

ABSTRACT

In 1965, Fr Alexander Schmemmann outlined a program of renewal designed to empower Orthodox Christianity in North America to overcome the degrading influence of secularism on Church life. Despite much success in several areas, Schmemmann's program remains incomplete. In particular, the Orthodox parish has yet to regain what Schmemmann calls its "missionary character" according to which the parish must learn to relate to the wider world and its needs as servant, rather than as beneficiary. This project seeks to complete what remains incomplete by exploring biblical, patristic, and missiological perspectives on the commandment found throughout Scripture to "seek justice." In addition, this project relies on data collected through survey work designed to explore and quantify the following among Orthodox Christians:

- i. basic attitudes toward social action,
- ii. sources of personal beliefs about social action, and
- iii. actual and potential sources of motivation for increasing personal involvement in social action.

Using these biblical, theological, and empirical resources, this project develops a new model of ministry in two parts: (1) a "moral theology" that promotes a deeper and more inviting understanding of ministry to the poor and suffering from an Orthodox perspective, and (2) a set of five basic principles for strengthening parish commitment to the two coequal liturgies of the Church—the eucharistic Liturgy celebrated at the holy altar, and what Orthodox missiologists call the "liturgy after the Liturgy" of compassionate ministry to the stranger and the neglected. The goal of the new model is to replace what Schmemmann calls the false ideal of "serving the parish" with a strong movement toward creating "servant parishes" devoted to providing relief and solidarity to those in need.