

# *I Am Orthodox!*

## **Who Are We?**

As Orthodox Christians in America, we are a diverse mixture of peoples from throughout the world. Looking back four or five generations, many of us can trace our families to immigrants from Greece, the Middle East, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, Siberia and the Far East. Traveling long distances, our ancestors established new families and communities on the North American continent. They discovered here the same Orthodox faith that Native Alaskans had adopted in 1794 from Russian missionaries to America. In less than 200 years, Orthodox parishes have populated North America with more than 4-5 million people!

Today, our churches include many new people who have found their home in the Orthodox Church. They or their ancestors come from a multitude of nations—Irish, Italian, English, Scandinavian and German cultures from Western and Northern Europe, as well as a mixture of traditional cultures from Africa, Asia, Mexico and South America. Today, we not only live in multicultural societies, but in multi-cultural parishes in Canada, the United States and Mexico.

## **We Are God's Witnesses!**

As God's children, we are called to witness to our faith. We are called to understand who we are as Orthodox Christians and to bear witness to God with our families and friends by being good neighbors, reaching out to help others and standing up and protecting those who are being mistreated or are victims of discrimination or prejudice. We are also called to know and live our faith; to correct misconceptions and wrong information about our beliefs, as well as to respect people of other faiths.

*"I Am Orthodox"* is a study program that will help us discover and develop ways we can continue to become living examples of Christ in our lives, while we help to build up the societies in which we live. We are responsible for our behavior in all the communities and "families" in which we live: home, church, schools, neighborhood, government, the environment, etc.

## **We Are God's People- The Church!**

God has made us His People through the sacraments of the Church. We became God's children in Baptism. He anointed us with the oil of Holy Chrism and called us to be His People: to hear, understand and proclaim His Word as God's prophets; to protect and care for the world as His anointed kings—clothed in the white garment of holiness; and to offer up to Him everything we are and do as a holy gift and service to God, as gifts offered by priests. God calls us to restore the world as the Paradise He created for His people in the Garden. He calls us to everlasting life without end in His Kingdom. It is through life in the Church that we become His holy people, who are called to do His work in this world!