

A Prayer for Missions

***God of truth and love; Father Son and Holy Spirit,
Hear our prayer for those who do not know You.***

***That they may come to a saving knowledge of the truth and that Your
Name may be praised among all peoples of the world.***

***Sustain, inspire and enlighten Your servants who bring them the Gospel.
Bring fresh vigor to wavering faith; sustain our faith when it is still
fragile.***

***Continually renew missionary zeal in ourselves and in the Church;
raise up new missionaries who will follow You to the ends of the world***

***Make us witnesses to Your goodness; full of love, strength and faith
– for Your glory and the salvation of the entire world***

***Through the prayers of St. Paul, St. Fotini,
Sts Cyril and Methodios, Kosmas, Innocent, Nicholas of Japan
And all the missionary saints, have mercy on us and save us.
Amen***

Note to Teachers:

EXCERPTS FROM:

AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN VIEW OF NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

<http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8089.asp>

Rev. Protopresbyter George C. Papademetriou

An Orthodox scholar recently observed that there are basically three views that Christians have taken with regard to non-Christian religions. The first is that the non-Christian will be damned because there is no salvation outside the visible Body of Christ, the Church, The second is that the non-Christian may be saved in spite the religion he practices, but only through the mercy of God. The third is that the non-Christian may be saved by means of the very religion he practices, for nonChristian religions may also contain saving truths. These three views parallel the three approaches identified elsewhere as exclusivism. inclusivism and cultural pluralism.

The salvation of all people, including non-Christians, depends on the great goodness and mercy of the Omniscient and Omnipotent God who desires the salvation of all people.

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest

Grade Level: Pre K - 3rd Grade

Theme: Laborers for His Harvest

Objectives: **Introduce** the idea of symbolism – one word can have more than one meaning.
Recognize that Missionaries are doing God’s Will by teaching people about the Good News of Jesus Christ.
Learn that many people in the world have never heard about Jesus Christ.
Understand that each and every one of us is called to do God’s Will.
Read the **apple pickers** and **identify** the symbolism in the story.
Respond by collecting funds throughout Great Lent with the Mission Coin Boxes to support the work of the Mission Center.

Mission Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus,
We pray for all people, so that they may learn about You and praise You.
Please help Your missionaries teach people about You.
Help us to spread Your Word and raise up new missionaries.
Help us be good examples; full of love, strength and faith.
Have mercy on us and save us. **Amen.**

Bible Verses: *“Then Jesus said to His Disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers’.”* Matthew 9:37

“I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready to harvest.” John 4: 35 (Please note; these verses have been simplified for younger children.)

Material List:

If your students read, a copy of the prayer for each child.
A copy of the student handout **apple pickers** for each student.
Items (or pictures) to demonstrate the idea of symbolism: an American flag, a cross, a dove.
Coin boxes for each student.

Class Outline:

Begin lesson by **praying** the above prayer. *If the class does not read, then read one line and ask students to repeat. Continue through the entire prayer.*

Teacher **reads** paraphrased Bible verses.

Do Activity #1 and Activity #2.

With the classes that do not read, the teacher can read the story out loud and do the lesson orally.

Close with a **prayer.**

Ending prayer:

Either say a spontaneous prayer for Missionaries or repeat the prayer used at the beginning of class.

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest

Activity #1: Introduce the idea of symbolism. Sometimes one item represents another item. A cross is a symbol for Christianity. The American flag is a symbol for the United States of America. The dove is a symbol for the Holy Spirit.

Read **apple pickers** to your class. Talk about the mission symbolism of the story:

- Harvest = apples on the trees = those who have not heard the Good News
- Far away apple trees = those who have not heard the Good News far away
- Laborers = apple pickers = Christians = Missionaries (when they go to the far away trees)
- Apple Orchard Owner = God

Assist the class through the three activities on the second student page. Share that our Church has been mission-minded since the time of Christ. Identify the Saints Paul and Photini, each of whom dedicated their life to traveling to far-away countries, sharing our Orthodox Faith with people who had no knowledge of the love and mercy of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Activity # 2: Have your class assemble the OCMC Coin Boxes and discuss how these funds will be used to support the ministries of the Mission Center spread the Gospel around the world as we train, equip and recruit Missionaries and short-term Orthodox Mission Teams and communicate the importance of Missions to the faithful in the United States. Extra Coin Boxes are available by emailing a request to coinbox@ocmc.org or calling 904-829-5132 or 1-877-GOFORTH (463-6784).

Follow-up: If your class did not complete the handout, set aside time next week to complete. Look up the lives of Sts Paul and Photini and share with your class next week.

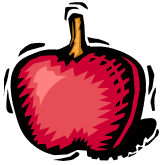
Note to Teachers:

Beginning in the Old Testament we see God's desire that all people know Him. From the very first Pentecost, Missionaries have spread the Church to nations and peoples who did not know Christ. St. Paul is a well-known Missionary Saint who took Christianity to different countries, traveling by ship and foot to reach people and cultures which did not know God. He endured countless hardships so that the Good News might be spread to many who hungered and thirsted for Christ. St. Photini (the Samaritan Woman at the well) is also a great Missionary Saint who traveled extensively, converting countless pagans to Christianity through her zealous faith in Christ. Today, the OCMC sends long-term Missionaries around the world to spread the Orthodox Church and the love of Christ. At the end of 2005, 25 OCMC Missionaries were serving in far-away countries to nurture and spread the Christian Faith.

Please stress with the children that missionaries can have different backgrounds. Some are deacons or priests and teach our faith and minister the sacraments, others teach in schools, some are health care workers. Missionaries go with many different backgrounds and use their expertise to build up the Church in the country they serve. They can be single, married, old or young. Today, only one of every three people are Christian. In addition, one of every three people have yet to hear of Jesus Christ.

*2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest*

Apple pickers



Once upon a time there was a man who owned an apple orchard. He had planted and cared for the apple trees for many years. One day he looked at the trees and saw that the trees had produced many apples that were ready to be picked. Some apples were red. Others were green or yellow. The apple orchard owner wanted to hire apple pickers to harvest the apples.

When the workers arrived at the apple orchard, the owner gave them instructions. He said to them, "I am going to go away. I will be back soon. The apples are ready to be picked. Pick all of them and put them in boxes in the storehouse. Some of the apples are close to my house. There are also apple trees which are very far away from my house. Please pick all my apples; the close ones and the far ones." Then he gave them ladders to reach the top of the trees, boxes to store the apples in and the key to the storehouse.



Some of the workers put their ladders on the close trees and began to pick apples. Some moved the filled boxes into a warehouse. Some of the workers made sandwiches so that the other workers did not have to stop picking apples. The workers stayed close to the apple grower's house and did not want to go to pick the apples which were far away.

Before long, the apple pickers had picked the fruit on the trees that were close to the owner's house. No one wanted to pick the apples on the trees that were far away. The apple pickers wanted to work near the house. Some moved the boxes to the warehouse. Others brought the boxes back to the trees. Some sorted the apples. Others shined the apples. No one went to the trees that were far away. The apples on those trees fell to the ground.



When the owner returns, the apple pickers will proudly show off the filled apple boxes. But who knows how happy the owner will be when he looks out and sees all the far away trees with apples that were not picked.

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest

Memory Verse:



The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of the Harvest will send out workers. Matthew 9:37



Match the words in the columns...

Harvest

Apple grower

Apple picker or worker

God

Christians

People who do not know God

Fill in the blanks with a word from the word list

God wants _____ to know about Him.

_____ go to far away places to teach people about Jesus.

_____ and _____ are names of two Orthodox missionaries.

Do you want to be a missionary when you grow up?

Word List:

St. Paul, St. Photini, everyone, some people, no one, Pirates, Missionaries

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest

Grade level: Grades 4-8

Theme: Laborers for His Harvest

Objectives: **Introduce** the idea that Missionaries have preached the Good News around the world from the time of the Apostolic Church.
Recognize that the OCMC follows the example of the Apostolic Church and sends Missionaries to assist new or persecuted Churches.
Explain that Missionaries serve in different capacities; priests, health care workers, teachers, catechists, etc. which build up the Church.
Discuss that our response to Missions around the world is critical.
Respond by collecting funds for the work of the Mission Center using the Mission Coin Box.

Prayer: The Mission Prayer

Bible Verse: *“Then He said to His Disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”* Matthew 9:37

“Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.” John 4: 35

Material list:

OCMC Mission Prayer
 Bibles or a photocopy with the verses so each student can read the Bible verse.
 Copies of Activity #1 handout for each student
 Coin Boxes for Activity #2

Class Outline:

Begin the lesson by **praying** the Mission Prayer.
 Have a student **read** the Bible passage.
Activity #1 apple pickers
 Read the **story**
 Turn over and follow directions for the 2nd side of the **worksheet**
 Encourage **discussion**
Activity #2 Coin Boxes
Closing Prayer

Ending prayer:

Ask your students to offer a **silent prayer** that the Orthodox people in the United States may respond to the Will of God by devoting their time, talent and funds to mission work.

2006 Mission Lesson Plan

Laborers for His Harvest

Activity #1: Hand out student sheets. Explain how one item can represent another idea or concept. A cross is a symbol for Christianity. The American flag is a symbol for the United States of America. The dove is a symbol for the Holy Spirit. A decorated pine tree is a symbol for Christmas. Take turns **reading apple pickers** out loud.

- Harvest = apples on the trees = those who have not heard the Good News
- Far away apple trees = those who have not heard the Good News far away
- Laborers = apple pickers = Christians = Missionaries (when they go to the far away trees)
- Apple Orchard Owner = God

Discuss the connection between the Bible quotes, the story and the lives of two great Saints, Sts. Paul and Photini, who **responded** by committing their life to sharing with others the life-giving gift of God's love and salvation. Work through page two 'something to read' 'something to think about' and 'talk about it' sections.

Activity # 2: Have your class assemble the OCMC Coin Boxes and discuss how these funds will be used to support the ministries of the Mission Center spread the Gospel around the world as we train, equip and recruit Missionaries and short-term Orthodox Mission Teams and communicate the importance of Missions to the faithful in the United States. Extra Coin Boxes are available by emailing a request to coinbox@ocmc.org or call 904-829-5132 or 1-877-GOFORTH (463-6784).

Follow up: Assign students the task of looking up the lives of Sts Paul and Photini and have them share what they learnt with the class the following week. Contact the OCMC so that, when a Missionary returns to the United States for fund raising, they include your community in their tour.

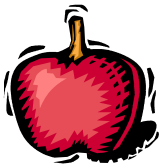
Note to Teachers:

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Please stress with the children that missionaries can have different backgrounds. Some are deacons or priests and teach our faith and minister the sacraments, others teach in schools, some are health care workers. Missionaries go with many different backgrounds and use their expertise to build up the Church in the country they serve. They can be single, married, old or young. Today, only one of every three people are Christian. In addition, one of every three people have yet to hear of Jesus Christ.

*2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest*

Apple pickers



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When the workers arrived at the apple orchard, the owner gave them instructions. He said to them, "I am going to go away. I will be back soon. The apples are ready to be picked. Pick all of them and put them in boxes in the storehouse. Some of the apples are close to my house. There are also apple trees which are very far away from my house. Please pick all my apples; the close ones and the far ones." Then he gave them ladders to reach the top of the trees, boxes to store the apples in and the key to the storehouse.



Some of the workers put their ladders on the close trees and began to pick apples. Some moved the filled boxes into a warehouse. Some of the workers made sandwiches so that the other workers did not have to stop picking apples. The workers stayed close to the apple grower's house and did not want to go to pick the apples which were far away.

Before long, the apple pickers had picked the fruit on the trees that were close to the owner's house. No one wanted to pick the apples on the trees that were far away. The apple pickers wanted to work near the house. Some moved the boxes to the warehouse. Others brought the boxes back to the trees. Some sorted the apples. Others shined the apples. No one went to the trees that were far away. The apples on those trees fell to the ground.



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Student's page

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest

Something to read



Saints Paul and Photini lived during the time of Christ. Once they became Christian they traveled far and wide and devoted their life to telling other people about Jesus and the love and forgiveness He offers. They are still remembered today as two of the Churches most devoted Missionary Saints. What an example for us! God wants the world to know about Him. The Bible is clear. The lives of the Saints prove that Missions is a priority of the Church. What are you going to do with your life?



Think about this:

"I do not believe in the salvation of anyone who does not try to save others." St. John Chrysostom; *Bria, Ion 1986 Go Forth In Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission. Geneva WCC: p 29.*)

"How can they hear without someone preaching to them?" -- Romans 10:14

"Someone asked 'Will people who have never heard the Gospel be saved?' It is more a question with me whether we -- who have the Gospel and fail to give it to those who do not have it -- can be saved." -- Charles Spurgeon; Baptist Missionary



- † **Think about what the above quotes have to say to you. Talk about it!**
- † **How important is it to do Missions?**
- † **What kind of apple picker are you?**
- † **Are most of the apples in your neighborhood picked?**
- † **Would you ignore directions God gave you?**

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest

Grade level: High School

Theme: Laborers for His Harvest

Objectives:

Learn how Missionaries are called to serve.

Investigate God's calling to become laborers for His Harvest.

Understand that each of us is called to do God's Will.

Respond to the needs around the world by collecting funds for the work of the Mission Center by using the Mission Coin Boxes throughout Great Lent.

Introduce Project Mexico and St. Innocent Orphanage to your class

<http://www.projectmexico.org/>.

Introduce Orthodox Youth Outreach to the students and encourage your class to be in touch with OYO to see about participating in an inner-city domestic mission project. (<http://www.orthodoxyouthoutreach.net/index.htm>)

Prayer: The Mission Prayer

Bible Verses:

"Then He said to His Disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'." Matthew 9:37

"Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest." John 4:35

Material list:

OCMC Mission Prayer

New Testament Bible

Copies of both student-pages for each student.

A coin box for each student

Class Outline:

Begin the lesson by **praying the Mission Prayer**.

Have a student **read the Bible passage** and then **paraphrase** the verse in their own words.

Activity #1

Activity #2

Close with a **prayer**.

2006 Mission Lesson Plan

Laborers for His Harvest

Activity #1: This age group has two hand outs. Begin with **the first Handout** and then work through the **Do you want to be a missionary in training? Then:** Interspersed throughout the text are statistics and quotes to begin the discussion. Encourage students to participate in sharing their thoughts and questions. **Project Mexico** has been involving young people in the alleviation of suffering by building homes for Mexico's poor. Hundreds of homes have been built for needy families with the help of nearly 10,000 volunteers. **St. Innocent Orphanage** in Tijuana provides a home for teenage boys who live on the streets or who have been put out of other orphanages.

Activity #2: Have your class assemble the OCMC Coin Boxes and discuss how these funds will be used to support the ministries of the Mission Center spread the Gospel around the world as we train, equip and recruit Missionaries and short-term Orthodox Mission Teams and communicate the importance of Missions to the faithful in the United States. Extra Coin Boxes are available by emailing a request to coinbox@ocmc.org or call 904-829-5132 or 1-877-GOFORTH (463-6784).

Conclusion: Finish by asking the students to offer a **silent prayer** that they may be given the spiritual strength to respond to the Gospel Message throughout Great Lent.

Follow-up: Assign two students to research the lives of Sts Paul and Photini. Have each present their findings to the class the following week. Play the 'Insiders Outsiders' game as an exercise to help the students understand the concept of cross-cultural sensitivity.

Introduce **Orthodox Youth Outreach OYO** to the students. This ministry of the Antiochian Orthodox Church (open to Orthodox youth of all jurisdictions) has been designed to provide local parishes with the resources necessary to involve junior and senior high students in local community service and short-term mission projects. These tools are made available through a four step service-learning process known as E4 (expose, engage, equip, and entrust). The strategy behind E4 is to move students from observers to leaders. This is accomplished using a stair-cased program centered on carefully chosen service projects. Each project is chosen based upon specific criteria known to be meaningful in service-learning contexts. In addition, an orientation and debriefing component maximizes the significance of these projects.

Print the testimony from Fr. Kevin Scherer (*NAC Teen SOYO OYO Coordinator*) and pass out to the students to take home and think about. Next week ask the kids to discuss participating in a project.

<http://www.orthodoxyouthoutreach.net/testimonies-2004-LA-Scherer.htm>

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest
the first Handout

When does God call people to long-term missionary service?

“I do not believe in the salvation of anyone who does not try to save others.” St. John Chrysostom; (Bria, Ion 1986 Go Forth In Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission. Geneva WCC: p 29.)

- † 21% were called as a result of a missions education program in their local church.
- † 20% felt God calling them after listening to a Missionary speak.
- † 19% were called because of their own family's Missions vision.
- † 10% heard God's call through reading about missions.

Take these steps to see if God is calling YOU to Missions!

"Someone asked ‘Will people who have never heard the Gospel be saved?’ It is more a question with me whether we -- who have the Gospel and fail to give it to those who have not -- can be saved." -- Charles Spurgeon
<http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/slogans.htm>

- † Pray.
- † Read everything about missions and missionaries that you can – twice a year the Mission Center publishes a Mission Magazine. Read all the articles!
- † At www.ocmc.org sign up for the Mission listserver to stay informed.
- † Get involved. Take your Coin Box home, fill it up and bring it back to Church.
- † Talk about Missions. Share with family and friends. Talk to your parents and priest about missions.
- † Go to <http://www.orthodoxyouthoutreach.net/index.htm> and consider an inner city domestic mission project with OYO.
- † Organize a service project at a local soup kitchen.
- † Encourage your class to organize a fundraiser for Missions.
- † Go hear a missionary speak the next time one comes to your church.
- † Contact Project Mexico at <http://www.projectmexico.org/> and see about going to help for a week
- † After high school, go on a [short-term missions trip](#)

Our ability to do God’s Will in our life depends on some important factors:

“Then He said to His Disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” Matthew 9:37

- † An open mind
- † The willingness to listen
- † A heart which is obedient and open to change
- † Motivation to make a difference
- † Endurance to see the vision through to its’ completion.

“Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.” John 4:35

"How can they hear without someone preaching to them?" -- Romans 10:14

2006 Mission Lesson Plan

Laborers for His Harvest

Do you want to be a Missionary in Training? Then:

1. Strive to grow in Christ – Pray, read the Bible, go to Church. Live a good Christian life and don't be afraid to ask for forgiveness if you have done something to hurt or anger another person.
2. Be Humble - When a Missionary is assigned to a mission country, he or she must remember that they have been called by God and sent by the Church to accomplish certain objectives. Missionaries 'serve' the church. Work on being a servant. In addition, keep in mind that a Missionary will learn a great deal from the people he/she is going to serve.
3. Be Sensitive - Missionaries serve in different cultures and minister to people of different ethnic backgrounds. They try to fit in with the people of the country they serve while remaining Christian models, examples and teachers. Being sensitive and trying to fit in is a way Missionaries show respect for the culture and the people they serve. Begin by learning to be sensitive now...at home, church or when you go to serve at a soup kitchen or nursing home.
4. Be Determined - Learning a language is not easy. Learning to eat different foods and traveling through a foreign country may not be easy. Missionaries must be determined to complete their task.
5. Be Adaptable - Missionaries must learn to adapt to a new home and new friends. Sometimes things don't go their way. Sometimes getting a flat tire can alter their plans in a big way. The repair services we take for granted in the United States are often not available in mission locations. Adaptability helps in many different situations both for Missionaries and Missionaries in Training.
6. Adopt the culture - For example, we often talk about "our" president or "our" high school or "our" church. When missionaries adopt the culture and people they have gone to serve, they follow a long history of Orthodox Mission tradition. The lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodios are an example of missionaries adopting the culture and respecting the language and customs of the people. These two Missionary brothers helped create a written alphabet for the Slavic peoples.

Student's page

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest
 Adult Bible Study

Theme: Laborers for His Harvest

Objectives: **Study** the missiological themes of Matthew 9:35-38, Luke 10:1-3 and John 4:35.
Introduce the thought that many people are called to be Missionaries.
Learn about the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, which is the official Mission agency for the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA.) The Mission Center **sends** long-term missionaries and short-term Orthodox Mission Teams, supports indigenous clergy, awards philanthropic grants, and nurtures the Orthodox Church in 29 countries around the world.
Reflect on the mission relevance of two quotes from Orthodox Saints.

Prayer: The Mission Prayer

Bible Verses:

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His Disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’.” Matthew 9:35-38

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, ‘The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ‘Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves’.” Luke 10:1-3

“Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.” John 4:35

Quotes from Saints:

St. John Chrysostom
 St. Tikhon

Material list: OCMC Mission Prayer
 New Testament Bible
 Copies of handouts for participants

Class Outline: **Pray the Mission Prayer.**
 Work through the **handouts.**

The Bible study is broken down into three sections. The introduction is “**Sowing**,” the main portion is entitled “**Growing**” and the wrap-up section is “**Harvest**.” In the Sowing section you may ask someone to read a section or line out loud or you may ask that everyone read the section silently. Then work through the next two sections encouraging as much discussion as your group is comfortable with.

Close with a **prayer.**

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest
 Adult Bible Study

Sowing:

- † By the end of 2005 the Orthodox Christian Mission Center supported 25 long term missionaries who serve the Church around the world. Should there be more? Less?
- † While it is true that not everyone is called to be a long-term missionary, could it be that more people are called than are actually answering Christ's call? Why would this be?

A Protestant Mission agency poll asking Missionaries how they were called to serve, concluded that:

- 21% were called as a result of a Mission education event in their local church.
- 20% felt God calling them after listening to a Missionary speak.
- 19% were called because of their own family's Missions vision.
- 10% heard God's call through reading about Missions.

Growing:

Read Matthew 9:35-38

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His Disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’.”

We see our Compassionate Christ as he traveled to teach, preach and heal. He saw the spiritual and physical needs of His Creation and He was moved to respond to them.

Today, even though we are connected by satellite and internet, many of us remain immune to the spiritual hunger and the physical suffering which exist around the world. We often choose to ignore or isolate ourselves from the needs of others and the reality of their hopelessness, pain and struggles. We focus on ourselves. Christ, in His earthly ministry, walked with awareness and compassion for others. His focus was on others.

There are a few relevant points to discuss here. The first is how can we become more sensitive to the reality of the fact that 33% of the world has not yet heard the Gospel message of love, transformation and salvation which Christ offers? The second is to note that this passage expresses a sequence of events which Orthodox have imitated for centuries. Christ went, He taught, He preached and then He healed. We go. Then we teach and preach. In addition to spiritual nourishment, we offer relief from the physical struggles which often accompany poverty. The third is that we must remember that God

2006 Mission Lesson Plan
Laborers for His Harvest
 Adult Bible Study

Commissions – commands - us to respond (Read Matthew 28: 19-20.) Here, and in various other places in the Old and New Testament, we receive God’s command for us to ‘go’ (be sent) to bring His family to Him.

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|--------------------|--------------|
| ○ 1 Samuel 17:46 | ○ Mark 11:17 |
| ○ Psalm 22:27 | ○ Mark 13:10 |
| ○ Isaiah 49:6 | ○ Rev 7:9 |
| ○ Matthew 28:19-20 | |

Finally, it is important to note that in Matthew 28:19-20, it is the Lord of the Harvest who **sends** laborers into the Harvest.

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) is the international Mission agency of the Orthodox Church. In 2005, 29 different countries around the world were assisted through the **sending** of short-term Orthodox Missions Teams, long-term missionaries, provision of financial support for indigenous clergy, philanthropic grants, theological training of men and women, building of Churches and other designated grants. The Mission Center is the means for Orthodox in the United States to respond to our Lord and Saviour’s Commission to “**send** laborers into His harvest”

1. In imitation of Christ, what are each of us doing to walk with awareness and compassion for others?
2. What are we doing to facilitate sending “laborers into His harvest”?
3. For Missions to happen there is a great need for each of us to make commitments of our time, talent and resources. How can we begin to make this a priority? What are we doing in our life, both with our time and with our resources, which will make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Read Luke 10:1-3

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, ‘The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ‘Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves’.”

In this passage, we see Christ Commissioning the Seventy. First, the need is stated (the harvest is great; the workers are few). Next, we pray. Then Christ takes action and **sends** the seventy, two by two. See notes in the Orthodox Study Bible (pps. 164 & 165.) The Seventy are **sent** as missionaries – as Apostles. Their response was vital to the spreading of the Gospel and the establishment of the Early Church. The establishment and nurture

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of the Church occurs through the initiative and power of God. Yet, He, in His infinite power initiates cooperation with His Creation. This is not an uncommon occurrence. For example, when a child is conceived and then born into the world, we see God cooperating with His Creation so that the miracle of life (a God-given gift) may occur. In Missions, we see a similar cooperation between the Creation and the Creator.

“Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.” John 4:35

- What is the Harvest?
- Who is to bring in the Harvest?
- How does this verse differ from Matthew 9:36-38?
- Comment on how the cooperation between The Creator and Creation is related to Missions.

Harvest:

“I do not believe in the salvation of anyone who does not try to save others.” St. John Chrysostom; (Bria, Ion 1986 Go Forth In Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission. Geneva WCC: p 29.)

Discuss the implication of this great Saint’s quote. If we are complacent and resigned to living our life without responding to the spiritual and physical needs of His Creation, we jeopardize our own salvation. Following is another great Saint’s inspiring words which offer us some more concrete ideas about how we might work out our ‘favorite task.’

“For each of us the dissemination of the Christian Faith must be a favorite task, close to our hearts and precious to us; in this task each member of the Church must take an active part - some by personal missionary effort, some by monetary support and service to the ‘needs of the saints’, and some by prayer to the Lord that He might ‘establish and increase His Church,’ that He might ‘teach the word of truth’ to those who do not know Christ, and ‘might reveal to them the gospel of righteousness, uniting them to His Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’.” St. Tikhon (sermon, March 17, 1907)

Discuss how each of us might respond to the needs around the world. Missionaries need monthly support from individuals **and** churches. Take this need to your parish council and ask them to commit to support a Missionary. Make an individual or family decision to support a Missionary. This way you and your parish are ‘sending’ Missionaries and helping to establish and nurture the Church around the world.