

## Orthodox Reality in America



St. Tikhon Monastery (est. 1903), South Canaan, PA



St. Nicholas Cathedral, Tarpon Springs, FL



Panagia Vlachernon Monastery, Ocala, FL



St. Lawrence Church, Felton, CA

## Sources of information in this presentation

- 2011 National Survey of Linguistic Situation in US Orthodox Parishes
- 2010 Census of US Orthodox Christian Churches
- 2010 “Faith Communities Today” (FACT) national survey (380 parishes of GOA, OCA and AOCA participated)
- 2008 “Orthodox Church Today” (national survey of laity in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Orthodox Church in America)
- 2009 US Religious Landscape Survey (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life)

## 2010 National Census of US Orthodox Christian Churches

Each local Orthodox parish was asked two questions:

- How many individual persons in total are associated with the life of your parish: including adults and children, regular and occasional attendees, paid stewards and persons who do not contribute financially?
- Approximately, how many persons – including adults and children – attend Liturgy in your parish on a typical Sunday?

## Combined, for all US Orthodox Churches:

- The answer to the first question is **1,043,800**  
That is, 1,043,800 persons in the USA participate in Orthodox church life or are at least known to the local parishes (817,500 Eastern Orthodox Christians + 226,300 Oriental Orthodox Christians)
- The answer to the second question is **294,300**  
That is, 294,300 persons are praying in all American Orthodox parishes on a typical Sunday (214,200 Eastern Orthodox Christians + 80,100 Oriental Orthodox Christians)

## Combined, for all US Orthodox Churches:

- The ratio between second (294,300) and first (1,043,800) figures is **28%**  
That is, 28% of all Orthodox Church adherents participate in church life on a regular weekly basis
- However, 35% of US Oriental Orthodox Christians attend church on a regular weekly basis in comparison with only 26% among Eastern Orthodox Christians

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## For the Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church:

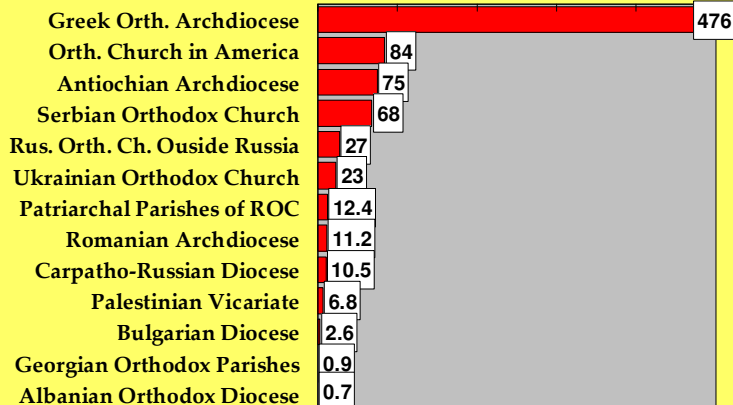
- The answer to the first question is **12,365**  
That is: 12,365 persons in the USA participate in the lives of the Patriarchal Parishes or are at least known to them
- The answer to the second question is **1,952**  
That is: 1,952 persons are praying in all Patriarchal Parishes on a typical Sunday
- The ratio between second (1,952) and first (12,365) figures is **16%** That is: 16% of all parishioners participate in church life regularly

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## Membership in US Orthodox Churches

■ Total number of adherents including children (in 1000)

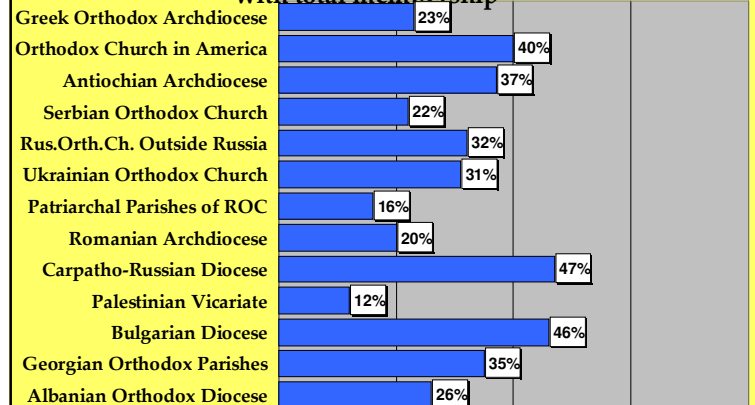
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## Various Orthodox jurisdictions are different in the strength of church commitment of their members

% of persons who attend regularly in comparison

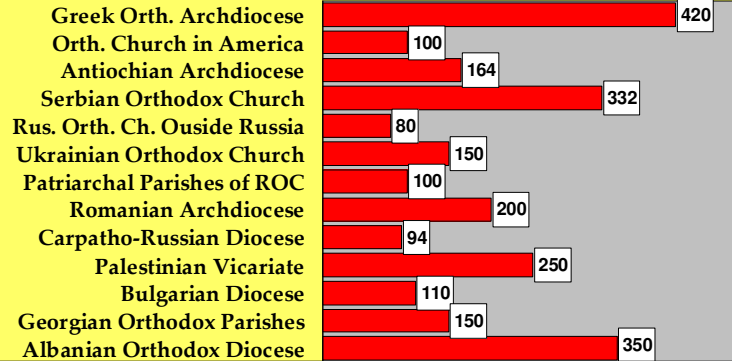
with total membership



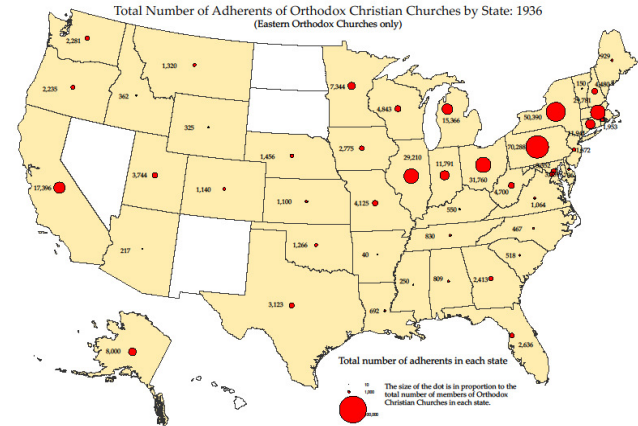
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## The parishes of different Orthodox Churches vary greatly in size

- Size of a median parish (persons, including children). That is, 50% of parishes are smaller and 50% are bigger than "median" parish

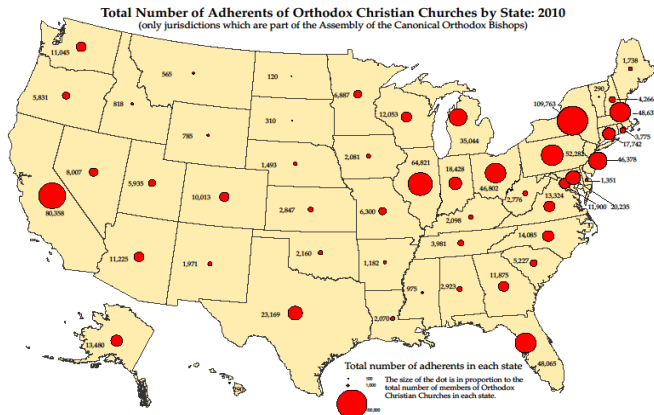


## In 1936: 345,400 adherents in all US Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches combined



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## In 2010: 817,500 adherents in all US Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches combined



## Geographically, 45% adherents of US Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches live in just five states:

- New York - 14% of all adherents of US Orthodox Churches
- California - 10%
- Illinois - 8%
- Pennsylvania - 6.5%
- Massachusetts - 6%

At the same time, only 29% of the US population live in these five states

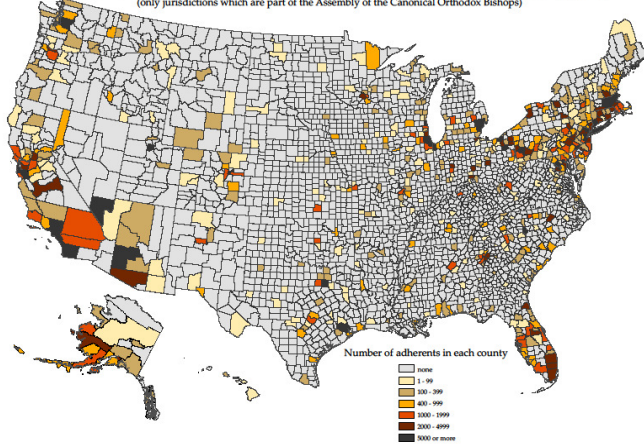
**Bottom line:** Compared to general US population, the members of Orthodox Churches are much more concentrated in certain (nice?) geographic areas

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## Where do the members of Orthodox Churches live?

Orthodox Christian Churches in the United States: Number of Adherents by County (2010)  
(only jurisdictions which are part of the Assembly of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops)



Source of data: 2010 US National Orthodox Census / 2010 Religious Congregation Membership Study  
Copyright by Alexei D. Kolomoich

## Five Top Counties With Largest Numbers of Adherents of the Eastern Orthodox Churches:

- Cook co. (Chicago), IL – 48,100
- Queens co. (New York), NY – 28,400
- Los Angeles co., CA – 24,200
- New York co. (Manhattan), NY – 16,800
- Middlesex co. (Cambridge, Lowell), MA – 16,700

That is: **16%** of all US Orthodox parishioners are concentrated in just 5 counties

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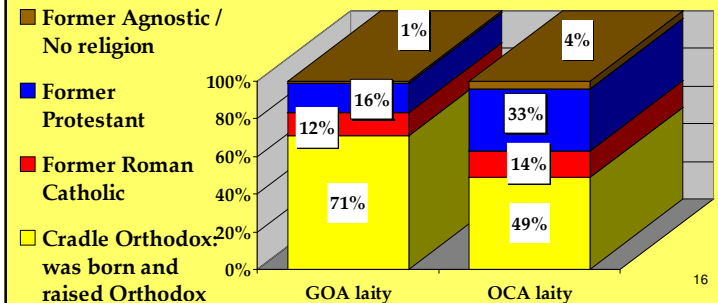
## Since 1980s, several new developments in American Orthodox Christian Churches:

- Geographic redistribution: dynamic growth in South (esp. Florida) and in West (esp. California)
- Fast growth of Oriental Orthodox Churches (in 1970, there were 2 Coptic parishes in USA; in 2010 - 172)
- Fast growing presence of converts (former Roman Catholics and Protestants) among Orthodox clergy and laity

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## Proportion of converts (born and raised non-Orthodox) among members of "Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America" and "Orthodox Church in America"

What was your Church affiliation before you became an Orthodox Christian?



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## How "Russian" are Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in USA?

➤ Do you agree with the statement "Our parish has strong ethnic heritage that we are trying to preserve?"

"Rather agree" or "Strongly agree" – 35% parishes

"Neutral / Unsure" – 55% parishes

"Rather disagree" or "Strongly disagree" – 10% parishes

➤ For all Patriarchal Parishes nationwide: average % of English used:

as language of liturgy – 77%

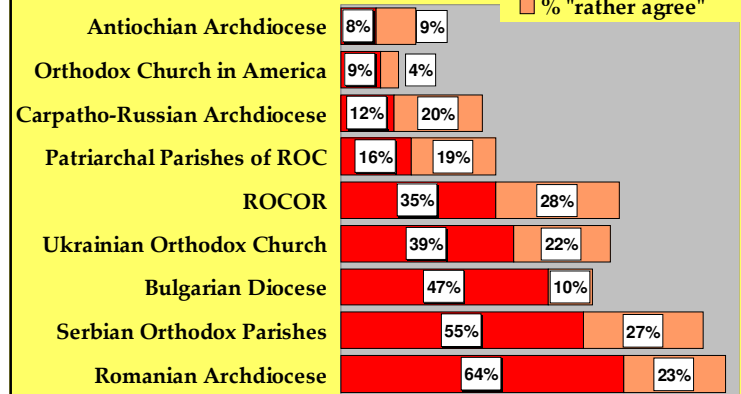
as language of sermon – 85%

as language of church choir – 74%

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## Some Orthodox Churches in US become "All American" and some remain "ethnically based"

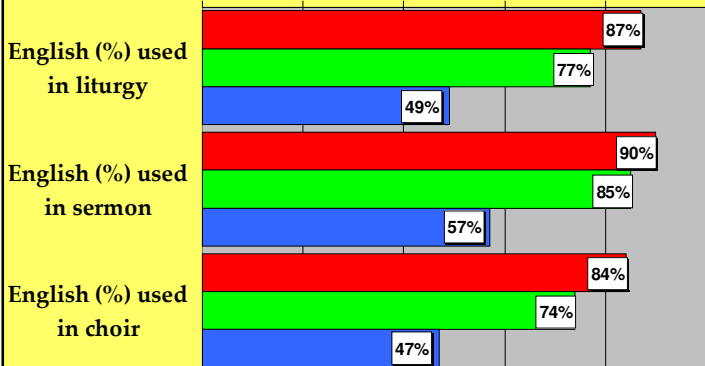
"Our parish has a strong ethnic heritage that we are trying to preserve." ■ % "strongly agree" ■ % "rather agree"



## US nationwide, average % of English used in the parishes: Patriarchal Parishes, OCA, ROCOR

■ OCA ■ Patriarchal Parishes of ROC ■ ROCOR

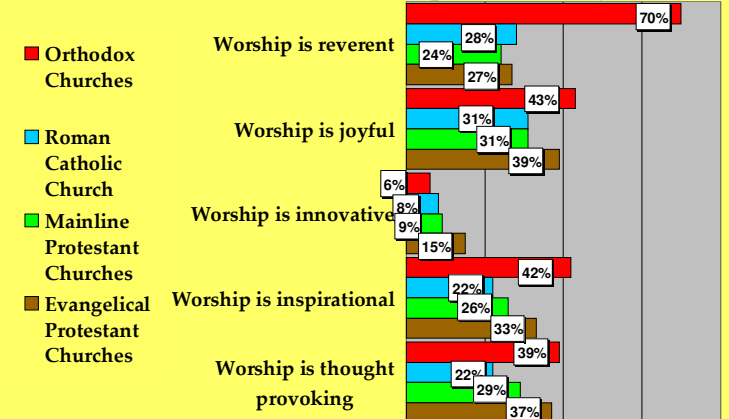
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%



## 2010 FACT Survey: How Do We Pray?

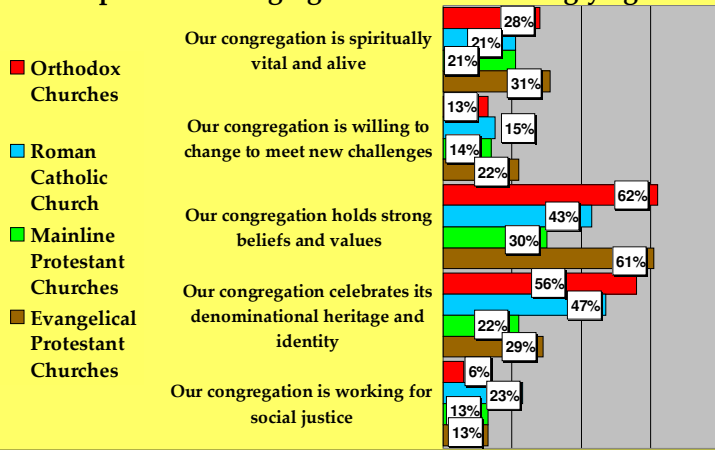
### Orthodox compared to Catholic and Protestant Churches

% of parishes / congregations reporting that following describe their week-end worship service "very well"



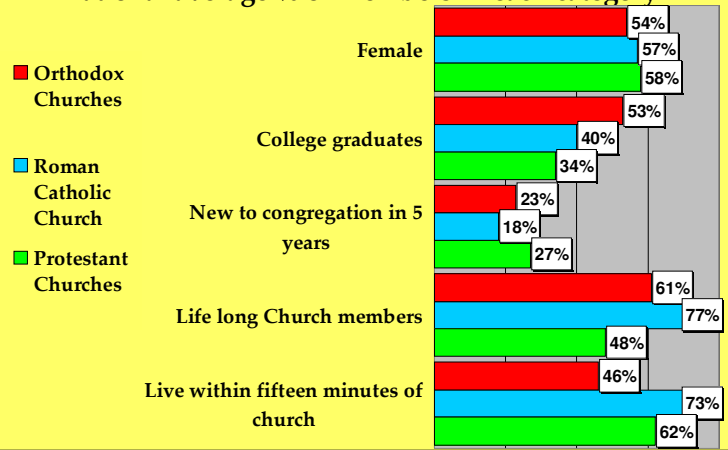
### 2010 FACT Survey: How Parishes / Congregations Look Like?

Orthodox compared to Catholic and Protestant Churches  
% of parishes / congregations which "strongly agree"



### 2010 FACT Survey: Demographic Features of Membership.

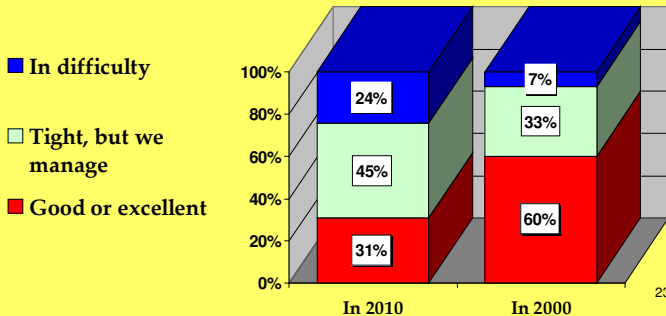
Orthodox compared to Catholic and Protestant Churches  
national average % of members in each category



### 2010 FACT Survey: Impact of 2008-2009 Recession on Financial Health of Orthodox Parishes

"How would you describe your parish's financial health?"

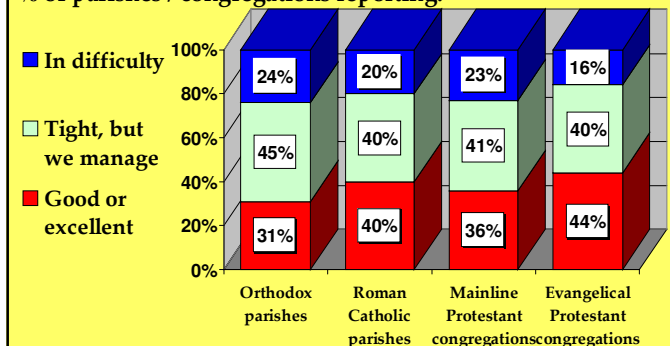
% of US Orthodox parishes reporting:



### 2010 FACT Survey: Financial Situation of US Orthodox Parishes Compared to Catholic and Protestant Congregations

"How would you describe current (2010) financial health of your parish / congregation?"

% of parishes / congregations reporting:



**Some important findings from 2007 "Orthodox Church Today" study: the US national survey of parishioners in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Orthodox Church in America**

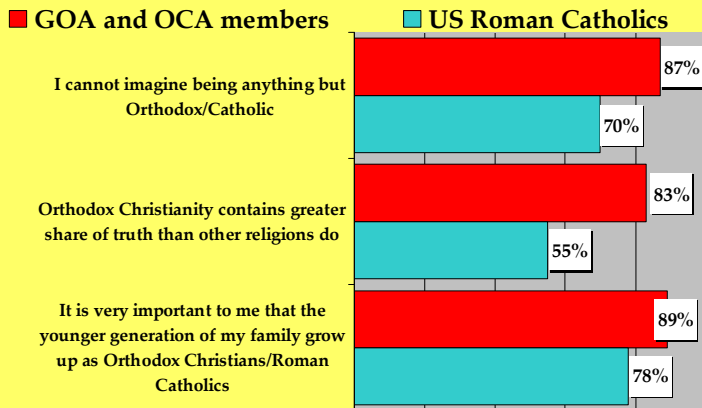
**What are most urgent issues in the Church life from the perspective of lay members of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA) and Orthodox Church in America (OCA)?**

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% of parishioners saying that the following subjects are "VERY IMPORTANT" to be discussed in Church	GOA	OCA
Issue of youth and young adults leaving Orthodox Church	84%	77%
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	63%	54%
Issue of interfaith and inter-Christian marriages	52%	27%
Representation of the local parish at decision making on the diocesan and national level	46%	44%
Issue of "ethnic" versus "American" parishes	45%	40%
Relationship between American Orthodox Churches and Mother Churches in the Old World	39%	31%
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	32%	25%
Sharing ministry with laity	32%	22%
Lack of clear professional standards for priests	28%	23%
Process of selecting bishops	25%	34%

**The good message: Compared to US Roman-Catholics, American Orthodox Christians have a strong religious identity and Church preference**

% who agreed with following statements



**The bad message:**

**strong Orthodox identity does NOT mean that "people in the pews" view their religious obligations the way they are expected by the Church**

Survey data tell us that regular Church attendance, obeying the priest and observing Great Lent are seen by majority of GOA and OCA parishioners as **non-significant** for being a "good Orthodox"

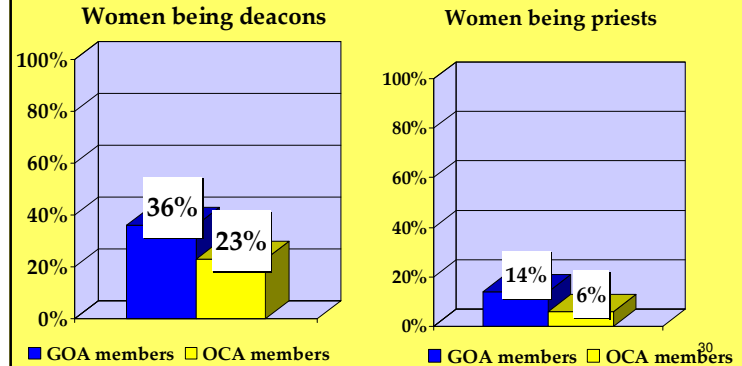
**Please, indicate if you think a person can be a good Orthodox Christian *without* performing these actions**

% of GOA and OCA members saying that he/she still can be a good Orthodox Christian without doing the following

Without going to church every Sunday	60%
Without obeying the priest	53%
Without observing Lent and fasting on certain days	50%
Without their marriage being approved by Church	40%
Without donating time and money to help the poor	28%
Without donating time and money to help parish	27%
Without believing that in Eucharist, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus	3%
Without believing that Jesus rose from the dead	<sup>29</sup> 2%

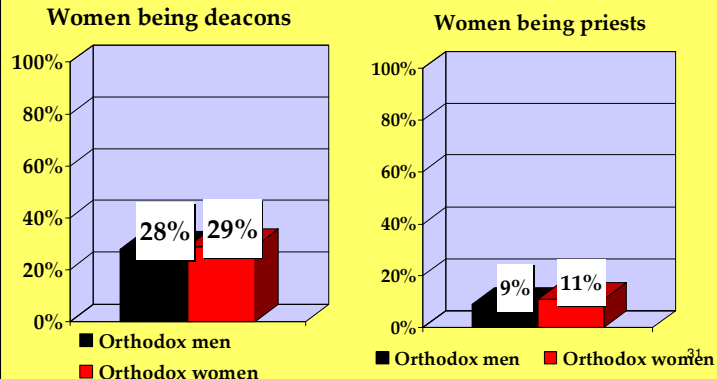
**Generally, Orthodox Christians DO NOT favor the idea of ordination of women**

% of those who would support women in following roles



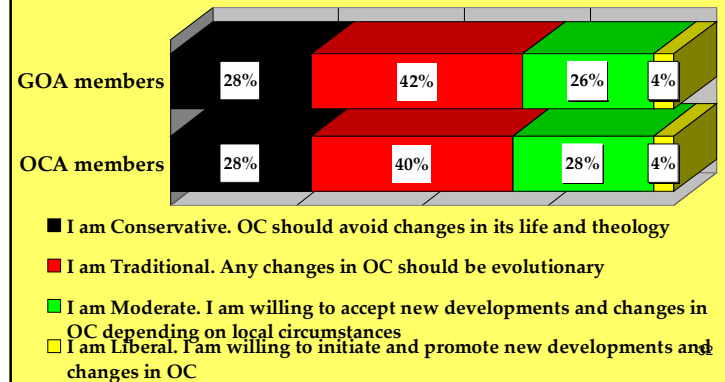
**Orthodox men and women have similarly negative opinions on ordination of women**

% of male and female respondents who would support women in following roles



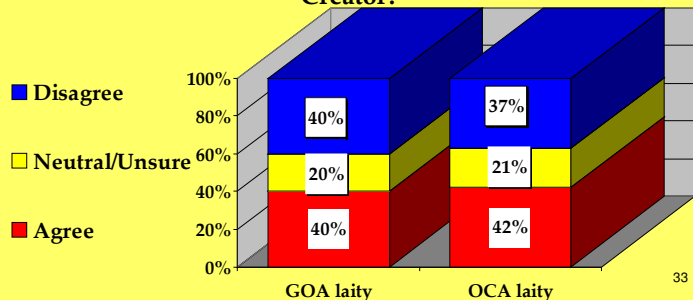
**Not all Orthodox laity are equally "Orthodox" in their personal "micro-theologies"**

When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes you?



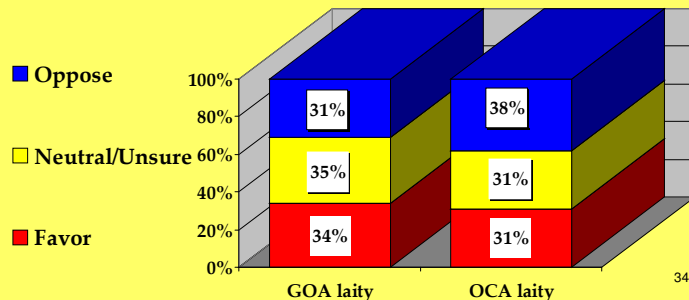
**Orthodox Christians in America are deeply divided among themselves on subject of evolution versus creationism.**

Do you agree with the statement "Evolutionary theory is compatible with the idea of God as Creator?"



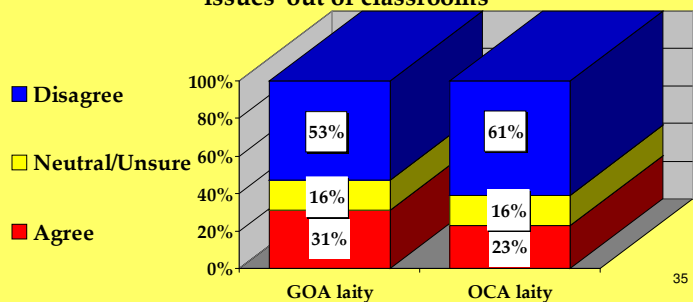
**Orthodox Christians are also divided among themselves on teaching of evolution versus creationism in the schools.**

Would you favor or oppose teaching creationism INSTEAD of evolution in public schools?



**An overwhelming majority of American Orthodox Christians DO NOT support secularity of education in the public schools.**

Do you agree with the statement "It is important that public schools keep religion and religious issues 'out of classrooms'"



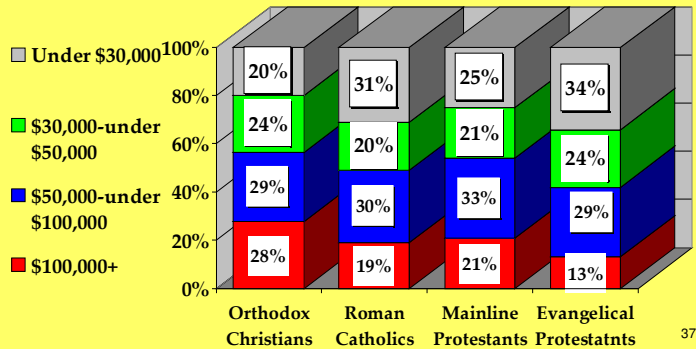
**And How "Different" Are We?**

**Some Interesting Facts about American Orthodox Christians Versus US Roman Catholics and Protestants**

Source: 2009 US Religious Landscape Survey by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

## American Orthodox Christians have higher income level than Roman Catholics and Protestants

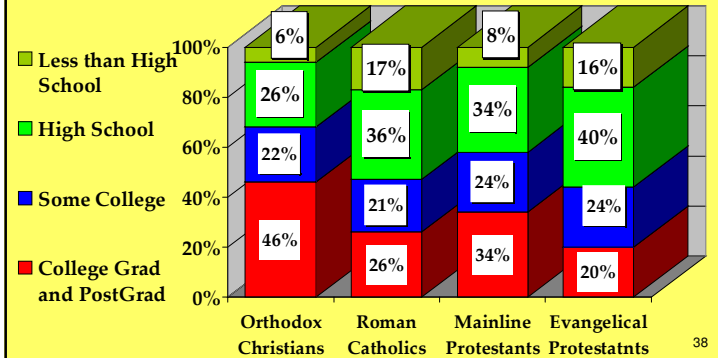
Annual Income Level



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## Which is not surprising, because American Orthodox Christians also have higher education level than Roman Catholics and Protestants

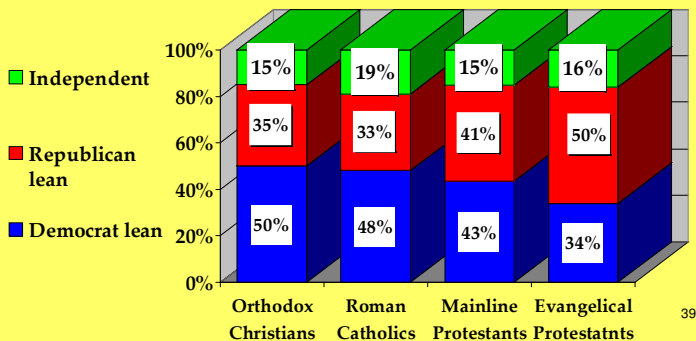
Educational Level



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## American Orthodox Christians are more "liberal" in their political preferences than Roman Catholics or Protestants

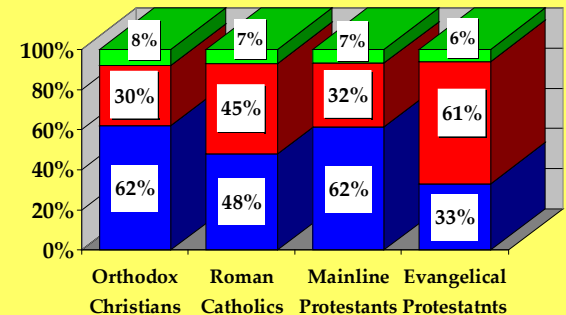
In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat or Independent?



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## In their attitudes towards abortion, 62% of American Orthodox Christians are "pro choice" and only 30% "pro life"

Legend:  
■ Don't know  
■ Abortion should be ILLEGAL in all or most cases  
■ Abortion should be LEGAL in all or most cases

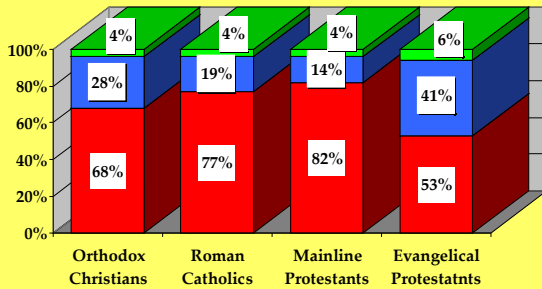


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## Vast majority of American Orthodox Christians are quite flexible in interpreting official Church teachings

Which of the following statements comes CLOSEST to your view?

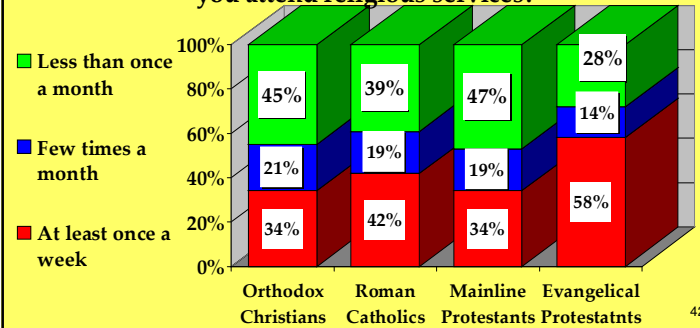
- Neither/Both/Don't know
- There is only ONE true way to interpret the teachings of my religion
- There is MORE than one true way to interpret the teachings of my religion



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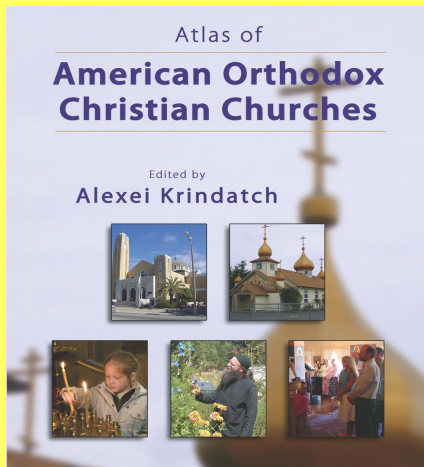
## Orthodox Christians DO NOT practice their faith in a particularly strong manner: they attend Church less frequently than Roman Catholics or Evangelical Christians

Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?



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## New Source of Various Information on US Orthodox Churches: Available on Amazon.com



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When you're back home, look for more information on Orthodox Church life in US at:

[www.orthodoxreality.org](http://www.orthodoxreality.org)

or write me to [Akrindatch@aol.com](mailto:Akrindatch@aol.com)

**Now is time for difficult questions:  
please, ask!**

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