

## Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America:

*A Survey of the Orthodox 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  
 (226 survey participants, 88% response rates)*

### Composition of Survey Participants and Response Rates

**GOA – Priests of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (Metropolises of San Francisco and of Chicago)**

**OCA – Priests of the Orthodox Church in America (Dioceses of the West and of the Midwest)**

	GOA	OCA	Total
Number of surveys sent to parish clergy	129	129	258
Number of surveys completed and returned	115	111	226
<b>% of surveys returned</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>88%</b>

### Priests' Personal Background and Characteristics

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
All clergy	30	54	16	51

How many years are you a priest? (% of priests)

	2 years or less, %	3-10, %	11-20, %	More than 20 years, %	Average time in priesthood, years
GOA	5	28	23	44	20
OCA	7	32	24	37	18
All clergy	6	30	23	41	19

Place of birth: Where you were born? (% of priests)

	North America: USA + Canada, %	Eastern Europe (Incl. former USSR), %	Western Europe, %	Greece and Middle East, %	Asia, %
GOA	75	4	0	20	1
OCA	90	6	4	0	0
All clergy	83	5	2	10	0

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
All clergy	74	26

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

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

You are: (% of priests)

	Married Priest, %	Celibate, %	Priest Monk, %	Widower, %
GOA	95	2	2	1
OCA	91	5	3	1
All clergy	93	4	2	1

Question for married priests only: **Is your wife...(% of priests' wives)**

	Working full time, %	Working part time, %	Stays at home, %
GOA	24	21	55
OCA	34	26	40
All clergy	29	23	48

**The size of the parishes:** the total number of persons who are “associated *in any way* with the life of the parish: counting both adults and children, both regular and occasional attendees” according to information provided by parish clergy.” (% of parishes)

	Less than 100, %	100-299, %	300-499, %	500-999, %	1000 and more, %	Average size of a parish, persons
GOA	5	24	12	19	40	1099
OCA	35	50	8	4	3	182
All parishes	20	37	10	12	21	656

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

	GOA, %	OCA, %	All clergy, %
<b>I am Conservative.</b> Orthodox Church <u>should avoid</u> changes in its life and theology	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>I am Traditional.</b> Any changes in the Orthodox Church <u>should be evolutionary</u>	<b>48</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>I am Moderate.</b> I am willing <u>to accept</u> new developments and changes in Church life depending on local circumstances	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>I am Liberal.</b> I am willing <u>to initiate and promote</u> new developments and changes in Church life.	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

## Sources of Joy and Satisfaction in Priestly Work

If you had your choice again, would you enter the priesthood?

	%, Definitely Yes	%, Probably Yes	%, Uncertain	%, Probably Not
All clergy	75	16	4	5
GOA	75	18	2	5
OCA	75	14	7	4

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?

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

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

	%, Will encourage	%, Will discourage	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	91	1	8
GOA	90	1	10
OCA	93	1	6

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

**% of clergy who said that the following has “LITTLE OR NO IMPORTANCE” for them as a source of satisfaction in their ministry**

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
“Business” aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects, etc.	35	28	45
Engaging in efforts at social reform	31	16	49
Respect that comes to the priestly office	21	14	28
Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call	14	6	22
Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community	12	7	16
Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church	5	3	6
Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives	5	5	4
Opportunity to exercise intellectual and creative abilities	3	3	4
Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel	2	5	1
Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel	1	0	2
Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments	0	1	0

**Sources of Support in Priestly Ministry**

**Question:** In your priestly ministry, *HOW MUCH SUPPORT* do you experience from each of the following sources?

**% of clergy who said that they experience “STRONG SUPPORT” from the following:**

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
For married priests only: from your wife	90	92	87
From your immediate family: children, siblings, parents)	59	68	51
From your parish council	59	50	65
From your parishioners	53	38	65
From your bishop	50	49	54
From fellow priests	36	29	42
From non-priest friends	31	33	28
From your extended family: in-laws, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.	29	39	20
From your local community in general	12	16	8
From the national headquarters of GOA and OCA	11	15	7
From the non-Orthodox Christian clergy in your local community	6	6	5

**% of clergy who said that they experience “LITTLE OR NO SUPPORT” from the following**

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
From the non-Orthodox Christian clergy in your local community	58	54	63
From the national headquarters of GOA and OCA	53	46	59
From your local community in general	50	45	54
From your extended family: in-laws, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.	34	20	47
From non-priest friends	18	16	20
From your bishop	16	14	18
From fellow priests	14	18	9
From your parish council	9	9	8
From your immediate family: children, siblings, parents)	6	2	9
From your parishioners	5	7	2
For married priests only: from your wife	1	1	1

## Challenges of Orthodox Priesthood in America

**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

## What Would Be Helpful in Parish Ministry

Question: Would any of the following BE HELPFUL in your priestly ministry?

% of clergy who said that the following would be *VERY HELPFUL* in their parish ministry.

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
Having more opportunity for personal spiritual development	<b>79</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>75</b>
Having more time available to spend with my family	<b>67</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>53</b>
Having greater feeling of fraternity among priests	<b>67</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>66</b>
Having "trained" deacons sharing pastoral duties	<b>62</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>56</b>
Having more opportunity to share concerns and to communicate regularly with priests in other parishes and dioceses	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>50</b>
Having opportunity for training in leadership skills: conflict management, communications, etc.	<b>46</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>44</b>
More opportunity to discuss theological and pastoral issues in a public forum	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>37</b>
Having opportunity to be free from involvement in business affairs in a parish, so that I can concentrate on liturgical life of a parish and spiritual needs of parishioners	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>
Having greater freedom to run the parish as I see best	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>
Having greater opportunity for participation in decision making in my diocese/metropolis	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17</b>
Having opportunity for training in organizational and financial skills: budgeting, investing, insurance, etc.	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>

## What Needs to Be Openly Discussed in the Church

**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 OPENLY DISCUSSED”*** in the Church

	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

**% of clergy who said that they “DON’T WANT” the following subjects “TO BE OPENLY DISCUSSED” in the Church**

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
Ordination of women	42	41	43
Ordination prior to marriage	32	36	27
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	11	13	9
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	8	4	12
The process of selecting bishops	8	9	7
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	6	9	3
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	5	4	6
Problems of overwork	4	4	3
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	4	4	4
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	4	6	1
Sharing ministry with laity	4	5	2
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	3	3	3
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	3	1	6
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	3	3	3
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	3	4	2
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	3	4	1
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	3	4	2
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	2	3	1
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	0	1	0

**Clergy Attitudes to Various Church Issues:**

**1. Notion of Priesthood and Status of Priests:**

**% of priests who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) or disagreed (“disagreed strongly” and “rather disagree”) with the following statements:**

I feel that I am most a priest when I am celebrating liturgy and sacraments

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	71	20	9
GOA	71	21	8
OCA	71	19	10

Ordination to the priesthood means an entirely new status which makes priest “different” from the laity within Church

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	61	30	9
GOA	68	24	8
OCA	53	37	10



The idea that the priest is a “man set apart” is a barrier to the full realization of true Christian community

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	21	60	19
GOA	25	52	23
OCA	17	68	15

Priests today need to be more involved with broad social and moral issues beyond their own parish’s level

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	59	21	20
GOA	64	17	19
OCA	54	25	21

It is urgent that priests achieve greater social status as competent professionals in the eyes of Orthodox community

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	45	27	28
GOA	55	22	23
OCA	36	31	32

More effective organizations of priests are needed to protect their interests and to serve the needs of priesthood

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	54	20	26
GOA	69	11	20
OCA	39	28	33

What is lacking today is that closeness among priests which used to be present

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	47	19	34
GOA	58	17	25
OCA	36	20	44

I see my wife as a partner sharing in my ministry in the parish

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	79	13	8
GOA	77	14	9
OCA	81	12	7

## 2. Democracy and Openness in the Church:

**% of priests who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) or disagreed (“disagreed strongly” and “rather disagree”) with the following statements:**

To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teachings and requirements of Orthodox Church.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	62	30	8
GOA	66	29	5
OCA	58	30	12

The Orthodox Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	56	20	24
GOA	60	12	28
OCA	51	27	22

I think it would be a good idea if the priests in a diocese were to choose their own bishop

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	46	34	20
GOA	38	38	24
OCA	54	30	16

I think it is a good idea if Orthodox parishes were to choose their own priest from among available ordained priests

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	19	61	20
GOA	12	67	21
OCA	27	54	19

I am willing to tolerate different viewpoints on Church life in my parish even if it spills over into conflict sometimes.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	41	43	16
GOA	37	49	13
OCA	45	36	19

In the case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	60	22	18
GOA	58	26	16
OCA	61	18	21

The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn't even think about leaving with the intent to "pick-and-choose" another parish.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	58	24	18
GOA	58	27	15
OCA	59	20	21

### 3. Changes and Innovations in the Church

**% of priests who agreed ("agreed strongly" and "rather agreed") or disagreed ("disagreed strongly" and "rather disagree") with the following statements:**

The Orthodox Church should allow its local parishes more freedom to explore new forms and patterns of liturgical life.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	15	77	8
GOA	14	78	8
OCA	15	75	10

All Orthodox Christians should have the individual freedom to interpret the Scriptures and Orthodox Tradition for themselves and be tolerant of differing interpretations.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	5	92	3
GOA	6	90	4
OCA	4	94	2

I think it would be a good idea if bishops could be selected from among married clergy, in addition to celibate clergy

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	46	39	15
GOA	57	29	14
OCA	34	49	17

I think it would be a good idea if priests could re-marry after becoming a widower or after divorces

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	26	53	21
GOA	35	39	26
OCA	16	68	15

I think it would be a good idea if marriage could happen after ordination

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	16	75	9
GOA	20	69	11
OCA	13	82	5

I think it would be a good idea if women were ordained to the diaconate

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	31	55	14
GOA	36	50	14
OCA	25	60	15

#### 4. Ecumenical Attitudes and Relations to the Outside Not-Orthodox Community

% of priests who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) or disagreed (“disagreed strongly” and “rather disagree”) with the following statements:

Only members of the Orthodox Church can be saved.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	9	76	15
GOA	8	74	18
OCA	10	78	12

I can perfectly well imagine myself learning about Christian faith from the people in other (not Orthodox) Christian churches.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	37	47	16
GOA	31	51	18
OCA	43	42	15

The only reason for Orthodox clergy to participate in inter-Christian meetings and discussions is to spread the message of Orthodox Christianity and to seek conversion of others into the Orthodox faith.

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	46	38	16
GOA	38	45	17
OCA	55	31	14

The Orthodox Church in the US should welcome Roman Catholic priests and Protestant ministers who want to become Orthodox priests

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	67	14	19
GOA priests	60	22	18
GOA cradle Orthodox priests	62	22	16
GOA convert priests	53	27	20
OCA priests	74	6	20
OCA cradle Orthodox priests	67	9	24
OCA convert priests	80	3	17

It is important that public schools at all levels keep religion and religious issues “out of classrooms.”

	%, Agree	%, Disagree	%, Neutral or unsure
All clergy	17	67	16
GOA	12	68	20
OCA	22	66	12