

THE ORTHODOX PASTOR AND WHAT HE
OUGHT TO AVOID IN HIS MINISTRY

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, a free-lance writer spoke to a convention of the Associated Church Press. He talked about his forthcoming book: The Seven Deadly Sins Today. This is a title hardly attractive to the general public and sometimes, not too interesting to us clergy. We live in a world which doesn't like any restrictions nor accusations that we can do wrong.

Basing his findings on the major sins as once listed by the fathers, the author gave his ideas on what influence these sins have in the world and how to overcome them.

As pastors, we too are aware of these "seven deadly sins". We all recall them from our seminary training: envy, anger, avarice, sloth, gluttony, pride, and lust. It is our recognized role to guide the faithful from them.

It is useful for us and necessary to see the faults of our flock and give direction. But we should also readily acknowledge the truth of the words of the poet Robert Burns: "Oh! Would someone the gift give us to see ourselves as others see us."

At this Priests' Conference, it seemed a good and useful idea to do just that: to "see ourselves as others see us"; the Church, the faithful and fellow clergy. To have a total picture, we will go back to the Old Testament for our information as well as to the New.

Let's set the proper tone by listening to the words of the holy first bishop of Jerusalem, James, Brother of the Lord.

*"Remember this, my brothers: Be quick to listen
but slow to speak and slow to rouse your temper;
God's righteousness is never served by man's anger;
so do away with all bad habits and impurities that
are still in you...accept the Word which has been
planted in you and can save your souls."*

1:9

Presbyters or priests are an extension of the hierarch or bishop who himself represents our Lord Jesus Christ. As such, it is necessary that the hierarch in his capacity as icon of the Master be solicitous for his entire flock, ordained and non-ordained, and for his own spiritual good as well as for theirs, review its condition. Secondly, the clergy as an extension of the bishop, should review its activities in the light of the obligation of compassion and love which characterizes the true ministry of the Lover of Mankind.

Therefore, it is a good thing for the entire body of clergy to individually and collectively re-evaluate its particular activities so as to see if it is acting like a "worthy and faithful steward" of the Master.

Let the presbyters and deacons do nothing without the approval of the bishop; for it is he that is entrusted with the people of God and of him will the account of their souls be required. (Canon 39, Holy Apostles)

Fallen Human Nature is in Need

The Mystery of Chirotonia

This presentation is based on the reality that the parish priest or presbyter, and for that matter, all clergy, is limited in his gifts. Secondly, everyone does, at some time, need to review his efforts in light of this truth and correct possible negative elements in his ministry. That every man is lacking and must be wary of his deficiencies is obvious from the words of the Mystery of Chirotonia:

The divine grace which always heals what is weak and fulfills what is lacking, lifts up through this laying on of hands (Chirotonia)...Let us pray, therefore, that the grace of the all-holy Spirit come on him.

Thus, we see that from the beginning of our ministry, individually and collectively, in our present human condition, we must recognize the reality that we are weak and lacking; and that it is by God's grace that we carry out our ministry. Without this special gift of grace at the laying on of hands, we could not fulfill the work given us by the Master of the vineyard.

Holy Scripture: Old Testament

We look back to the old testament prototype of our priesthood only to show that human nature, fallen from its original state, was well observed. Moses regarded it as needful of grace for the special calling of ruling the people.

"Why do you load on me the weight of all this nation? God instructed him to call men who were "known to be the people's elders and scribes"; in other words, worthy of a definite ministry.

Yahweh took some of the spirit that was on him (Moses) and put it on the seventy elders. (Num. 11:16;25)

Holy Scripture: New Testament

In addition to our Lord's own directives, we find that as the Church grew, the limits of fallen nature in the presbyterium were seen, recognized, and remarked on by the apostles.

Paul speaks of the negative aspects which ought to be recognized in candidates. He advised that things observed as detrimental to the Good News be rooted out, or be considered as definite obstacles to Chirotonia.

Beginning with a positive attitude, Paul says it is a good thing, a "noble" work, to want to be a presiding elder. But separating the office from the holder, he goes on to draw an icon in chiaro-scuro of the character of the "president."

He must not have been married more than once...not a heavy drinker, nor hot-tempered...not be a lover of money...not be a new convert...never get a bad reputation..." (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Simon Peter, in his first letter, recognizes the difficulties of the office and compassionately identifies with the presbyters: "I am an elder myself, and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, and with you I have a share in the glory that is to be revealed." But he chastises for the definite negativisms obvious to him among the clergy:

Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow. (1 Peter 5:1-5)

The Holy Fathers

The holy fathers, especially the hierarchs, knew that our ministry is based on the grace of God working with and through our individual human frailty. Therefore, they often make mention of the need to be vigilant to correct faults and to be aware of the reality of short comings due to our fallen human nature.

The priesthood requires a great soul; for the priest has many harrassing troubles of his own, and has need of innumerable eyes on many sides. (St. John Chrysostom Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles.)

St. John, himself not well-liked by his clergy for the fact that he was watchful over them and the flock he had entrusted to them, clearly points out the reality of every man's initial limitation, while reminding us of the great demands that the office itself demands.

In the writings of St. Gregory I, we find that it is not enough to know our faults. To bring our work to fruition, we must know:

*...how to perceive (our) own faults and subdue them...
St. Gregory I Pastoral Care.)*

Liturgical Life

That we ourselves are always in need, as is the entire Church, of "ever reforming", is made clear in the liturgical life of the Church. It is in the prayer life that we confront our limitations, faults, and sinfulness. It is the cleansing pool into which we must constantly plunge in order to be refreshed and cleansed. The priest is not a mere custodian of "beliefs" and "traditions". He must set a living example for his flock. In turn, his example is the bishop who takes the place of Christ.

What priest is not reminded of this each time he says:

*None among those who are enslaved by passions and
pleasures of the flesh are worthy to come, to approach,
or to serve you, O king of glory.*

The two Prayers for the Faithful in which we recall "...our sins and the sinful errors of the people..." and "...cleanse our souls and bodies from all defilement of flesh and spirit..." lead up to that Prayer During the Time of the Cherubic Hymn. These are not rhetorical phrases meant to fill up time while the faithful prepare to receive the "King of Glory". These are confessions of present sin, of real limitations. We are not only aware of them, but must strive to overcome them.

In the Morning Office we plead:

*Do not reject us from your face, but as good and the
lover of mankind, allow us, up to our final breath, to
offer you the sacrifice of righteousness and gifts in
your holy sanctuaries. (10th Prayer of Matins.)*

In Vespers, too, that sighing of Adam in us cries out:

*...enlightening ourselves with the thought of your
precepts, may we rise in spiritual joy, to the glory
of your goodness, offering intercessions and suppli-
cations for our sins and for your entire people. Visit
us in your goodness. (7th Prayer.)*

In these prayers, we confess our limitations and we voice the need for a "visit" from on high. The visit being none other than the grace of God and his presence in our ministry.

From the Mystery of Chirotonia, sacred scripture, and the holy fathers, we can see that we begin our ministry within personal limitations. Also, we must be aware of adding further negative elements by our own attitudes and actions.

Duties of the Pastor

As we review some of the duties of the pastor, it may become clearer in which areas we too may personally be remiss. Simply stated, the presbyter or elder is: "as priest, to administer the mysteries; as preacher, to proclaim and teach the Good News of Christ; and as pastor, to serve the needs of the people. These three functions are correlated and cannot be separated." (Mastrantonis: A New Catechism, page 133.)

The real and only object of the pastorate is the human soul and its eternal destiny.

Old Testament

As far as Christ surpasses Moses, so does the new testament priesthood surpass the old. The ritual, prayers, and sacrifices were only a foreshadow of the one prayer and unique sacrifice of the New Covenant: "That they may be one as we are one" and "He that eats my body and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him". The temporary priesthood of the old Israel was not really pastoral, but that of the new is eternal and of the spirit.

New Testament

The New Covenant priesthood is resplendent in the reflection of the example of its High Priest. It is marked by a compassionate and unique personalism.

The work of the pastor in the days of the apostles expanded to include those things which the synagogue council never did. This is in imitation of the work of the merciful physician of bodies and souls, Christ Jesus.

Let us note that the pastor according to the epistles:

visited the sick (James 14)
preached the word (1 Tim. 17)
oversaw the needs of the community (1 Peter 2)
and received gifts (Acts 11:30)
a part of the first Council, that of Jerusalem (Acts 15:6)

Holy Fathers

Who is a better witness than the holy Polycarp who, at the age of 86, remained the example of the pastor, fulfilling the duties of which he had written some twenty years before his martyrs death?

*Let the presbyters be compassionate, merciful to all,
bringing back those who have wandered astray, visiting*

those who are sick, neglecting neither widow nor orphan nor the poor, but providing always what is good in the sight of God and of men. Let them refrain from anger, respect of persons, and unjust judgment; let them be far from the love of money, not quick to believe evil of anyone, not hasty in judgment, knowing that we are all debtors in the matter of sin. (11 Letter to the Philippians.)

Isadore of Seville takes care to remind the priest that his duty is to:

preserve peace with his brothers, to despise no member of the Church, to condemn no one without proof.

Mystery of Chirotonia

We all recall the words of our ordaining bishop as he enumerated the duties of the priest: to stand before the holy table, to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, to minister the word of truth, to offer sacrifices and gifts, to renew the people through baptism. But these are more of a sacramental nature. It is in the Bishop's Chirotonia as Shepherd, that we find the pastoral charge and thus through him to his priests:

...to be a leader of the blind, a light to those in darkness, a reprover of the unwise, a teacher of the young, a lamp to the world...a perfecter of the souls entrusted to him...

And finally, it is in the bishop's hands that the pastor's staff is put, and on his chest does the icon of the Shepherd rest.

However, we are imparted with sharing that office through his laying on of hands and to him must we render account.

If any of the clergy insult the Bishop, let him be deposed; for you shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people. (Canon 55, Holy Apostles.)

The Evil Pastorate

Archbishop John Shahovskoy, in his revered work: The Orthodox Pastor, dedicates an entire chapter to the problem of the "Evil Pastorate". He makes the reader aware that the burden on the priest is truly very great. On the other hand, that the priest can be negligent and even destructive in the pastoral field is also affirmed. They are a scandal to the faithful and the cause of loss of faith to some.

The evil pastor is a "pseudo-pastor"; one who wounds the Body of Christ to which he is supposed to be dedicated to heal. There is no sin comparable to that of the false pastor because the destruction comes from within and what results is:

the spirit which brings spiritual ruin to men destroying their faith in the holy. (The Orthodox Church: Shahovskoy)

Reflecting on what the holy apostles have said and the fathers repeated, we can also concur that a poor ministry is possible. It is as though this priest carries out the letter of the office without entering into the spirit of it. He has distanced himself from the work of the one Shepherd whom he is supposed to be imitating.

Behold the Bridegroom Comes: Vigilance on all Occasions

As the pastor is the one in charge of souls and their care, it is useful to review the occasions on which we come into contact with our people. We ought to observe ourselves in action.

The outline below is one which can be looked at from time to time. It demonstrates that the pastor is always in the sight of his flock. He is a PUBLIC FIGURE.

I. Liturgical Occasions of Contact with the People

- A. Public Occasions:
 - 1. Community Worship: The Divine Liturgy.
 - 2. Mysteries: public but personal:
 - a. Baptisms
 - b. Chrismations
 - c. Weddings
 - d. Unction
- B. Private Occasions:
 - 1. Individual Mysteries (Confession)
 - 2. Counseling
 - 3. Preparatory encounters for sacramental occasions; e.g. Matrimony, Conversions.

II. Non-Liturgical Encounters: Social Life of the Parish

- A. Meetings of the organizations:
 - 1. Council
 - 2. Ladies' Aid
 - 3. Youth Group
 - 4. Special Committees
- B. Occasions with non-parishioners present at functions.

III. The Priest in the Public Forum

- A. Official visits and calls.
- B. Public assemblies.

IV. The Pastor Engaged Outside of and in Addition to the Parish

- A. The working priest and his fellow workers.
- B. The working priest and his employer.

V. Private Life of the Pastor as Private and Public Figure

- A. Home Life:
 - 1. Family
 - 2. Friendships
 - 3. Parishioners

- B. Public Life;
1. Friends
2. Strangers
3. Parishioners

What to Overcome

Perhaps it is best to see what attitude we presently have toward our ministry and see how it fits into the total ministry of Jesus Christ in the world. If our attitude is sound, then we have a good basis for our pastorate; if our attitude is not pure, then we must rectify it.

Recall the words of the Fisher Apostle: "...not as a duty but because God wants it...". If the priesthood is: a "job", an "income", "something to do because there is nothing else"; then we have built not on the rock of Christ but on the sands of our passions and pleasures.

Most priests do build on Christ. They felt called by God to share in his work of salvation. However, sometimes, along the path, the emphasis may shift from God to ME, from his ministry to MY MINISTRY.

No doubt, the trembling and awe which overcame St. John Chrysostom in his contemplation of the office, also comes over us. This element can also help us to have the desire to renew our pastorate lifestyle and to also confess our limitations. He tells us what to overcome:

...above all despise fame, be superior to anger, and be full of tact...mix and associate with all sorts of people and still manage to preserve untarnished and steadfast...purity and poise, devotion, patience and and frugality and other good qualities. He (the priest) appears in public. All his faults are exposed and tested as by fire testing metal.

If a man be boastful or hot-tempered or petty or conceited or anything like that, it soon uncovers all his shortcomings and lays them bare. And not only does it lay them bare, but makes them more tough and intractable.

Love of popularity and bragging and avarice rouse a man and lead him on to luxury, self-indulgence and indolence. Flattery unmans him and courtesies enslave him. (The Priesthood: St. John Chrysostom.)

Scripture

Among the more negative aspects observed in the pastor are these from the Sacred Scriptures:

Heavy drinkers - I Timothy
Hot-tempered - I Timothy
Dictatorial - I Peter

Money Hungry	-	I Timothy
Proud	-	I Timothy
Bad Public Reputation	-	I Timothy
Professionalistic	-	I Peter

If we look upon these not just as "possibilities" but as possibly present in us and this, evident in our ministry, we see what damage can and has been wrought.

That we should avoid these and other factors weakening our work is evident from the fact that we can actually see the damage we are doing and the harm to human souls entrusted to us.

Our efforts are concerned with binding up, strengthening, nourishing, calling back, healing, sanctifying and transfiguring. These are all positive efforts and movements upward. Anything that hinders growth must be weeded out. In other words, everything we know to be detrimental to the growth of the Church must be cast aside.

Archibishop John lists the following as characteristics of the "Evil Pastor":

Love of money: Practical materialism; offering prayers and sacraments on the payment of a fee.

Pomp, show and theatricality.

Fawning on the rich and powerful. Contemptuous toward the poor and humble.

Preaching in church of earthly values and attainments: negligence of the Gospel and absorption in some side-issue or work.

Coming to some specific things to watch for in ourselves:

Impatience. We are guilty of impatience; at meetings, in the services, or during events not going the way we want them to. The pastor who is impatient will not be able to weather out the storms in councils, family feuds and at home. No constructive work can be done without reflection and calm review. "Haste makes waste" is the old adage, and certainly if it's souls or the goods of the parish, we cannot afford to squander.

Egoism. At times, we are confronted by people more intelligent, more learned even in theology and in some virtues than are we. We have a choice: to recognize our limitations in a real, humble and constructive way or to protest, make ourselves to be what we are not and appear foolish. We do not have the right to defend our weaknesses. When we must answer, we should recall that "the divine grace always heals what is weak and fulfills what is lacking." The answer will be given.

Time. Time is nothing we can stop, but we can use it to our advantage. The day has too many activities and we are faced with

with choosing what is useful to the Church or what just has to be done. The pastor is often overworked. Perhaps, a rescheduling of efforts would help.

There are just so many hours a day. The abundance of willing workers in the parish is amazing. But, unless we realize that our time is limited and we are able to seek help in those areas which the Church allows, we are overworking.

It is true that not every one is a theologian or cantor, but there are many other labors passed onto the priest which he in turn could delegate. Freed time is pastoral time; time to do those works which every priest wants to do but can't any longer seem to "squeeze" in.

Negligence.

If any bishop or presbyter neglects the clergy or the people and does not instruct them in the way of godliness, let him be excommunicated; and if he persists in his negligence and idleness, let him be deposed. (Canon 58, Holy Apostles.)

Physical Incapacity or Restrictions. Sometimes we are unable to carry out our work. Maybe it is temporary, maybe it is advancing age. As we are limited physically, our pastorate is limited and the parish suffers---unless we again make use of all the labor forces and stewardship at our disposal. Visiting the sick, the grieving, is a part of the work that the non-ordained can do. Secretarial work, office labors and caring for the needs of the aged are also things that we cannot continue to do at a breakneck speed for ever.

Self-restraint. The pastor, when faced with situations and persons who have not been a part of his regular ministry for some time, must practice self-restraint. The young are especially demanding of our self-restraint. When we want to chastise them for not taking advantage of the sacramental life of the Church, we must be careful not to turn them away by our rebukes. Baptisms, weddings, marriages can be occasions for bringing back the lost. Remember that these sheep are not returning to pay their respects to the pastor, but are seeking to be found by the Lord Christ.

Under this, we can also mention the occasions when the "lost" do come back and are in need of welcome, not chastisement. To belittle does not enlarge, to press a wound does not heal it. To put ourselves in their position is the best method of not quenching the smoldering wick not breaking the bruised reed.

Vendetta. No one can accuse us of fostering a "vendetta" attitude, but the faithful are easily scandalized by the lack of forgiveness that they may sense in the clergy. For us to pay back "an eye for an eye" is completely out of step with the paces of the forgiving Savior. To respond: "There! Let's see how he/she/they like it!" is not an answer, but a battle cry that never quiets. The faults of grandparents, and parents and relatives should not be hung around the neck of the next generation, nor can we stigmatize

them. Animosity does not construct. It is a waste of time, effort, and results in the separation of generations yet to come.

If any Bishop or presbyter does not receive him who turns away from his sin, but rejects him, let him be deposed; for he grieves Christ who said: 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents'. (Canon 52, Holy Apostles.)

Ridiculè. It is enough to look at the following canon to see what is the Church's teaching:

If any of the clergy mock the lame or the deaf or the blind, or him who is infirm in his legs, let him be excommunicated. (Canon 57, Holy Apostles.)

Sacramental Stability. The words we hear falling from the lips of a penitent are not meant to be means of information to the confessor. Not to be published, nor acted upon, these confessed sins ought to be hidden in the recesses of the holy altar and never heard nor repeated again. More separation is caused by the misuse of information from the confession than should be. More than one of the flock has left the fold because of our carelessness as confessors.

Discouragement. Discouragement is ever present to pounce on on the hard-working pastor. It is the "wolf" of our lot. It can be controlled and set aside by humility. The pastor who looks for signs of growth as proof of his ministry will very likely see nothing permanent. Paul tells us that one plows, another sows, another reaps. To demand that God "show" our parish to be perfect, our lives perfect, is to tempt him and ask a sign. The flock is God's. The grace is of God. The goal, set by God. If we are doing all we can do, he will take up the slack. If we are discouraged, we are our own enemy. Size, power and efficiency are not what Christ promised to us. He offered life, here and that which is to come. We should remember that we are the instrument, not the physician; the offerer, not the offered; the foot, not the head.

There comes a time when we can say: Lord, there is nothing more I can do. Forgive my negligences. Your will be done. If we realize that everything works through his grace, and that we are one link in the chain of the eternal pastorate, we will see and accept supposed "failures", accept the fact of the unconverted and unrepentant not because we haven't tried, but because they have not allowed the grace of God to work in them.

How to overcome some of these Negatives in our Lives

Simply stated, to overcome the negativisms in our lives we must want to be aware of them, want to control them, want to eliminate them and act to do so. The life of the priest is unique. There is no other point of reference nor touchstone other than that of the Rock of our Salvation. Therefore, his medicines, healings and cures, are from God and are godly. No physician, no psychiatrist,

no social worker can prescribe the remedy needed for the pastor. This comes from the heart of the priest himself; always reforming and ever hoping.

The fathers give their prescription:

Let the fear of his own faults moderate it and let him confirm with the example of his life, his teaching of those who do not believe his words. And when he has performed some good work, let him remember the evil he has done, that his contrition for his evil deeds may moderate his joy for his good works. (St. Gregory I, Pastoral Care.)

The method is humility; example the rule; vigilance the password; and action the solution.

The Means to Overcome

The Orthodox Pastor has three sharp instruments at his disposal: his thoughts, words, and actions. Because he cannot separate his pastorate from his own sanctification; or rather, because he is sanctified through his pastorate, there is no thought, word, nor actions that is not "pastoral". There is no eight-hour job. We can leave the problems of the office, but not the desire to solve them.

Inner Attitude. No one knows the thought of the priest but himself and his confessor. But this inner heart is revealed by his attitude toward the priesthood in his words and actions.

Spoken Word. The word of the priest is public. Not only are they public but they become public property to be referred to, acted upon and lived by. It is always: "Father said...". Even a personal preference becomes paraded as public information. It isn't far from the truth to say that half of our ministry is in what we say and how we say it.

Pulpit. The Word of God through the mouth of the priest sometimes takes on strange nuances. The Word is to bring joy, peace, and reconciliation to fruit in salvation. The canons remind us not to use the pulpit for criticizing:

Hierarchs
Fellow clergy
Faithful or sinners by name or implication
Public figures in politics

By preaching about the Gospel, we avoid the pitfalls of abusing the word:

The prelate of the Church, especially on the Lord's day, shall teach doctrine. (Canon 19, 6th Ecumenical Council)

Extra-Liturgical. If we find ourselves doing these things in the church, we are more than likely doing them outside the services as well. Talking about parishioners and those who do not agree with our policies and who may be agitators in the community does

not confront the problem but adds insult and fuel to it.

Why mention the harm that comes through grief, insults, abuse, and criticism from high and low, wise and foolish, (who are) deprived of right judgment (and) not readily accepting explanations. The priest must not despise even them. (St. John Chrysostom: The Priest, chapter 6.)

The same is true of the meetings of the parish organizations, before and after as well. To be talked about and brought to judgment without being present is wrong. To be judged by the priest without the possibility of redress is very trying indeed. No growth can come about through our abuse of talking about others.

The spoken or sung word in the liturgical services is also an indication of our inner attitude. If we rush through, cutting litanies, or serve so rapidly that the only positive idea the faithful have is that the services are to be done, but just as rapidly as possible, then we are not providing the atmosphere of prayer and spiritual encounter with God.

Actions. The actions of the pastor do indeed speak loudly. Personal conduct outside the altar is as evident to the faithful as it is during the services. The priest is on a pedestal. If he totters, everyone sees. The liturgical piety of the priest has much to do with the liturgical piety of the faithful, which, in turn, alters the lives of all concerned. To induce the people of God to partake of the Mysteries, they must be moved and impressed with the holiness of them. The holiness of the altar is totally dependent on the priest. This sanctity of actions in the altar should extend itself to those serving within as well. The altar boys and cantors and others busy around the holy table should reflect the same piety of the priest. He must correct and teach the right attitude to the holy things.

Availability. The priest does not work in a vacuum. He speaks to people, works with people. As his work engulfs him, so his words and thoughts and actions are shaped by the demands made on him. If he is available to the people, he will be called upon to think like a pastor, to speak like a pastor, and to act in that capacity. The best way to overcome negativism in our pastorate is to expose ourselves to the people. Their desire to be holy will spread to us and intensify and purify our own like desire.

Practical Conclusions

The canons merely state that one must simply "stop" doing whatever it is that is taking us from God. There is no practical indication other than a change of will implied.

Augustine says:

Sin is nothing else than to neglect eternal things and seek after temporal. (De Arbitrio Libero.)

John of Damascus says:

Wickedness is nothing else than the withdrawal from goodness. (Exposition of the Orthodox Faith)

All practical solutions must start from the acceptance that it is necessary to base our life on God first and that overcoming the seven deadly sins is a life-long struggle for the Orthodox pastor as much as it is for the faithful.

Simplistic as it may seem, we must constantly put ourselves, our family, in the place of those to whom we are ministering. We are to see the other as self; the icon of God as true in the flock as in the pastor.

Restraint in speaking, in acting and revised thinking will remind us of our unique but common role as pastor. By calling on the name of the Lord, before acting, we will not have to confess to him afterwards.

SUMMARY

I have tried to show that the role of the Orthodox pastor is both common and unique. It is common in that it has universal actions and attitudes for every priest. It is unique because each priest carries out his pastorate as an individual with his own gifts and his own shortcomings.

The office of the pastor is a positive one. It is surrounded with many temptations and pitfalls. Some of them arise from the demands of the office, others from the inability or change of the attitude of the minister to execute his work.

The priest cannot avoid the problems of the pastorate without ceasing to be a pastor. He must face them realistically and courageously. It comes to mind that if there are recognized elements to be rooted out or avoided, the solutions all begin from a single common source: the universal desire of the priesthood to be effective.

While I am sure that it was possible to state more problems, and less theory, I thought it as useful to give fewer examples and rest on the exhortations of the Sacred Scriptures, the holy fathers and the liturgical practice of the Church than to present many abstract solutions. The uniqueness of each pastorate and each situation will provide a solution if the problem is recognized and change desired.

In concluding, I would like to recall one of the sticheras of vespers of Pentecost:

*The Holy Spirit provides every gift : He
inspires prophecy, perfects the priesthood,
grants wisdom to the illiterate, makes simple
fishermen to be wise and upholds the perfect
discipline of the Church.*

SOME THOUGHTS OF THE FAITHFUL ON THE PASTOR

Some priests show indifference to spirituality.

Services are not conducted with feeling nor meaningfully. Dignity is too often left out of the services.

Announcements are made during the service, interrupting them.

Priests ought to not joke nor make light of things before, during and after the liturgical services.

Family takes precedence over the church community.

Priests fail to keep up with the times in education and reading.

Too many cliches.

The priest should draw people out.

He ought not to worry about offending anyone if what he must teach is right if he acts in a spirit of growth through explanation.

Priests should defend the Faith and also explain it.

The pastor should make demands on the people to grow spiritually.

He should keep in touch with his people, especially in the times of sickness, death and other personal situations.

He should be available to have services, prayers for individual needs.

Be persistent but patient in approaching the fulfilling of the needs of the parish.

He should have a good appearance and be presentably in public.

A personal relationship is more important than personal likes and therefore the priest ought to take the lead in re-establishing a broken relationship with a parishoner.

The priest should be repetitious.

Personal likes should be moderate, but not stifled.