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## St. Brendan's Journey & Immigration

*Shall I abandon, O King of mysteries, the  
soft comforts of home?  
Shall I turn my back on my native land, and  
turn my face towards the sea?  
Shall I put myself wholly at Thy mercy,  
without silver, without a horse, without  
fame, without honor?  
O King of the Glorious Heaven, shall I go  
of my own choice upon the sea?  
O Christ, wilt Thou help me on the wild  
waves?*

- Prayer of St. Brendan the Voyager

It is often said that Canada is a nation of immigrants. More than perhaps any nation in the history of the world, the Canadian population is made up of those born outside her borders, those whose first loyalties were (and even still are) in another place, and whose homeland - the "Old Country" - is far, far away.

Canadian civil culture is the culture of the immigrant: the man or woman or family who comes to the "new" country to seek a better material life, to flee from the dangers of war, persecution, or famine, to build a happier future for their children. On a certain level, all Canadians share this dream and hope, and would not begrudge it to others who come to our shore with the same honest aspirations.

But is this a Christian hope? Unlike the American Puritans who crossed the ocean in search of religious freedom, most Orthodox Christians in the west did not come to North America to practice their faith, or to share it with others: they came for the land, for the jobs, for the prosperity and freedoms that would allow them to build a home, open a restaurant, and enjoy weekends off from work. The idea of building a common culture with every neighbour, knit together by a common faith and language, common values and common hopes, was left behind,



exchanged for the shared culture of the marketplace. We see it in our conversations today, where neighbours of different cultural backgrounds avoid talk of spiritual or political questions, preferring to discuss home improvements, shopping, and bargain hunting. From those who two generations ago professed Orthodox Christianity as the centre of life in the homeland, we have become something very, very different indeed.

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The sixth-century Orthodox monk, Saint Brendan, was perhaps the first Orthodox Christian to set foot on Canadian soil, and as such, is the first of the saints of North America. Saint Brendan is known as the



“Voyager”, since he undertook, with his monastic brethren, a unique pilgrimage across the ocean, one whose goal was truly a “better life” - not materially speaking, but a life fully trusting in Christ for his daily bread, for the path ahead of him, and for his safety and his very life.

Saint Brendan’s company continued the practice of Orthodox Christian Celts of their time, called *peregrinatio* - a kind of pilgrimage, with the destination left entirely up to Providence. As an act of faith, much like the ascetics of the Egyptian desert, these monks left the comforts of home, and charted a small boat laden with limited rations, their sail set for no direction in particular. They trusted - indeed, they trusted completely - in the destination God chose for them, whether it was a harrowing journey, some distant shore, or death at sea.

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*For many - indeed, for most - the goals of a better house, bigger property, a successful business, and more material wealth have been successfully passed from one generation to the next, virtually uninterrupted by the practice of the Orthodox Faith.*

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This unique kind of self-imposed martyrdom, unique to the Orthodox Celts but one in spirit with the deserts of Egypt, the forests of Russia, and the mountains of Greece and Serbia, was a call suited to only a few souls out of thousands. Yet the same spirit of complete reliance on God, and the determination to place Christ at the centre of every decision, is not unique to the Orthodox Celts, or to monastics: it is central to the life of every authentically Orthodox Christian.

It is common to hear members of Orthodox parishes of the immigration express their sadness that their children and grandchildren have lost their culture, and their Faith. In fact, this is not entirely true. For many - indeed, for most - the goals of a

better house, bigger property, a successful business, and more material wealth have been successfully passed from one generation to the next, virtually uninterrupted by the practice of the Orthodox Faith. The same purpose that was behind much of the immigration of our ancestors, wherever they came from, and whenever they came, has been with a few exceptions, successfully handed on to each generation.

The real question - the only real question for Orthodox Christians - is whether the central goal in crossing the great oceans to come to Canada was an Orthodox Christian goal at all. For Saint Brendan and his company, the first Orthodox Christians in Canada, the purpose of the trip was clear. For us, immigrants, and the children of immigrants, we must ask only if we are the inheritors of the legacy of the saints who made the dangerous journey to this land, or whether we are the inheritors of the spirit of the shopping malls, which steal away so much of our heritage, our time, our children, and our hopes.

Saint Brendan, pray for us! 

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*For a more thorough investigation of the pilgrimage of Saint Brendan, download the audio lecture by Hieromonk Ambrose (Father Aleksey Young) entitled The Uniqueness of Celtic Monasticism, available at [www.asna.ca](http://www.asna.ca).*

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## Working for the Weekend

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” - Exodus 20:8*

With thanks to our Judeo-Christian roots, Canadians enjoy a two-day weekend. The observance of Saturday - the seventh day, on which God rested after the creation of the world - dates back to the Lord’s first covenant with the Jews. With the Resurrection of Christ on what the Church Fathers call the “eighth day” - Sunday, the day that exists outside time, in the eternal joys of Heaven - the new day of Christian worship was established.

Each Sunday represents a celebration of the Resurrection of Christ, a miniature Paschal celebration, with Saturday evening as the time of preparation for it. For the eternal salvation of our souls, and the salvation of the world, one would think that this would be more than enough.

Alas, the fallen human heart yearns for more, and more. With the advent of Sunday shopping in the 1980s, the three-day weekend has been perfected in Canada. For Canadians, the three day weekend is deeply rooted in the Canadian psyche, much more than British bank holidays (which can be any day of the week), or American civil holidays (which can fall any time, and which do not necessarily provide a day off work). Canadian three-day weekends have become thoroughly institutionalized, and we enjoy a wide variety of them - Good Friday, Easter Monday, Canada Day, Victoria Day, Labour Day, Civic Holiday - whether we recognize their meaning or not.

These secular feast days even establish the passing of the seasons on the civil calendar, in a near religious fashion. For example, ask yourself, if the date is June 28th, has summer arrived? Even if it is blistering hot outside, most Canadians

would say no - summer arrives July 1st, on Canada Day. (Presumably, Canadians get three more days of summer than Americans, whose summer does not begin until July 4th). Similarly, the day before Labour Day is still summer; the day after Labour Day is most assuredly fall. If one does not believe this system of dating is taken with a religious level of seriousness, ask someone who works in tourism or the cottage rental market, or - better still - a public school teacher.

This delineation of the civil calendar in Canada - from three day weekends to the establishment of a two-month summer vacation - reflects the false god of the Canadian dream: the hunger for recreation. It is a false god joined inextricably to the false god of materialism

The quest for a recreational life - working, in order that we may enjoy the weekend (or better still, the three or four-day Long Weekend), has led us to the point where stores are opened in most Canadian cities seven days a week, and where many folks - Orthodox included - work at least six days.

What is the fruit of this secular calendar? Primarily, it is a nation of souls who are tired, tired of the rat race of the work week, unsatisfied with the small pleasures awarded them on holidays, and physically tired from the never-ending quest for technological and recreational satisfaction, whether in their boats or on the golf course, at the cottage, or before their computer or television screen. It is all just empty - hopelessly empty.

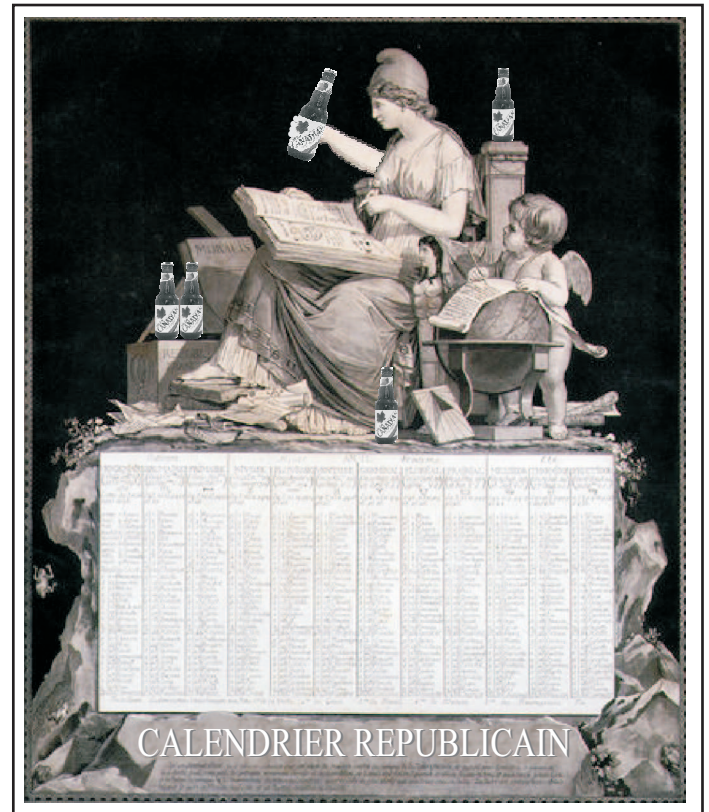
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Of course, this should not surprise us. We are told in the scriptures that the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27); we have days set aside for rest and worship because God sanctifies time. The seasons of the year and the Feasts of the Church reflect this: if we do not have them, as human beings created in the Image of God, we try hopelessly to create them, in the form of secular holidays. We reconstruct the calendar in our own clever image, just as the French Revolutionaries tried to remake the cycle of the months and weeks - a change which left the French revolutionaries exhausted (they tried a ten-day week), and soon brought pressure for a return to the Christian calendar. Secular holidays in the name of recreation or for the veiled excuse simply to enjoy recreation for its own sake (such as the now-emptied tradition of "May two-four", presumably a day to honour the matriarch of European Royalty and Orthodox sovereigns by consuming vast amounts of beer, purchased in cases of - you guessed it - twenty four bottles) leave us empty, looking for something more. And so begins the quest for the next long weekend.

When someone takes time away to go to the cottage for a "holiday", we often forget that the word itself means "holy day"; the fact that we forget suggests just how much we have



accepted the secular substitutes for the Feasts of the Church. Trips to the cottage provide a secular parallel for pilgrimage to monasteries, with the same ostensible goals (physical and spiritual refreshment, etc.), but with an important difference: the latter is all about Christ, while the former is all about *me*. So what is the poor Orthodox Christian to do, other than to sit Grinch-like in his cave, avoiding all the joys of the world? Of course, this is the picture the secularist would paint, to somehow bring meaning to the secular approach to time. The truth is, as anyone who has tasted the joy of the Paschal celebration knows, the true and lasting joys of our lives come not from passing recreation (which is harmless, and often even helpful, albeit temporary), but from plugging into eternity. This is the point of the Feasts: to share in the joy of the saints, who dwell with Christ. This is also the joy of the Fasts: to live like the angels, not like carnal man, and to prepare ourselves in some small way to taste the Kingdom. Each week provides us with a little of each of these: a taste of Great Lent and Holy Week each Wednesday and Friday, and a taste of Pascha, the Risen Christ, and Holy Communion every Sunday.

I remember a conversation I had years ago with a woman, who bragged about her son's business success, who had to be on call at all times, and work essentially seven days a week. She could not understand why Orthodox Christians would stop working on Saturday night to prepare for Sunday with Vespers, and then swear off all work throughout the Lord's Day. She put it down to some sort of cultural psychosis on our part. When I asked her if her son was happy, she looked at me with absolute confusion, and replied, "He's rich!". "I know he's rich," I replied, "But is he happy?". There was no answer. 🍂

## Daughters, Mighty in Christ: Three Western Orthodox Princesses

*"Be of good cheer, daughter: your faith has made you well,"*

- Matthew 9:22

A famous saint in the family? How about a holy and righteous Orthodox sovereign as a relative? For those of northern European or Celtic ancestry, the possibility does not require a stretch of the imagination, or the fabrication of myths. The family trees of three daughters of the Orthodox west are as clear as their images on church icons.



Baptism of Saint Helga (Olga)

Earliest Church Tradition tells us of the early life of Saint Helen, mother of saint Constantine the Great, first Emperor of Christian Rome. Saint Helen was a Celt, born at Colchester, who traveled to Byzantium to join the court of the emperor whom she would marry. Her later travels to the Holy Land, and her finding the relics of the True Cross are well known. What is less known is the extent to which she had to fight for the recognition of her son as heir to the Empire, and her baptism in her Celtic homeland which fed her son Constantine on the milk of Christ from his earliest years - a faith which blossomed in his adulthood to encompass his entire empire.

It was the Viking lands of Norway that produced a second Orthodox sovereign, in the holy personage of Saint Helga, who came to be known as Olga among the Slavic people with whom she made her home. Grandmother of the Orthodox prince, Saint Vladimir, her efforts to Christianize Vladimir's father were unsuccessful, yet her holy prayers proved effective. It was years later that the barbarous pagan Vladimir sought a religion to unite the people of Rus (a name drawn from a Viking tribe), and found it through his emissaries to Constantinople, in the Orthodox Christianity of his grandmother, Saint Helga (Olga).

Nearly one thousand years later, a prince of the same Russian land married the German Lutheran princess who would come to be known as Saint Elizabeth Romanov. A convert to the Orthodox Church (a rare practice for nobility, who were never compelled to convert in order to marry), Saint Elizabeth endured the death of her husband, and service as a nurse on the front lines of the Orthodox Empire during war time. After taking monastic vows, the nun Elizabeth was captured by the invading communists, who eventually martyred the saint by throwing her down a well. Her incorrupt and miracle-working relics were later enshrined in the Russian Church in the Holy City of Jerusalem, not far from the place where her sister in Christ, Saint Helen, once found the True Cross.

Faithful Orthodox - especially Canadian young women with roots in Celtic, Scandinavian, and German lands - can look to these holy women as intercessors, as princesses in the true and Eternal Kingdom, who share the blood of all Orthodox Christians, through Holy Communion.



## Real Estate Boom

*"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens,"* - 2 Corinthians 5:1

Speaking demographically, the best real estate opportunities in the country may soon be found among urban Greek and Ukrainian Orthodox Parishes.

According to Canadian census data, these communities face demographic disappearance: Ukrainians as a result of low birth rate and high intermarriage rates, and Greek as a combined result of exogamy (marriage to those outside the Church and culture) and a reverse immigration that has seen many expatriots returning to the sun and clear blue waters of Greece. If such trends continue, as they likely will, these Orthodox communities will likely face the same surplus of church buildings now facing Anglicans and others across Canada.

Of course, nothing is inevitable. The key to the resuscitation of such parishes is within reach - but not through better dance classes and heritage language programs which inoculate the rapidly Canadianized grandchildren against anything that seems to come from the "Old World" - including the Orthodox Faith.

*Parishes which ignore opportunities to bring new life to their parish, and to share the Gospel with Canadians in general, can only expect dwindling spiritual life in the parish, faithful people seeking spiritual food elsewhere, and eventual closure.*

The future life of these church buildings - and indeed, the very real hope for the missionary work of the Church in Canada - can be found elsewhere:

- **Put underused parish buildings to use as missions to non-Orthodox Canadians**, concentrating on sharing the Orthodox faith with the neighbours, setting aside any idea of such missions as guardians of ethnic heritage, such as heritage language classes, dances, or festivals. In many inner city areas, this would mean running a soup kitchen or kids program, a shelter for street people, etc. Would wealthy, comfortably middle class Orthodox jurisdictions ever do this?

- **Offer pan-Orthodox youth programs**, both in the summer, and throughout the year, for children, as well as teen groups. These would make no money for the parish; they may not bring in a single person, or even involve anyone (or any children) from the sponsoring parish. They would simply provide a common Orthodox life and teaching, not to mention friendship and relationship-building times, including laying foundations




for authentic Orthodox marriages in the years ahead.

- **Arrange social events for unmarried young people** in their early twenties, including young people from all local parishes. Centre these events on the spiritual instruction of the Church, followed by lots of food, and a fun social day or evening in a setting which reflects the Faith (i.e. not a Salsa Night).

- **Provide marriage preparation classes** to every couple scheduled to be married in an Orthodox church. Do this together with priests and parishes from across each community, sharing the work. Continue to provide ongoing groups for the spiritual instruction and counseling of newly married couples, and for the support of new mothers.

- **Tear out the bars in the basements of churches**, and shuffle out gambling nights and gala fundraisers, whose basis contradicts the Orthodox life. This is the only way to accommodate programs for building the Orthodox faith in young people, young couples, and people in need - not to mention strengthening adults for the spiritual battle at the heart of the Christian life.

One might ask: will communities continue a numeric death spiral, stubbornly oblivious to the great spiritual opportunities that sit on their doorstep? This remains to be seen. Of course, those parishes which prefer to ignore these opportunities to bring new life to their parish, and to share the Gospel with Canadians in general, can only expect current realities to unfold to their logical conclusion: dwindling spiritual life in the parish, faithful people seeking spiritual food elsewhere, and eventual closure.

If the better options are out of the question, for reasons of pride or stubbornness, perhaps the real estate agent should be called right away. 

## Submit to Those in Authority

*“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors,”*

- 1 Peter 2:13

For great missionary saints like Saints Cyril and Methodius, Patrick, and others, one of the great advantages of ancient

Societies - even pagan ones - was the presence of order and authority. Common people looked to their leaders for both political and spiritual guidance: evil or weak leadership saw a general disintegration of society, whereas the leadership of the righteous was a great blessing, even when it was short lived. Where the leaders led, the people followed, for better or for worse.



Few would argue that North American life provides such leadership for Christian living. Knit together by the common goal of prosperity, leadership is now often measured by the ability of the leader to bring the greatest material benefit. As a result, North American leaders are reduced to fellow-strugglers in the battle for the almighty dollar, and authority of any other kind - moral, spiritual, political, legal, or family - is almost forgotten.

*Canadians are perhaps more seriously afflicted with the disease of anti-authoritarianism than are Americans. While Americans will often fight over who will provide political or spiritual leadership in their nation, Canadians usually reject the very idea of leadership and authority.*

Surprisingly, Canadians are perhaps more seriously afflicted with the disease of anti-authoritarianism than are Americans. While Americans will often fight over who will provide political or spiritual leadership in their nation, Canadians usually reject the very idea of leadership and authority, preferring to be left alone to make their personal choices in private. The very fabric of Canadian civil culture rejects common order and common values, and where relativism reigns supreme, one cannot hope to benefit from legitimate authority, or to submit to it.

The disappearance of titles from Canadian society is a case in point. In our day, everyone - even perfect strangers - enjoys rights of familiarity; everyone is a “pal”, allowed to move to the most common form of address upon first meeting. Canadians hate titles, so everyone is a “buddy”: our family physician is “Rick” (or Richard, if one wants to be formal about it), the local priest is no longer Father Athanasios, but Father Tom, or simply “Tom”. After all, we’re all friends here, right? Even young children often refer to adults by their first name - apparently as equals.

Where our Yankee cousins speak of “Mister President”, Canadian political leaders are our pals: Paul, Stephen, and Stephane - just like old friends you might have over to watch the ball game. God forbid we should submit to the political authority of these people: if we don’t like them, we can always get rid of them. *Vive la Revolution!*

Sadly, the same flavour of radical egalitarianism infects the life of the Orthodox Church. The strange religious history of Canada which saw the faithful creating parishes, then sending overseas for priests, has bequeathed to Orthodox Canadians a parish structure which is fundamentally Protestant. Parishes are often (indeed, usually) constituted in such a way that parish councils can discipline priests, remove priests, or at least deprive them of basic benefits (we know of one case where a jaded council refused to pay any dental costs for the priest and his family).

At the root of such decisions is a spirit very foreign to the Orthodox faith, a Protestant spirit, where every man is an island, competing for power and authority in all matters, spiritual and temporal. It is a spirit that caters to ever-changing tastes, rather than submitting to eternal Truth. Born out of the dream of immigrants seeking freedoms, Orthodox life in North America, and particularly in Canada, is today afflicted with the very worst

aspects of spiritual order, inherited from the “free world”: a freedom guided totally by the never-satisfied passions of the human heart.

The Lord warns us to call no man father or teacher, a warning the Church Fathers understood as Christ’s injunction against following gurus. Of course, even the Protestants who rebelliously refuse to use the title “Father” understand this, every time they send a Father’s Day card, or attend a Parent-Teacher interview at the local school. Modern readers have to look not further than Saint Paul or Saint Ignatius to see the essential role of spiritual fathers and their spiritual children, teachers of the Gospel, and *episcopoi* (overseers, or bishops) to the unity and integrity of the Church, authority without which we get... Canada.

The spirit of rebellion against authority has taken its toll on our neighbours to the south, where entire religions or “ministries” are built around one person or one family, the exact thing against which the Lord warned. The harmonious witness of the voice of the Church Fathers is drowned in a flood of emotionalism and celebrity worship, without any ties of real authority to compel submission in personal moral or spiritual life. As C. S. Lewis put it so well, most people don’t really want a Father in Heaven - we want a Grandfather in Heaven, one who is most concerned that the young people are having a good time.

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*It is only in our own, individual heart that such a revolution of humility can begin.*

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Ironically, Canadians who have lost the moorings of the authority of the Church Fathers are not having a good time. Isolated in private worlds of spiritual loneliness, without authority or guidance, we are so often unable to submit to any authority at all, in our work, in our marriages and family life, and - most particularly - in our spiritual life.

With the threads of political authority worn through, the Church is the last bastion of authentic authority. It is the authority of the united voice of the holy and saintly Christian Fathers of the last twenty centuries, without whom we float alone on the troubled seas of modern life, fending for ourselves as we scrape to understand the scriptures, and try helplessly to recover some shred of discipline in the unstable corners of our lives.

Canadians, more than even our American cousins, are fundamentally alone, suffering the effects of decades of rebellion against the only True Authority, Christ and His Church. We cannot hope to restore unity of mind or heart in our nation, until every heart bends its will to that Authority, over and over again.

And it is only in our own, individual heart that such a revolution of humility can begin.



## ERRATA

In the previous issue, the poetry contribution should have been credited to Sara Hillis.



## Scotland the Brave

*Hark when the night is falling, hear, hear the pipes are calling,  
Loudly and proudly calling, down through the glen.  
There where the hills are sleeping, now feel the blood a-leaping,  
High as the spirits of the old Highland men.*

*Towering in gallant fame, Scotland my mountain hame,  
High may your proud standards gloriously wave,  
Land of my high endeavour, land of the shining river,  
Land of my heart for ever, Scotland the brave!*

- Traditional Folk Song

The Cross of Saint Andrew - the blue and white emblem of Scotland’s patron saint - is believed to be the oldest continuously used flag in the world. Simple in its design, it has withstood centuries of political and religious turmoil, and remained the standard for Christian Scots, as well as those who have forgotten the reason their banner bears the Cross. (For the record, Saint Andrew was martyred on an X-shaped cross). Like the people for whom it flies, Saint Andrew’s Cross has proven its resilience and strength.

The endurance of Saint Andrew’s Cross is seen in the presence it still has in Scotland’s largest emigree nation - Canada. In a country whose first Prime Minister was a MacDonald, whose first woman Prime Minister was a Campbell, and which boasted no fewer than nine Prime Ministers of Scottish ancestry (only five Prime Ministers were French), it is not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that Scotland still has at least a pint or two of its own running through the bloodstream of Canadian culture. Official ceremonies, academic awards, university names and traditions, along with the pipers who lead their processions - all these have been inherited from the practices of the Celts of Scotland, through their Canadian children.

The Cross of Saint Andrew can be found on five Canadian provincial flags, either within the Union Jack, or in the mirrored

image of the flag of Canada's New Scotland, Nova Scotia. Yet those who trace their roots from that chilly isle to this great land do not often read back far enough to discover the essence of Scotland's Celtic roots, roots that reflected the faith of Saint Andrew for nearly one thousand years in a Celtic Church that was vibrant, independent, and fully Orthodox.

For those who entertain new-agey illusions about the Celtic Church, there is bad news: Celtic Christian worship was in most ways very similar to the life of Orthodox parishes today. What is very clear, Celtic Christians had far less in common with the free-wheeling nature worship one might find in certain Protestant or Roman Catholic circles than it did with the spiritual life of Greek monasteries in Byzantium. This shouldn't surprise us: the Greeks and the Celts had the same faith and liturgical life, while the Christian Celts and the modern western confessions, distorted by the Great Schism and the Protestant Reformation, do not.



*Orthodox Celts fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, rejected the claims to universal authority that Popes of Rome, had married priests, and resisted innovative changes to Church practices. They observed a highly ascetical life, shaped by monasteries, where the Hours were said daily. The Celts were in communion with Rome, Gaul, and Africa - part of the universal witness to the One Faith*

In his classic book, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, F.E. Warren thoroughly outlines this common spiritual inheritance. Concrete examples are numerous. Celtic Christians fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, the universal observance of the Church in the first millennium. They rejected the claims to universal authority that Popes of Rome often claimed over Church decisions in custom, belief, and practice, and resisted innovative changes to early Church practices, including the Church calendar. The Celts observed a highly ascetical life, strongly shaped by the widespread presence of monasteries, where monks and non-monastics alike would say the services of the Hours on a daily basis.

The presence of married priests among the Celts did not arise out of a special dispensation from Rome, but rather, from the Celtic Church's *independence from Rome*. Around 400 A.D., the Celtic Church was large enough to attract the attention of Saint Jerome, who noted that the Celts were in communion with Rome, Gaul, and Africa - part of the universal witness to the One Faith. At the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Saint Wilfred affirmed the Orthodoxy of the Celts, despite the concerns of their critics that some local Celtic customs were at variance with Rome. Saint Columbanus, the great champion of the independence of the Celtic Church, repeatedly upbraids the Roman Church for its claims to universal authority - the timeless Orthodox defense against the extension of papal powers. "Let no

bishop leave their diocese," he thunders, "lest he interfere with the affairs of the Church."

The artistic life of the Celtic Church shows a warm interplay between the images of the universal Orthodox witness, and local Celtic traditions. Architectural decoration, ribbons in stone carvings, and giant initial letters in manuscripts reflect a North African influence, a fact not lost on most modern authorities on the Celts. The use of icons, and iconostases, were seen in various Celtic churches, including the burial place of Saint Brigid, the great Celtic saint. Celtic depictions of Christ as a child, wrapped in mummy-like swaddling bands, reflect Egyptian and Byzantine iconography. Like Orthodox bishops today, Celtic bishops used staves bearing the heads of snakes, like Moses in the desert. We can only imagine how much more we would know if the persecutions of Diocletian (305-313AD) had not destroyed many churches in the Celtic diaspora on the European continent (the earliest Celtic Church dated from around 200 A.D).

Liturgically, the Celtic Liturgy will seem familiar to Orthodox Christians, which is not a surprise in light of the fact that it represents one of the oldest Orthodox liturgies. The celebrant faced the altar, behind an icon screen, offering up the sacrifice of the Holy Mysteries of Communion with both elements together in the chalice. Communion was almost certainly delivered on a spoon; many such spoons have been found. A little water was added to the chalice before Communion, just as it is in the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. There was even use of a small Eucharistic knife or spear, used for dividing Communion before it was placed in the chalice.

The souls of the departed were uniformly commemorated at the Liturgy, with long lists of saints, both local and universal, named at the services (there is some suggestion that the Celts did not ask for specific prayers for the saints; their general intercessions were assumed). The episcopal blessing, at Liturgy and perhaps other times, was bestowed in the manner of the Greek Church, with the fingers of the celebrant in the form of the Christogram (IC XC).

A variety of other liturgical parallels exist. Women were always veiled in the Celtic Church for the reception of Holy Communion. It is known that the Celts served at baptism an unction with blessed oil (as well as chrismation), and performed a ritual washing afterwards, much like the Slavic churches do to this day (the Greek custom of covering a newly baptized child

with olive oil is an expansion on this practice, which works very well in Mediterranean climates, but which finds its limits in chilly northern climes). There is some suggestion that the Celts celebrated the Liturgy without wearing shoes, in the manner of the Copts of Egypt (just like the North American saint of our time, Saint John Maximovich). Noting the Celtic monastic connection with the Copts, this would come as no surprise.

It should not surprise us to find these similarities, since in comparing the Celtic Church to the Church in Byzantium, or to Orthodox Christianity today, we are in fact comparing the Church to itself. The Orthodox Christianity of the Apostles, of the Ecumenical Councils, of the Byzantines, the Slavs, the Arabs, and the Celts - it is one faith, not many. The Celtic Church was astonishingly similar to Orthodox life today - because *it was Orthodox*.

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*The inheritance of Saint Andrew is not to be found inside Presbyterian churches, at Burns dinners or chip shops, or the Lodge of the Scottish Rite. The inheritance of the Celts is an Orthodox Christian one; it always has been.*


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The inheritance of Saint Andrew, whose proud banner waves in front of many a Presbyterian church in Canada, is not to be found inside these churches. Nor is the bold heart of the Celtic Christians of Scotland to be found at Burns dinners or chip shops or the Lodge of the Scottish Rite. The banner of the Celts is an Orthodox Christian one; it always has been. And it is a banner that flies proudly in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of Canadians, who still await the rediscovery of their own Orthodox Celtic roots, which cannot be found in the western confessions. These confessions of the last thousand years would have been virtually unrecognizable to the Celts of a millennium ago - the same Celtic Christians who would feel right at home in any Orthodox church in North America today.

Canada's first Scottish leader, Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, lies buried in the cemetery of a parish church in Kingston, Ontario, the same building that is home to the Orthodox Community of Saint Gregory of Nyssa. Perhaps it is in such a representation that we can rediscover the heritage of the founders of our own nation, its own enduring and brave Orthodox roots, put down in Celtic lands by the same Orthodox monastic saints who once made pilgrimage across the ocean to our own land. For it is only these roots that will keep Saint Andrew's banner long and gloriously waving - not just in our hearts, but in our lives.

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**Background note:** *The St. Andrew's cross is a distinctive shape because the Apostle Andrew, who would later become the patron saint of Scotland, asked that he not be crucified on a cross of the same shape as that on which Jesus Christ was executed. (See the Great Synaxarion of the Orthodox Church, November 30th) The legend of the birth of the Scottish flag takes place circa AD 832 near Athelstaneford in East Lothian. Angus mac Fergus, King of the Picts, and Eochaidh of Dalriada faced off against the army of Athelstane, King of Northumbria, comprising Angles*

*and Saxons. On the eve of the battle, it is said that the Scots saw the clouds in the evening sky arranged in a formation exactly like that of St. Andrew's cross. The Scots saw this as a harbinger of their victory. When they were victorious the following day, they adopted a white St. Andrew's cross on a field of azure blue as their national standard.* 

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## Ever a Minority?

*"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing,"*

- Genesis 12:2

Demographic statistics show Orthodox make up about 2% of the population of Canada and the United States, virtually the same as 100 years ago. Although the number of Orthodox has increased in line with population growth, the proportion remains the same because Orthodoxy in Canada and the U.S. is essentially an import industry: Orthodox here don't have enough babies to sustain numbers, much less to see the faith grow. There is definitely no "free trade" as far as faith goes: Canadian Orthodox are simply not in the business of exporting their faith.

For Orthodox families, this presents a serious question. We must reevaluate the "Canadian dream", the dream that drew (and draws) so many immigrants to Canada: the dream of financial freedom and security.

This is the dream that makes us slaves to financial upward mobility, and saves us from the plague of having more than two children in a household. It is the same dream that makes us a blip on the radar screen of Canadian life.

In and of itself, life as a minority is not a sin for Orthodox people. The reality behind the current conditions speaks volumes about the extent to which Canadian Orthodox carry the same goals, attitudes, and worldview as the rest of the largely secularized country. This is a spiritual problem.

Since Confederation, Canada has seen a consistent population pattern: Roman Catholics make up the largest group (40-50%), followed by a combined group of various Protestants in second spot (slightly fewer than the Roman Catholic numbers, when counted all together), with Orthodox Christians and Jewish Canadians tied for third at about two percent each.

The last Canadian census projected a radical change in this pattern: Islam is now the third largest religion in Canada, and the fastest growing, by virtue of both immigration and birthrate. It is rapidly overtaking several previously major Protestant groups (more youth under thirty describe themselves as Muslim than either United or Anglican), and within a decade, it will be the second largest group (i.e. larger than any single Protestant group) if current trends continue. Most of the Roman Catholic population will continue to be made up mostly of non-practicing francophones and a smaller number of anglophones if current trends continue.

This begs the question: Will Orthodox Christians in Canada forever be a minority?

We will if we do not conquer the quest for money that keeps family sizes way down.


We will if we do not conquer individualism, support each



other's struggles, businesses, and spiritual efforts, including church projects, etc., with our time and money. We will if we do not recapture the Orthodox Christian practice of tithing (real tithing, of 10% of our income), which other groups practice, if imperfectly.

We will if we do not reject secular feminism, which distorts the identity of the person, both male and female.

And we certainly will if we do not do everything it takes to keep Orthodox youth in the Orthodox faith, by teaching them, creating opportunities for them to make Orthodox friends, and to marry Orthodox Christians. Coptic Christians take this very seriously; most Orthodox across Canada do not (if one begs to differ on this, read the marriage roll at any local parish and compare the number of interfaith wedding to weddings of two Orthodox faithful).

Being a minority is no sin; the Orthodox faith has survived in much worse circumstances, through God's great grace and the faithful lives of pious people. The situation in most Canadian parishes does not bear these hallmarks, however - at least not yet. And here is the place we can find hope: that as Canadian Orthodox recapture authentic Orthodox spiritual life, we will become a spiritual blessing to this nation, even as a tiny minority... or perhaps even the source of hope for the majority of Canadians. 

## Whose Life Is It Anyway?: *Why We Pray The Way We Pray*

Recently, I had a conversation with a Jewish friend of mine in which we found ourselves discussing the purpose and fruits of prayer. Being myself a very new Orthodox Christian, I am having to learn a whole new concept of prayer which does not conform to the loosely-protestant idea of prayer with which I grew up. In a nutshell, this approach was very spontaneous, and involved asking for help from God to obtain whatever we felt we needed at the time, thanking Him for giving us the current day, and praying for His blessings upon others. The idea of saying set prayers or of reading from a book always seemed strange to me, because it felt like I was using others' words which were not my own. Interestingly, it was my Jewish friend who threw a new light on what prayer is, and while she spoke about it as applying to her own faith and its set prayers, I believe that this definition finds its fulfilment in the Orthodox prayer life. She said that the purpose of prayer is to align our will with the will of God. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss this definition of the purpose of prayer by relating it to some of my own experiences in learning how to pray, and then analyzing a short and well-known prayer to see how it can, in fact, align the human will with the will of God.

When I set foot in an Orthodox church as a seeker for the first time, the thing which stayed with me the most was the reading of the prayers before Communion. Over and over again, the reader stated how unworthy "I am" to even receive the Holy Mysteries. Not only was the soul's uncleanness discussed, but even the body was spoken of as impure and polluted. I remember reflecting at the time that Communion seemed like



“no fun,” as it were. All that “doom and gloom,” as I saw it then, made it seem impossible for anyone ever to receive what I saw as their due for being “in the club” with any joy, because we were such lowly creatures. Furthermore, I could not understand why people who had been duly baptized kept going on about how sinful they were. It was, to put it mildly, a shock.

Now, imagine my even greater shock when I opened an Orthodox prayer-book for the first time. Again, I was confronted by the harshest self-criticism that I had ever seen. Men like St. Ephraim, who were holy and virtuous monks and are now glorified in Heaven were stating in their prayers how wretched and sinful they had been, and I, by extension, was saying the same thing by reading their prayers at my own little icon corner. Quite simply, I felt like a hypocrite. How could I seriously pray these prayers when I knew that I didn't mean a word that I was saying? Little did I know then, that this was precisely the attitude that these prayers were meant to provoke.

Prayer is one of the many standards of measurement which the church contains. It can be a mirror, showing us our truly sinful nature. For this, we must give glory to God. However, a far more usual result of prayer, at least in my own experience, is that it shows us what we are reaching for, and that is nothing less than a full knowledge of our sins and of ourselves, such as those who composed the prayers we read have attained. While we may feel ourselves to be saying meaningless words which have nothing to do with our personal lives, it is good to remember that prayer is a progressive act. Like water crashing on rock, prayer slowly chips away at the hardness of our hearts,

and does, in fact, serve to align our will with the perfect will of God.

Let's look at an actual Orthodox prayer as an example. This is a simple prayer, only ten to twelve words in English, but even this prayer, if repeated throughout one's life, can serve prayer's ultimate purpose. The twelve-word version of this prayer is: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." When I first heard this prayer, long before I sincerely and consciously sought communion with The Orthodox Church, it was incomprehensible to me. Why was it asking for mercy? Why did it focus on the self? Weren't Christians supposed to deny the self and spend their lives in service to others? Well, here's the thing. Yes, we must do for others, but if we don't pray for mercy upon ourselves, we'll never truly know what being merciful to others means.

Now, let's look at the prayer. When we say: "Lord Jesus Christ," we're saying a whole lot. This is a true act of bravery and courage, and can only be granted to us, as The Apostle Paul states, by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). We are calling Christ our Protector, our Master, our Pilot, and our King. In our world of individualism, it is truly an act of grace that any one of us is able to acknowledge a Lord of any kind, let alone Christ, who has been called simply a teacher or a philosopher in academic circles and in the popular media for so many years now that it is hard to see Him as anything more.

The next phrase is equally staggering. Calling Christ "Son of God" points out that He is more than "just a simple carpenter with healing in his hands", as a protestant "Christian Rock" song calls Him. He is God's only Son, begotten by God before time was, and yet also born of a Virgin, the *Theotokos*, at a specific point in history. If it is hard to see Christ as our Lord and Shepherd, how much more difficult is it for the human mind to comprehend his Sonship with God, and his ability, through the taking on of our flesh even unto death and resurrection, to make us heirs of The Kingdom? Yet, again, we are granted the grace to call him "Son of God," even if we can't understand that Mystery.

Finally, we come to the third part of the prayer: "have mercy on me, a sinner." After acknowledging that Christ holds our lives in His hands, and that He has the right to do this because He is God's Son and also Lord, we ask Him to "have mercy on me," not on John or Jane or even on the world, but on me, myself and I. Christ is then shown to be a personal God, a God who knows even my struggles and wounds, and He is also infinitely merciful. We don't ask Him for justice, but for mercy. Mercy, by definition, is never deserved by the one to whom it is given. It is granted completely at the discretion of the one with the power to grant it. Finally, we ask Christ to "have mercy on me, a sinner." The end of this prayer reminds me of the reason I must trust in God's mercy, and the reason I must be merciful to others, because I am a sinner, whether I know it or not. The point is that God knows everything that I have ever done, and still, He grants that I may ask for mercy, and will not, while I continue to ask, deal with me according to His justice, which is actually what I deserve.

We must remember that God does have a will, and it is free and sovereign. The Prophet Ezekiel states that God does "not desire the death of the sinner," but rather that he "turn from his

way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). This, finally, is the alignment which is the fruit of prayer, that we begin to desire repentance for ourselves and, by extension, that we gradually will see our own sins and have true empathy, or co-suffering, with everyone in the world. It is this empathy which gives rise to mercy and charity, and it all begins with a gradual acquiring of a new way of looking at ourselves, through Christ's undimmed eyes. This is a great Mystery, a Mystery that is not revealed to us through the eyes of the world, much less through the eyes of western materialism.

May God grant me, His obstinate one, one day to understand those prayers before Communion, for in them, as in that great Mystery itself, there is Truth, Mercy and Life.



- Sara Hillis

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## Dreaming of Byzantium

Government-backed multiculturalism has for decades encouraged - even paid - Canadians to relive the cultural experiences of places long ago and far away. On the surface, such nostalgia has the smell of Orthodoxy, a longing for a truth long forgotten, a time and culture where we were closer to God, and more innocent.

Such nostalgia is misleading, since its focus on an ideal time and place, lost in the past, runs absolutely contrary to the authentic longings of the Orthodox Christian heart: a longing for eternity, for the Kingdom of Heaven. Orthodox Christianity is not a museum piece, despite its antiquity: it is the timeless Truth, as fresh yesterday and today as it will be tomorrow, and in a million years.

Sadly, this vision of true Orthodox Christianity is often lost in North America. Drowning in the soup of ethnic nationalism, many parishes are made up of members who buy into the nostalgia, bringing Orthodox Christianity along for the ride. Where the faith has become part of some dusty bookshelf, churches are occupied only by those interested in dusty books. Trying to "spice up" the dusty church library with ethnic food festivals and dance lessons doesn't help: in fact, it undermines any chance of connecting most Canadian-born people with the eternal Truth of Orthodoxy.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the false attempts to equate Orthodoxy with a revised view of certain Imperial cultures, particularly Imperial Russia, and especially Byzantium. Ethnic nationalism, fueled by Canadian multiculturalism, has distorted our memories of both these Orthodox empires. Both were in fact multi-cultural, multi-lingual empires, whose richness and diversity were the very means by which God granted the spread of the Gospel. This is not the picture that is painted by many modern Hellenists (and to a lesser extent, Russian nationalists), who speak of their Orthodox empires in very different terms: uni-cultural, uni-lingual, fundamentally mixing the identity of one people - Hellenic, Russian, or others - with the identity of the Orthodox Faith. For those who subscribe to such fiction, the spread of the Orthodox faith requires the adoption of Byzantine, Russian, or some other Imperial Orthodox culture.

This is of course the approach taken by Protestant sectarians around the world even today, who offer their Protestant religion in the trendy global pop-culture of the west: for them, to become a “Christian” means to become an *American*. Islam does the same in its idealizing the Arabic Q’raish culture as the only one which truly allows entry into heaven. Clearly, Orthodox in North America must be above this silliness - or are we?

Despite the best hopes of Canadian multiculturalism, one of the unintended effects has been the utter ghettoization of ethnic groups. Regardless of age, with the exception of youth who have joined the rootless Canadian pop culture, most Canadians are most comfortable to remain firmly entrenched in within communities, and circles of friends, who look, cook, talk, and dance like them. Orthodox communities, once culturally integrated and mixed (and until the 1920s, united under a single jurisdiction), have bought into this balkanization, and in doing so, have indulged their own ethnic nationalists dreams, many of which could never have been achieved in reality in their homeland.

This reality has deeply affected the Orthodox concept of mission work. While great Orthodox empires like Byzantium saw their task as bridging diverse cultures and languages, to bring all into the fold of Orthodox Christianity, modern groups too often expound on the uniqueness of the Orthodoxy of their people: the Greek dismisses others as *xenous* (strangers), the Slav speaks of *nashi* (“our people”, or more subtly, “people like us”). We see recently that when such ghettos suffer numerical decline, there are calls to bring back those who have fallen away from the Faith (or more specifically, from the *faith of their people*). This pastoral work with lapsed Orthodox is too often mistaken for mission work, when it is nothing of the kind.

A similar confusion afflicts North American converts, particularly in the so-called “missionary” jurisdictions like the Orthodox Church in America and the Antiochian Archdiocese. Shaped by North American Anglo-Protestant culture, the approach to “mission” work is similarly Imperialistic, and similarly distorted. Rather than a mission that goes out and across cultural divisions - an undoing of the divisions resulting from the sin of the Tower of Babel - the so-called “missionary” jurisdictions are almost exclusively focused on building new parishes that are almost exclusively white, suburban, middle class, English speaking, and very, very establishment. As such, we often live under the illusion that the Orthodox in North America have escaped their immigrant ghettos, when in fact, the ghettos have simply joined the comfy middle class.

Of course, neither of these approaches have much at all to do with Orthodox Christian mission work. The fact that most of the largest ethnic and linguistic groups in North America - Hispanics and Black Americans in the United States, French, Chinese, and Asians in Canada - remain virtually untouched by the Orthodox Church should tell us something about our blissful myopia.

Multiculturalism should provide to North American Orthodox the greatest missionary opportunity in the history of the world, particularly in Canada. In almost every case, Orthodox faithful and bishops themselves have bought into the balkanized culture, and have settled instead for the chance to dream about the way things could be, in some empire, far, far away. 🍁



Constantine's Dream  
Piero della Francesca  
(c. 1455)

## Sonnet XVI: *When Patrick Stood Upon the Ancient Hill*

When Patrick stood upon the ancient hill Of Irish Kings,  
and with the holy light  
Of Paschal flame did swiftly put to flight  
The rule of fallen nature,  
He did fill That land with joyous news that Christ did kill  
The ancient sway of death and reign of night.

With wood which might have kindled feast or rite  
Of spring did Patrick kindle warmth from chill.  
At Tara, when the Paschal flame did burn,  
Christ's conquering of death was written plain  
Upon the earth and sky of Erin.

There, The Light of Hope did dawn.  
The land did learn The Truth that Christ did die and rise again,  
And is the Joy of Spring made pure and fair. 🍁

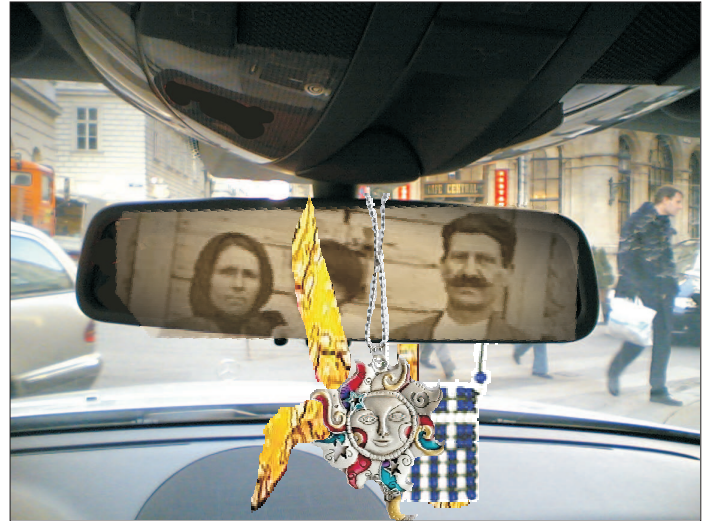
- Sara Hillis

## The Belgrade, Moscow, Byzantine Hood: *Reaping What We Sow*

*“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,” - Proverbs 22:6*

Several years ago, the American media was flooded with several studies comparing the attitudes and habits of American evangelical teens to their secular counterparts. The results were surprising to many people. Those who identified themselves as evangelical or born-again Christians had almost identical attitudes *and habits* on sexual issues to the population at large. Believe what they would, the heart of evangelical youth had been essentially won over by American ghetto culture.

Canadians pride themselves on our differences from Americans, in some cases, defining Canadian identity based on our profound differences from those living south of our border. Yet in the case of youth absorbing the popular culture - the ghetto slang, the suggestive music, the trashy clothes, the permissive sexual attitudes - Canadians represent a clone of their American cousins. For Orthodox Christians, the question is perhaps even more serious: for the lost generation of Orthodox youth, those whose grandparents and parents spent more time and attention on building the family business than on building the faith of their kids, a giant gap has emerged. Whereas American evangelical youth are still frequenting their churches, and are in contact with leaders who are trying - perhaps



ineffectively - to offer them a spiritual and moral life preserver, the Orthodox children and grandchildren are not: they are gone.

One need look not further than the church schools and youth groups in old, established parishes. Even where they exist, their influence is very often muted by ethnic nationalism, or watered-down curriculum. Neither of these approaches prepares Orthodox youth to live out their faith in the outside world. As a result, the youth do what their parents, grandparents, and every generation of immigrants have always done: they assimilate.

American evangelical leaders responded to the U.S. studies with balanced maturity. They did not dispute the results; they did not blame the music industry, the Internet, or television, although each of these influences had a role to play in the problem. Remarkably, American evangelical leaders blamed *themselves*, and their own religious lives, for not cultivating a more authentic spiritual life in their children and teens. They recognized that they - American evangelical adults - lived lives that looked like, sounded like, and produced results like most of their non-evangelical neighbours. They also recognized that if they hoped for a different life for their kids, the results would have to start not with the kids, but with *themselves* - the parents.

The time is too late for Canadian Orthodox grandparents: the results are in, and our side gave up a generation ago. But for Orthodox parents, decision time is now. Will we say our prayers, and teach our kids to say them - in the morning, night, at meals, and in times of need? Will we actually attend Liturgy on Sundays and feast days - every time, not like some fickle movie fans? Will we turn off, then unplug, then disconnect the television, and radically shrink our time online?

If we refuse to take such steps, we will find ourselves walking in the failed steps of the generation before us, the generation who were so eager to be like “the Canadians”, that they were willing to leave behind the day-to-day practice of the Orthodox Faith, tucked in some dusty corner in case someone died.

Of course, someone did die: the spiritual hearts of a whole generation of Orthodox youth, who are now parents themselves. And like the fictional mad scientist who created the monster, we got exactly what we set out to create.



### ORTHODOX CANADA

A Journal of Orthodox Christianity

*Published with the blessing of His Grace Bishop SERAPHIM of Ottawa, Archdiocese of Canada (OCA).*

**ORTHODOX CANADA** is dedicated to sharing a traditional vision of Orthodox Christianity with Canadians. *The opinions expressed in these articles are those of the author(s), and do not necessarily reflect those of the Archdiocese of Canada (OCA). Uncredited articles are the work of the editor(s).*

**ORTHODOX CANADA** is published six times annually: Pascha (March-April), Pentecost (May-June), Dormition (July-August), Holy Cross (September-October), Feast of Saint Nicholas (November-December), and Nativity (January-February). Donations in support of the Journal are gratefully appreciated.

**Published by:** All Saints of North America Orthodox Church, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

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