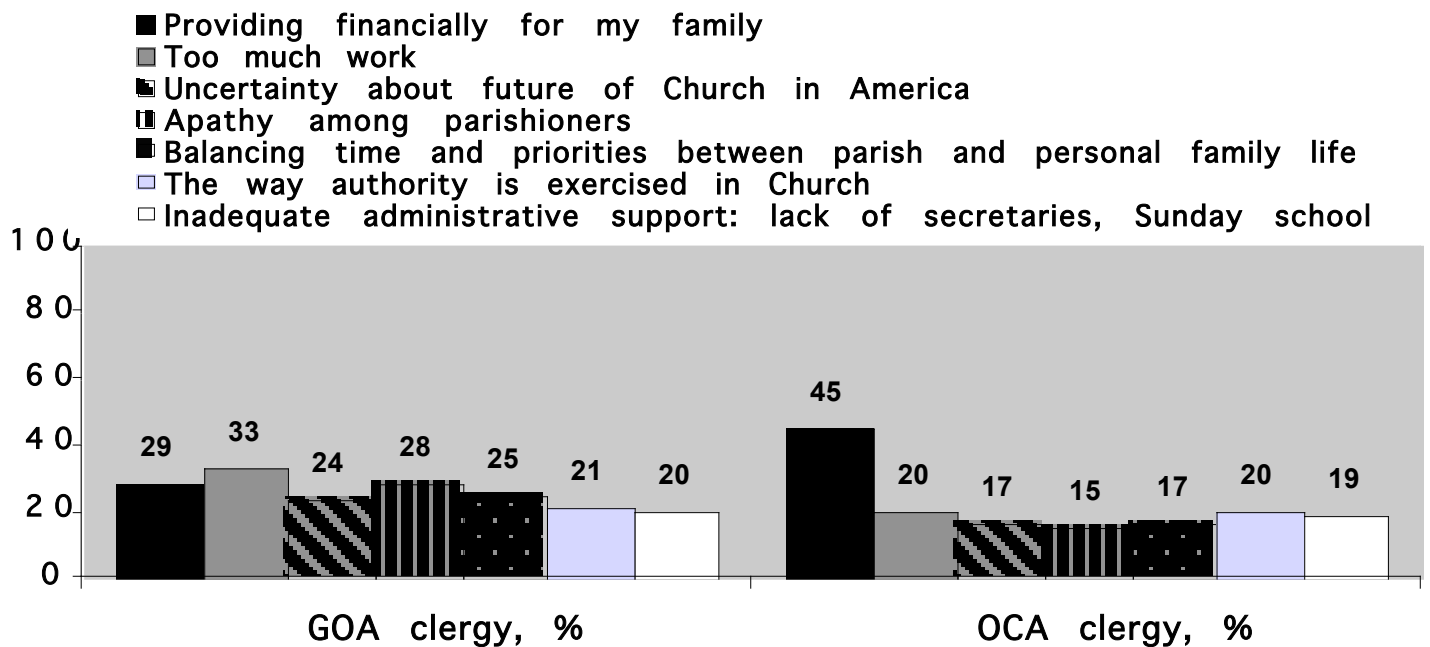
There are significant distinctions between the GOA and OCA clergy in what is perceived as the major challenges in priestly work.

First, a by far larger proportion of OCA than GOA clergy report that providing financially for their families is a “great problem,” 45% and 29% respectively. This fact barely needs further explanation, because the salaries of the OCA priests are significantly lower than in the Greek Archdiocese. In fact, a significant proportion of OCA parish clergy (especially those serving in smaller parishes) are forced to combine “full time” priestly duties with “full time” secular jobs.

Second, a larger portion of GOA than OCA clergy report that “too much work” represent a “great problem” for them: 33% and 20% respectively. This fact can be partially explained by the much larger size of an average Greek Orthodox (1099 persons) than the OCA (182 persons) parish – a subject which was discussed in the first part of this study report.

Seven Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy

% of GOA and OCA clergy who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



There are three other items that are related to the general problem of “overwork” and, accordingly, which were more frequently chosen as “great problem” by the GOA clergy than by the OCA priests. These are the challenges of “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life” (reported as “great problem” by 25% of GOA priests in comparison with 17% of OCA clergy), “lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development” (21% and 5%), and “unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners” (19% and 7%).

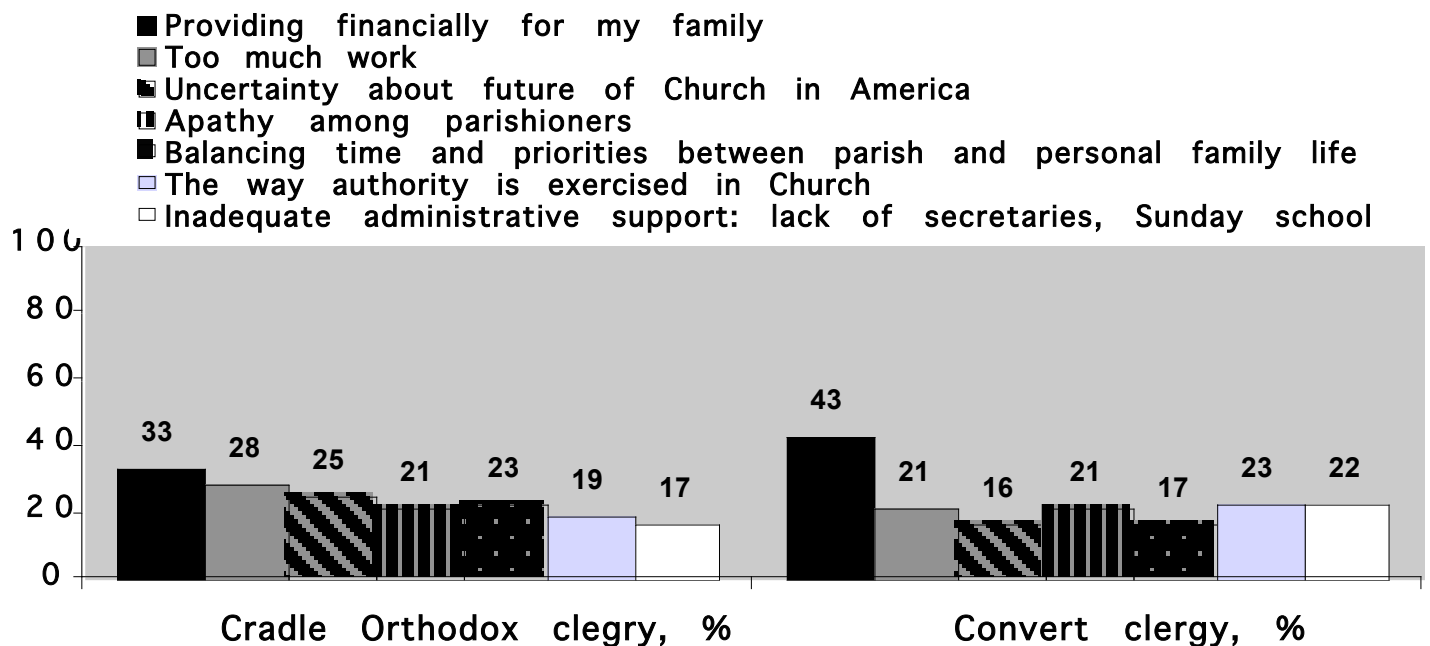
The “Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.” is felt equally strong by the GOA and OCA clergy: about one fifth of the clergy in both jurisdictions reported this item as a “great problem.” Indeed, many more GOA than OCA parishes have full-time secretaries or other paid staff. At the same time, one can imagine that the OCA priest serving without any administrative support in a parish with one hundred parishioners and his GOA colleague who has some secretarial support but works with one thousand parishioners would be equally challenged by the problem of “inadequate administrative support.”

Finally, a remarkable distinction between GOA and OCA clergy is that “apathy among parishioners” was reported as “great problem” by almost twice as many Greek Orthodox priests (28%) than by the OCA clergy (15%). Further, out of all possible problems the challenge of “apathy among parishioners” is ranked as the third most significant problem by the clergy of Greek Archdiocese (after “too much work,” and “providing financially for my family”). More research is needed to examine this perception.

Many distinctions between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in what they feel as a “great problem to me” are derivative from the differences between GOA and OCA priests. As noted in the first part of this study report there are many more convert clergy among OCA priests (59% in our sample) than among GOA clergy (14%). Therefore, the major problems of OCA clergy tend to be typical for the convert priests, whereas challenges more frequently reported as “great problem” by GOA priests are in many ways characteristic for the cradle Orthodox clergy.

Seven Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Clergy: Cradle Orthodox and Converts

% of clergy who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



On the one hand, the chart above and data below indicate that the problem of being “underpaid” (and therefore being challenged to provide financially for the family) is more common among convert priests (43% said that this is a “great problem”) than among cradle Orthodox clergy (33%). On the other hand, the issue of being “overworked” (“too much work”) has been reported as “great problem” by more cradle Orthodox (28%) than by the convert clergy (21%). Similarly, the challenge of “balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life” is also more common for the cradle Orthodox than for the convert clergy.

The Major Problems in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Cradle Orthodox and Converts
(included are the items which scored more than 10% among all respondents as “great problem”)
% of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”

	Cradle Orthodox, %	Convert clergy, %	All clergy, %
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	33	43	37
Too much work	28	21	25
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	25	16	22
Apathy among parishioners	21	21	21
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	23	17	21
The way authority is exercised in the Church	19	23	21
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	17	22	20
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	15	11	14
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	13	10	13
Difficulty of really reaching people today	11	18	13
For married priests only: Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	12	11	12
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	10	11	11
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	11	10	10

Out of problems listed in the above table that have no relation to the issues of feeling either “overworked” or “underpaid,” two items seem to be perceived somewhat different by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy. More cradle Orthodox than the convert priests feel that “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” represent a “great problem” to them. Conversely, more convert than cradle Orthodox clergy report “difficulty of really reaching people today” as “great problem.”

The analysis of the data on convert and cradle Orthodox clergy for OCA priests only (where these categories of clergy present two almost equal groups) confirmed both patterns. In general, however, the distinctions among cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in what is perceived as the major challenges and problems in the work of an American Orthodox priest are less important than the denominational differences between Greek Orthodox and OCA clergy.

The picture of what is perceived as the major challenges of the priesthood in America by various generations of clergy is complex, because in many cases the GOA and OCA show various relationships between the age of clergy and the relative significance of one or the other problem. As a result, most of the patterns based on the analysis of GOA and OCA clergy as a whole are not present when one look at various generations of clergy in OCA and GOA separately.

The table below contains survey results on clergy in various age groups for GOA and OCA combined together. One could make several conclusions. First, the “youngsters” seem to be more exposed than the “matures” and, especially, than the “seniors” to the problems of “too much work,” “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life,” “lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development,” “unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners,” “social isolation and loneliness of priestly life.” Second, all generations of clergy appear to be equally concerned with the challenges of “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” and “apathy among parishioners.” Third, the concern about “the way authority is exercised in the church” is more present among the “matures” and “seniors.” Fourth, in an overall picture the “youngsters” seem to be more sensitive to the greater number of problems and challenges than the “matures” or “seniors.”

The Major Problems in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Age Differences

(included are the items which scored more than 10% among all respondents as “great problem”)

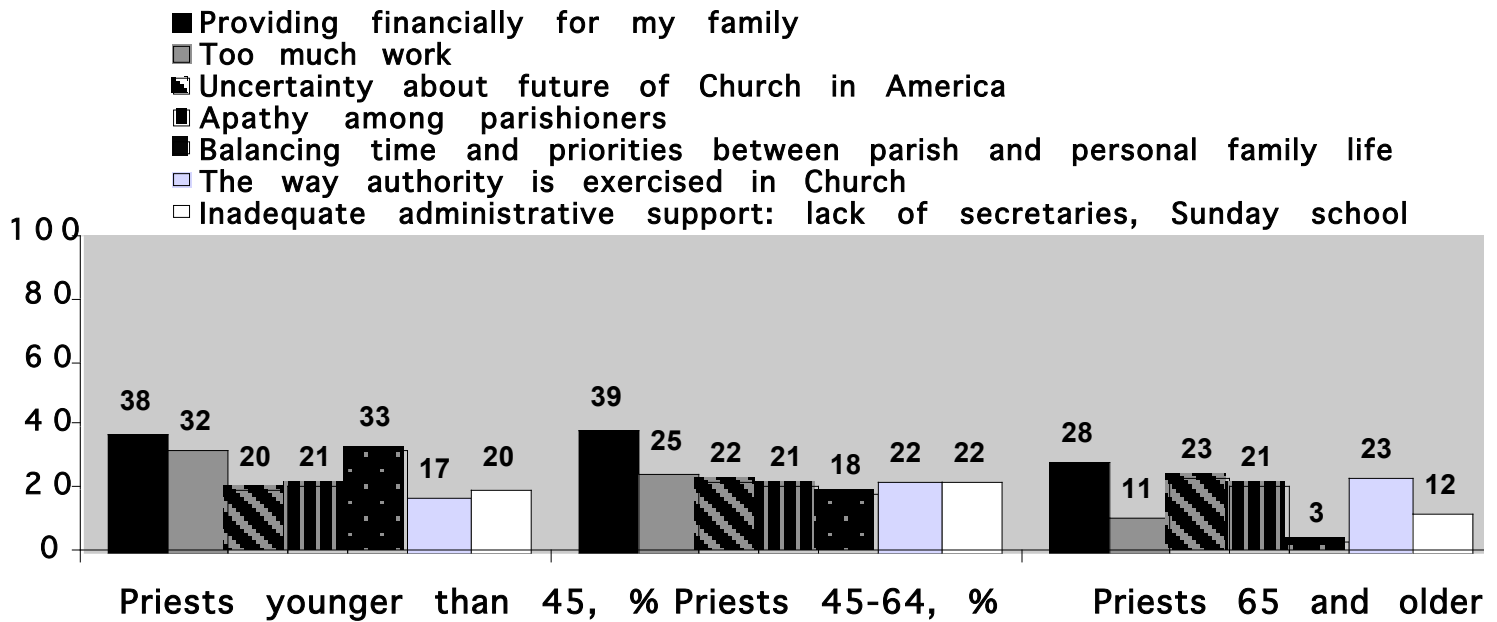
% of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”

Priests in the age:	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %	All clergy, %
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	38	39	28	37
Too much work	32	25	11	25
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	20	22	23	22
Apathy among parishioners	21	21	21	21
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	33	18	3	21
The way authority is exercised in the Church	17	22	23	21
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	20	22	12	20
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	17	15	3	14
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	14	13	11	13
Difficulty of really reaching people today	14	12	15	13
For married priests only: Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	12	12	9	12
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	17	11	3	11
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	11	12	6	10

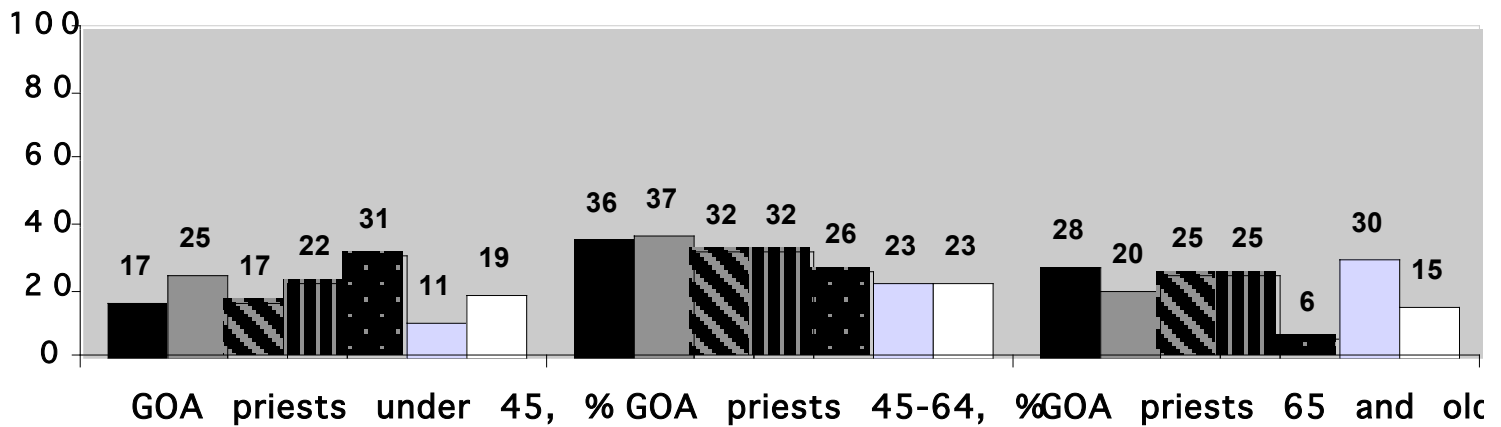
However, the analysis of data for GOA and OCA clergy separately do not confirm or impose significant limitations on many of these conclusions.

Seven Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Age Differences

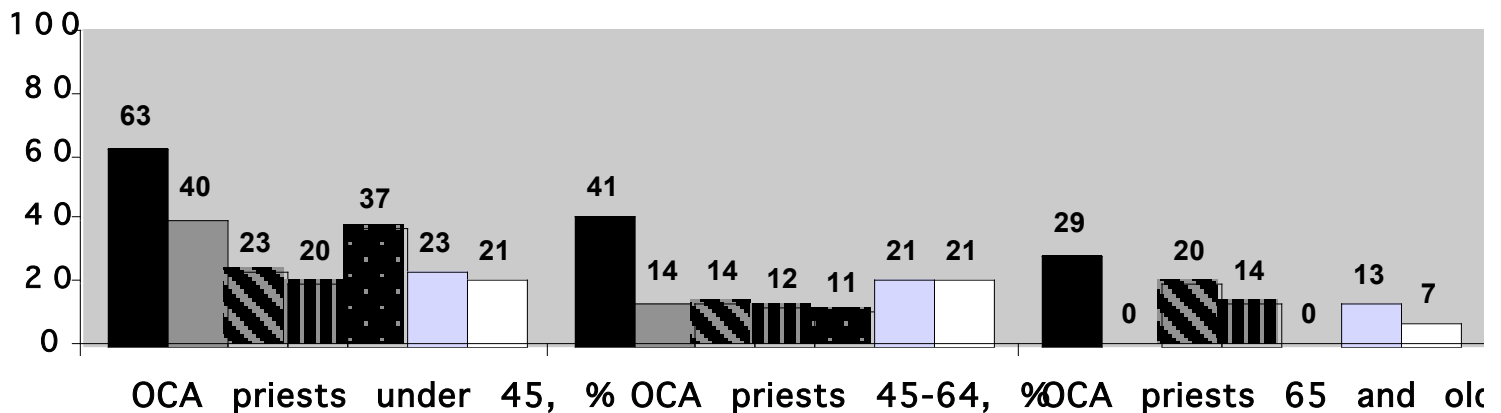
All Clergy: % of clergy in various age who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



GOA Clergy: % of clergy in various age who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



OCA Clergy: % of clergy in various age who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



First, there are only two consistent relationships between age of the clergy and the proportion of priests who say that this or that is a “great problem to me.” In both GOA and OCA, the issues of “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life” and “social isolation and loneliness of priestly life” were most frequently reported as “great problem” by the “youngsters” and least frequently – by the “seniors.” This is an understandable situation as the younger clergy are still newly married with the younger children, requiring more of their time, while senior clergy are more likely to be “empty nested,” with no children at home and a marital relationship that is, most likely, more solidified

Second, as noted, in the whole sample of the respondents (GOA and OCA together) all generations of clergy appeared to be equally concerned with the challenges of “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” and “apathy among parishioners.” However, the separate data for GOA and OCA priests presented in the charts above show that significance of these problems varies greatly between various generations of priests within each jurisdiction. In GOA, the priests in the age 45-64 expressed greater concern for both these problems than the “seniors” or “youngsters.” In OCA, the younger generation of clergy (under 45) reported that “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” and “apathy among parishioners” are “great problem to me” more frequently than the “seniors” or “matures.”

Third, in GOA, the issue of “how authority is exercised in the Church” is especially painful for the “seniors” than for the “matures” or “youngsters.” 30% of GOA priests in the age of 65 and older reported that “the way authority is exercised in the Church” is a “great problem to me” in comparison with 23% among the clergy who are 45-64 and only 11% among the clergy younger than 45. To the contrary, in the OCA, only 13% of “seniors” are seriously concerned with “the way authority is exercised in the Church” in comparison with 21% among “matures” and 23% among the “youngsters.” In depth analysis is needed to determine the direction of the authority problems: are clergy expressing concerns with the way *hierarchical authority* is exercised or with the way authority is exercised within an *individual parish*?

Fourth, the OCA and GOA differ significantly in which generation of clergy tend to report more frequently that this or that is a “great problem to me” with regard to most of the possible challenges. The above charts show that in GOA the “matures” are the generation of clergy which is especially exposed to most of the problems. Indeed, the GOA priests in the age 45-64 reported 5 out of 7 major challenges more frequently than the “youngsters” or “seniors” as being “great problem to me.” In OCA case, these are the younger clergy under 45 who reported all seven major challenges more frequently than the “matures” or “seniors” as “great problem to me.”

In an overall picture, similarly to distinctions among the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, the differences between various generations of priests in what is perceived as major problems in the work of an American Orthodox priest are less important than the denominational differences between Greek Orthodox and OCA clergy.

The study looked also at the influence of the size of the parishes on the relative importance of the various problems of priesthood. The data in the table below show the differences between the answers of clergy who serve in the parishes of the different size: in the small churches with less than 100 persons, in the medium-sized with 100-499 persons and in the large parishes with more than 500 persons.

The Major Problems in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Differences Between Clergy Serving in Parishes of Various Size

(included are the items which scored more than 10% among all respondents as “great problem to me”)

% of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”

Size of a parish:	Less than 100 person	100-499 persons	500 and more persons	All clergy
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	65	36	19	37
Too much work	29	16	39	25
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	23	20	20	22
Apathy among parishioners	23	17	24	21
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	18	20	25	21
The way authority is exercised in the Church	21	23	18	21
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	31	17	15	20
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	5	14	18	14
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	12	11	19	13
Difficulty of really reaching people today	21	7	14	13
Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	8	12	13	12
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	16	13	5	11
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	16	6	11	10

The data for the OCA and GOA clergy together and the analysis of the survey results for the GOA and OCA clergy separately revealed two major findings about relationship between size of a parish and its exposure to a particular type of the problem.

First, both in the GOA and in OCA, there is a strong relationship between size of a parish and proportion of clergy who said that “providing financially for my family” represents a “great problem to me.” The smaller the parish is the more likely the priest would report that “providing financially for my family” is a “great problem to me.”

Second, the clergy who serve in the smallest parishes with less than 100 persons are much more exposed than those in the medium (100-499 persons) or in the large (500+ persons) to the three particular problems:

- Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc;
- Difficulty of really reaching people today;
- Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.

In the OCA, twice as many of priests in the small parishes reported “inadequate administrative support” as “great problem” (28%) than their fellow priests in the medium sized (13%) or in the large (14%) parishes. In the GOA, the gap between proportion of clergy in the small, medium and large parishes reporting “inadequate administrative support” as “great problem” is even larger: 50% and 23% and 15% respectively.

Similarly, 33% of GOA priests in the small parishes say that “difficulty of really reaching people today” is a “great problem” in comparison with only 13% of their colleagues who serve in the medium and 15% of those in large parishes. The respective data for OCA are: 19% in comparison with 3% and 0%.

50% of Greek Orthodox clergy in the small parishes perceive an “inadequate liturgical support” as “great problem” in comparison with only 10% of priests in the medium and 12% of clergy in the large parishes. The similar data for OCA priests are: 11% and 3% and 0%.

Summing up, the relative significance of various problems in the priestly work depends on the age of clergy, on the differences between the cradle Orthodox and the convert priests, and on the size of their parishes. At the same time, the factor of denominational distinctions between GOA and OCA seem to be the most important one for the degree of exposure of the parish clergy to the different type of problems.

Part 4. What Do Clergy Believe Ought to be Openly Discussed in the Church?

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The “issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox Church” was chosen as “very important to be openly discussed in the Church” by the vast majority (74%) of all categories of clergy (e.g. GOA and OCA priests, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy).
- All categories of clergy are similar in choosing the second and third important subjects for an open Church discussion: “Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church” and “Clarification, standardization of salaries and benefits.”
- All categories of clergy are also uniform in their two top choices of what they “don’t want to be discussed:” “Ordination of women” and “Ordination prior to marriage.”
- The major distinction between Greek Orthodox priests and OCA clergy is that the OCA clergy are more reluctant to bring to the public discussion the issues related to the priests’ personal matters such as “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” “Problems of overwork,” etc.
- Convert clergy are more reluctant than the cradle Orthodox priests to discuss openly the subjects of “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests” and “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests.”
- Older priests feel greater urgency than younger clergy to open a discussion on all subjects connected with the *general church policies and issues* such as “Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church,” “The process of selecting bishops,” “The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes,” “Sharing ministry with laity,” “Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level,” etc.
- Younger priests are more eager to talk about the *personal problems of clergy* such as “Clarification, standardization of salaries and benefits,” “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” and “Problems of overwork.”
- There is a strong relationship between the theological stance of the clergy and their willingness to discuss openly “ordination of women,” “process of selecting bishops,” “sharing ministry with laity,” “ordination prior to the marriage,” “family problems of Orthodox priests,” and “relationship between mainstream American culture and the traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church.” The “conservative” and “traditional” clergy are much more likely to say that these subjects are “not important to be discussed” or they “don’t want it to be discussed.” The priests who defined themselves as “moderate” and “liberal” reported more frequently that these matters are “very important to be discussed.”

Numerous Church related subjects are frequently - and sometimes hotly - debated among both Orthodox clergy and laity. These subjects range widely from the business aspects of parish life and the clergy's personal matters to various sensitive issues of national Church policies. This study examined the opinions of the Orthodox parish clergy about what is most important to bring to a public forum and to discuss openly. The survey asked the question "Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?" The clergy were given the list of 19 possible subjects for discussion and they can respond "very important to be discussed," "somewhat important to be discussed," "not important to be discussed," "do not want it to be discussed." The responses to this question provide a number of significant insights.

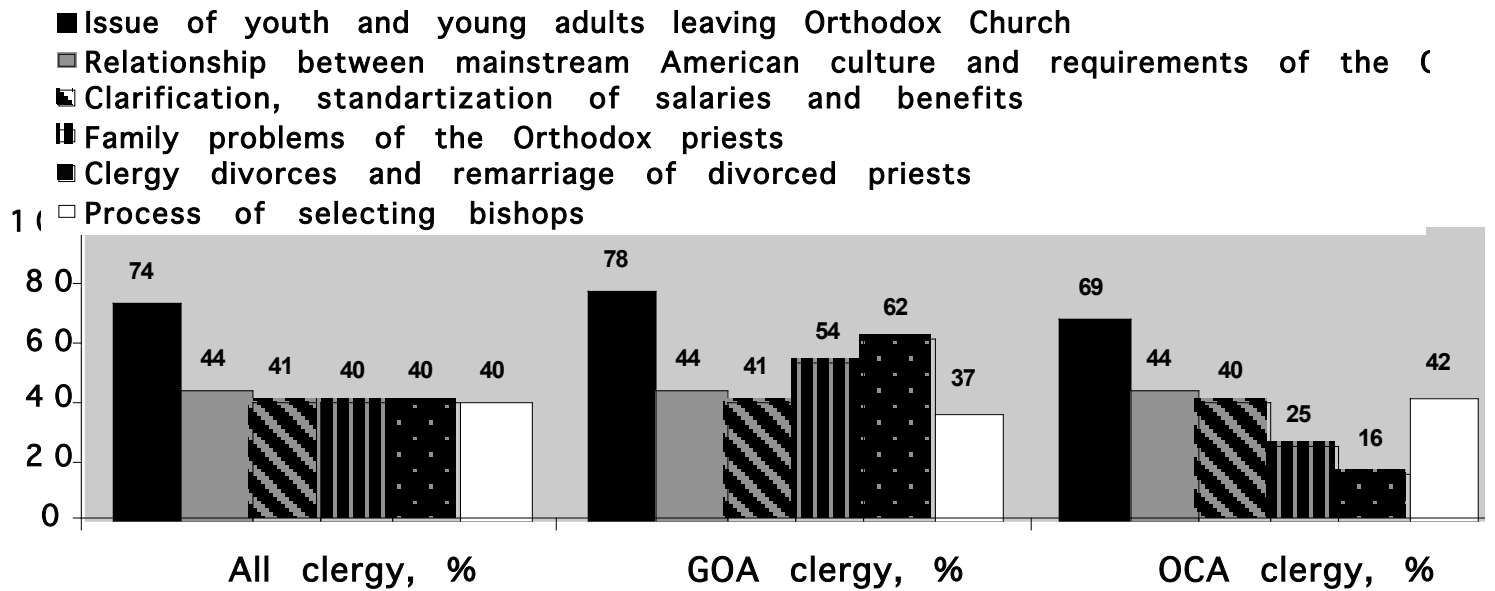
There is only one subject which has been chosen by the vast majority (74%) of clergy as "very important to be openly discussed." This is the "issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church." Further, all categories of clergy - GOA and OCA, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, younger and older priests – were unanimous in their opinions about importance of an open discussion on this issue. There was also a remarkable agreement among all categories of clergy about second and third important subjects for an open Church discussion: "Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church" (selected by 44% of clergy as "very important to be discussed") and "Clarification, standardization of salaries and benefits" (41%).

This clergy' unanimity on three most important subjects for an open discussion should give a clear indication for the national Church leadership at what requires particular attention, consideration and, perhaps, some action.

Three further subjects scored 40% of clergy votes as "very important" for an open church discussion: "Family problems of the Orthodox priests," "Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests," and "The process of selecting bishops." At the same time, in the case of these three items, various groups of clergy expressed different opinions about their importance for an open discussion.

Six Most Important Subjects for an Open Discussion in the Church

% of clergy who said that these subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT” to be discussed



The above chart and clergy opinions on all 19 possible topics for an open discussion included in the survey (see the table on the next page) show one remarkable distinction between GOA and OCA priests. In general, Greek Orthodox priests are much more eager and OCA clergy are more reluctant to bring to the public discussion those issues which are related to the priests’ personal matters. Indeed, “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” “Problems of overwork,” and “The lack of clear professional standards for priests” have been more frequently chosen by the GOA than OCA clergy as “very important to be discussed.”

This major difference between GOA and OCA clergy provokes an important question: are Greek Orthodox priests actually more exposed to the various personal problems than the OCA clergy, or do the latter ones simply believe that priests’ personal matters should be kept “quiet?” Why are also almost half (44%) of the Greek Orthodox clergy seriously concerned with the issue of “the image and esteem of the priesthood today” and feel that this subject is “very important to be discussed” in comparison with only 14% of OCA clergy? More in depth research is needed to answer these important questions.

In comparison with the “personal matters” of the priests, most of the topics connected with general church policies and problems scored comparable number of OCA and GOA clergy responses as “very important to be discussed.” These are the subjects “issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church,” “relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church,” “process of selecting bishops,” “issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes,” “representation of the parish priests at decision

making on the national Church level,” and “recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy.” These subjects reflect the issues and concerns equally shared by various American Orthodox communities.

Question: Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?

% of clergy who said that the following subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT TO BE DISCUSSED”

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	74	78	69
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	44	44	44
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	41	40
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	40	54	25
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	40	62	16
The process of selecting bishops	40	37	42
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	38	45	30
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	35	39	31
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	34	43	25
Problems of overwork	33	44	21
Sharing ministry with laity	31	37	26
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	30	32	27
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	29	44	14
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	26	25	27
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	25	30	20
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	21	29	13
Ordination prior to marriage	14	17	10
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	11	14	7
Ordination of women	7	8	6

The OCA and GOA clergy – both cradle Orthodox and convert – were also quite uniform in their two top choices of what they “don’t want to be discussed:” “Ordination of women” and “Ordination prior to marriage.” Further, out of 19 possible subjects, these were the only items rejected for potential discussion by a significant proportion of clergy. 42% of all clergy (41% in GOA, 43% in OCA) said that they don’t want discuss “ordination of women” and 32% of priests (36% in GOA, 27% in OCA) do not want discussion on “Ordination prior to marriage.”

The differences between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in their opinions on what is “very important” to be openly discussed in the Church are almost an ideal mirror of the distinctions between GOA and OCA priests. This is understandable, because of the much higher proportion of the converts among OCA priests (59%) than among GOA clergy (14%). Convert clergy are much more reluctant and the cradle Orthodox priests are more eager to discuss openly various priests’ personal problems. At the same time, in case of various general church matters and issues, there is no significant difference between proportions of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy who said that this or that subject is “very important to be discussed.” As noted, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy are also similar in their rejection to discuss two issues: “ordination of women” (39% of cradle Orthodox and 45% of convert clergy don’t want it to be discussed) and “ordination prior to marriage” (36% and 26%)

Question: Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?

% of clergy who said that the following subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT TO BE DISCUSSED”

	All clergy, %	Cradle Orthodox, %	Convert clergy, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	74	76	70
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	44	42	47
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	45	35
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	40	49	25
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	40	53	17
The process of selecting bishops	40	40	40
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	38	40	33
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	35	36	34
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	34	42	21
Problems of overwork	33	41	21
Sharing ministry with laity	31	30	32
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	30	32	27
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	29	33	23
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	26	26	26
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	25	29	18
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	21	27	11
Ordination prior to marriage	14	17	9
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	11	13	8
Ordination of women	7	6	8

The striking similarity in the opinions expressed by the OCA and convert clergy, on the one hand, and by the GOA and cradle Orthodox priests, on the other hand, raises a question of the relationship between “resilience of denominational heritage” and “importing another’s denominational culture.” In other words, are the opinions of convert clergy based on the denominational tradition of the OCA which is – presumably - different from the GOA? Or, vice versa, is the whole denominational culture of OCA heavily influenced by the high proportion of the convert clergy who may be “importing” attitudes from their former denominations? Further, is there any way to separate these two factors?

A partial answer on this question can be obtained by the comparison of the responses of the convert and cradle Orthodox clergy within OCA where these two categories form size-wise comparable groups.

% of OCA clergy who said that the following subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT TO BE DISCUSSED”

OCA clergy only:	All OCA clergy, %	OCA Cradle Orthodox,%	OCA Convert clergy, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	71	73	69
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	45	36	52
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	52	33
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	26	27	25
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	17	23	13
The process of selecting bishops	44	48	42
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	30	28	32
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	31	34	31
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	25	33	20
Problems of overwork	22	26	20
Sharing ministry with laity	26	18	32
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	28	27	28
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	14	14	15
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	27	27	27
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	21	23	20
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	14	14	14
Ordination prior to marriage	10	14	8
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	8	9	7
Ordination of women	6	2	8

The data above show that out of six issues which OCA clergy were more reluctant to discuss than GOA priests (“Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” “Problems of overwork,” and “The lack of clear professional standards for priests”), four were fairly similarly responded by the OCA

convert and the cradle Orthodox clergy: “Family problems of the Orthodox priests” (27% of cradle Orthodox and 25% of convert clergy said “very important to be discussed”), “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests” (28% and 32%), “Problems of overwork” (26% and 20%) and “The lack of clear professional standards for priests” (14% and 14%).

At the same time, OCA convert clergy were still much more reluctant than OCA cradle Orthodox priests to discuss openly two most challenging and “politically charged” subjects - “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests” (only 13% of convert clergy say that this is “very important to be discussed” in comparison with 23% among the cradle Orthodox priests) and “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests” (20% and 33%).

The data below show that the age of the clergy also has significant influence on what various generations of priests believe is “very important to be discussed.” Two patterns should be noted in particular.

First, in the case of almost all subjects connected with *general church policies and issues*, the older the priests are the stronger urgency they feel to bring these subjects to an open discussion. Indeed, the “seniors” have chosen more frequently than the “matures” and the “matures” – in turn - have chosen more frequently than the “youngsters” as “very important to be discussed” the following subjects: “Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church,” “Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church,” “The process of selecting bishops,” “The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes,” “Sharing ministry with laity,” “Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level,” “Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy,” “Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level,” “The lack of clear professional standards for priests,” “Ordination prior to marriage,” “Recruiting priests from abroad.”

Second, the picture is quite different in the case of various matters which are related to the *personal problems* of clergy. The subjects of “Clarification, standardization of salaries and benefits,” “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” and “Problems of overwork” have been chosen either equally frequently by the various generations of clergy or even by the greater proportion of “youngsters” than “seniors” as “very important to be discussed.”

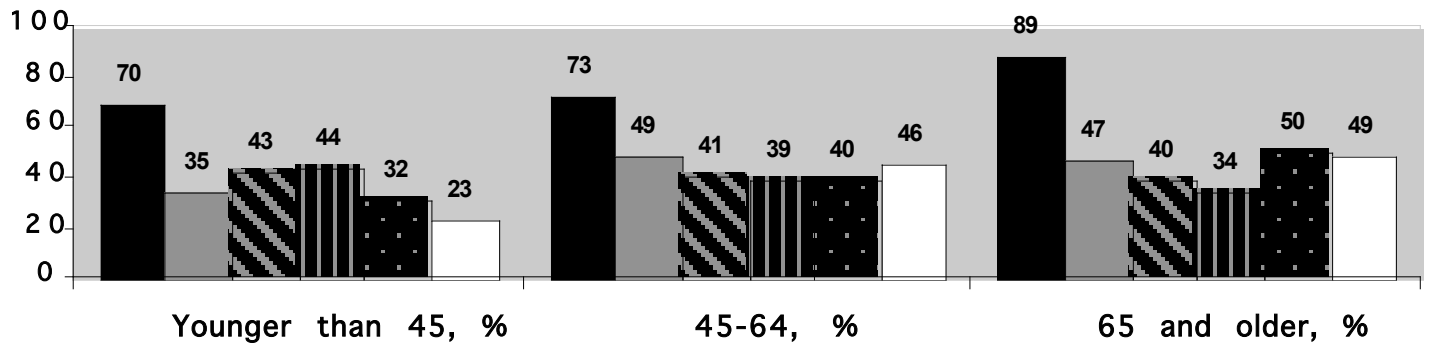
With some minor exceptions, these two patterns are present among various generations of clergy within both GOA and OCA (e.g. if the data for OCA and GOA clergy are analyzed separately). The message is clear: either younger clergy are naturally more “apolitical” than their fathers, or they are simply overwhelmed with daily family and work routines, but in any case the “youngsters” are less inclined (or less concerned) to raise their

voices and to express openly their opinions on various church policies and issues than the “matures” or, especially, than the “seniors.”

Six Most Important Subjects for an Open Discussion in the Church: Generation Differences

% of clergy in various age who said that these subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT” to be discussed

- Issue of youth and young adults leaving Orthodox Church
- Relationship between mainstream American culture and requirements of the (
- Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits
- Family problems of the Orthodox priests
- Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests
- Process of selecting bishops



Question: Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?

% of clergy in various age who said that the following subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT TO BE DISCUSSED”

Clergy in age:	All clergy, %	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	74	70	73	89
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	44	35	49	47
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	43	41	40
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	40	44	39	34
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	40	32	40	50
The process of selecting bishops	40	23	46	49
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	38	35	42	29
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	35	29	36	44
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	34	32	33	37
Problems of overwork	33	37	31	31
Sharing ministry with laity	31	26	32	40
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	30	17	33	41
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	29	26	29	37
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	26	19	28	34
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	25	11	28	43
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	21	17	21	29
Ordination prior to marriage	14	8	15	23
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	11	1	12	24
Ordination of women	7	11	5	6

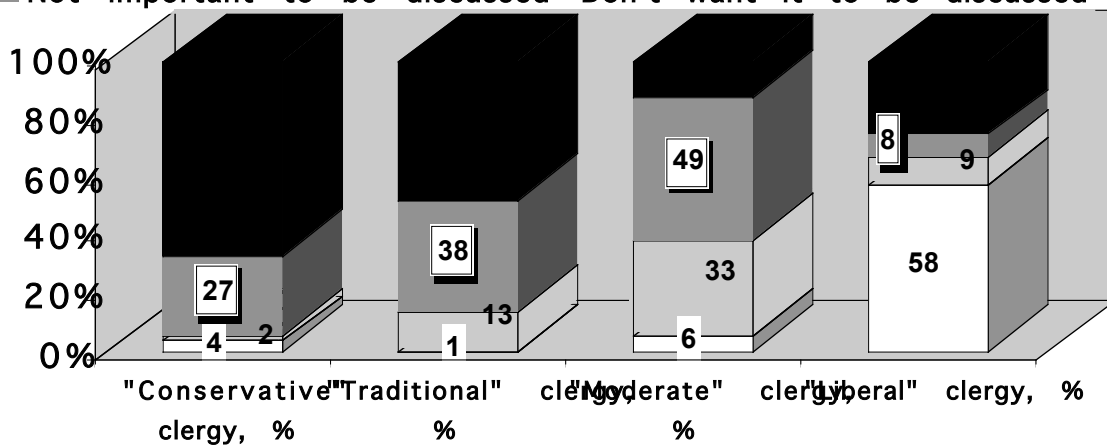
Similarly to the situation with the GOA and OCA clergy, and with the cradle Orthodox and convert priests, only two subjects have been rejected by significant proportion (more than 20%) of clergy in all generations as “don’t want it to be discussed.” These subjects are “ordination of women” (45% of “youngsters,” 36% of “matures” and 57% of “seniors” don’t want it to be discussed) and “ordination prior to marriage” (39%, 27% and 44%).

The analysis of the survey data revealed one more important finding. There exists a strong and *statistically significant relationship* between theological position of the clergy and their willingness to have an open discussion on such sensitive issues as “ordination of women,” “process of selecting bishops,” sharing ministry with laity,” “ordination prior to the marriage,” “family problems of Orthodox priests,” and “relationship between mainstream American culture and the traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church.” The clergy who identified themselves as “conservative” and “traditional” (see part 1 of this report) are much more likely to say that these subjects are either “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.” Conversely, the priests who defined themselves as “moderate” and “liberal” reported much more frequently that these matters are “very important to be discussed.”

Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “ordination of women”

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”

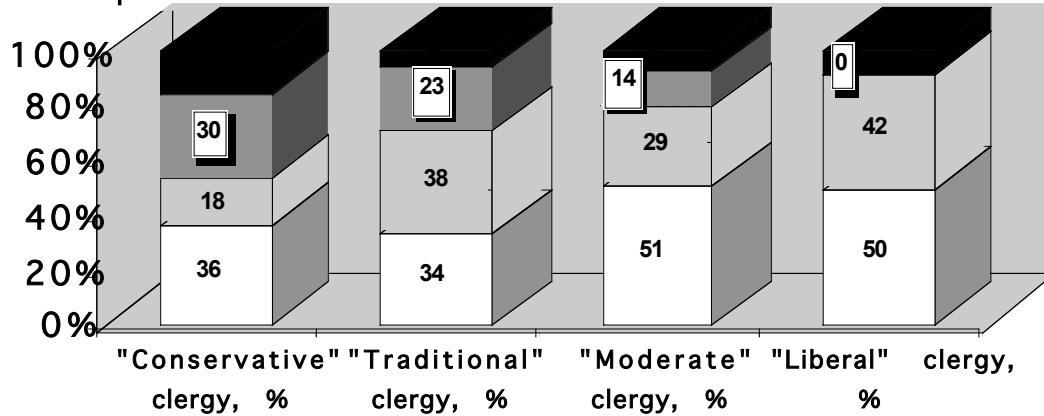
- Very important to be discussed
- ▒ Somewhat important to be discussed
- Not important to be discussed
- Don't want it to be discussed



Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly “process of selecting bishops”

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”

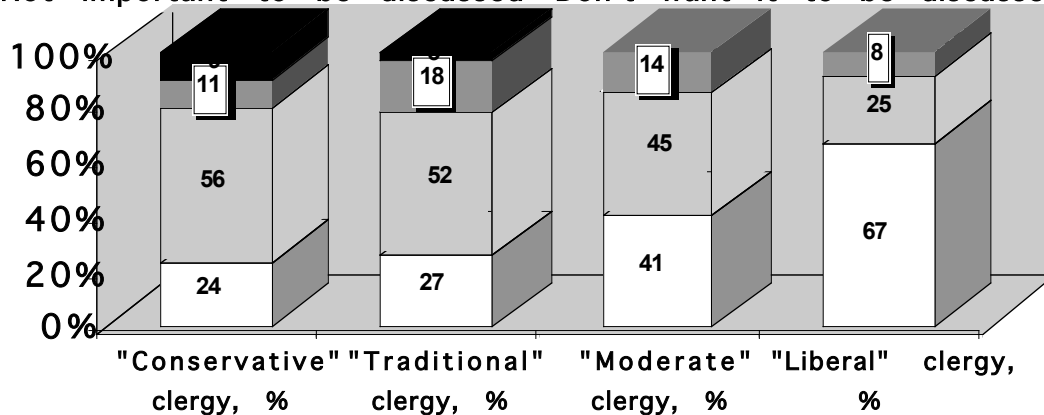
- Very important to be discussed
- ▒ Somewhat important to be discussed
- Not important to be discussed
- Don't want it to be discussed



Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “sharing ministry with laity”

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”

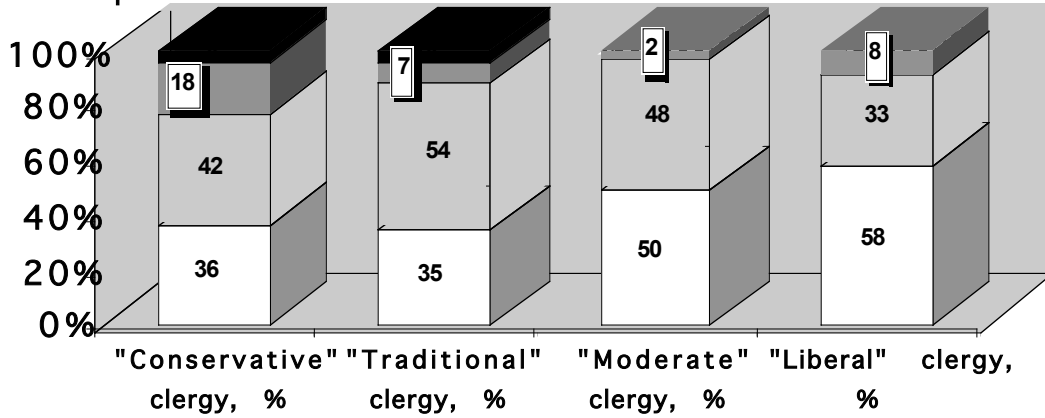
- Very important to be discussed
- ▒ Somewhat important to be discussed
- Not important to be discussed
- Don't want it to be discussed



**Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject
"family problems of the Orthodox priests"**

% of clergy who said either "very important to be discussed" or "somewhat important to be discussed" or "not important to be discussed" or "don't want it to be discussed."

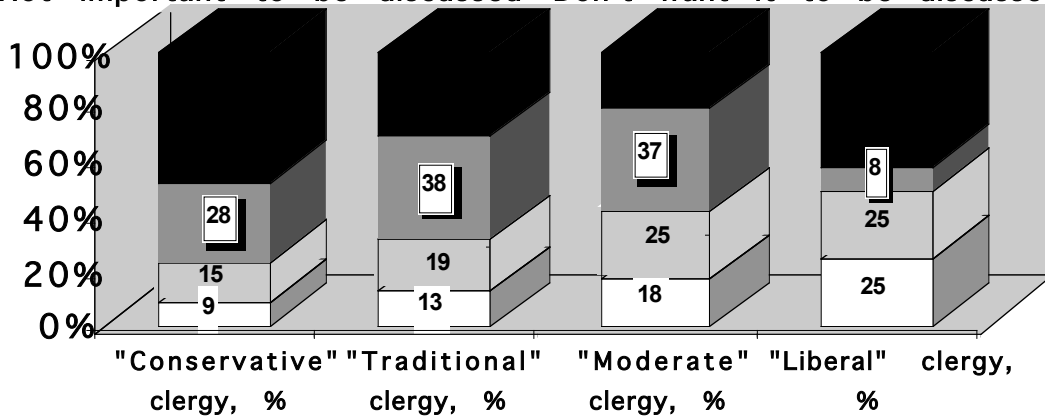
- Very important to be discussed
 Somewhat important to be discussed
 Not important to be discussed
 Don't want it to be discussed



**Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject
"ordination prior to marriage"**

% of clergy who said either "very important to be discussed" or "somewhat important to be discussed" or "not important to be discussed" or "don't want it to be discussed."

- Very important to be discussed
 Somewhat important to be discussed
 Not important to be discussed
 Don't want it to be discussed



Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “relationship between mainstream American culture and requirements and traditions of the Orthodox Church”

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”

- Very important to be discussed
- ▒ Somewhat important to be discussed
- Not important to be discussed
- Don't want it to be discussed

