

Extensions of Our Selves *continued from front cover*

These trips have been an enormous help to those struggling to recover, but even more so these trips have allowed our parish (and the youth from our parish) to live the gospel in action. It is very unlikely that on our own our parish would have been able to do all of the behind-the-scenes coordination required to make these four trips happen – we simply don’t have the connections, resources, and skills needed to do this.

But IOCC does.

This is but one of many examples of how a parish benefits from these many national agencies – and why we parish-es should see these ministries as being truly an extension of ourselves.

Yours in Christ,

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If you wish to contribute a reflection to the next issue of Priest to Priest, please email asiegel@iocc.org

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PRIEST *to* PRIEST

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR ORTHODOX CLERGY

2025 Issue 2

Extensions of Our Selves

A Reflection on Humanitarian Relief by Fr. Panteleimon Dalianis

It’s quite common in the private sector to “outsource” various business tasks – such as accounting, human resources, and marketing. And, of course, outsourcing simply means that the company either doesn’t have the skills or perhaps isn’t big enough to have an internal department for this task. For many years I have been of the school of thought that we should look at all of our national Orthodox ministries (IOCC being one of these) in a similar way.

Most, if not all, of our parishes don’t have the resources or skills required to focus heavily on humanitarian aid, sending missionaries abroad, creating publishing houses, or launching internet radio stations. The purpose of the parish is—as the Greek Orthodox regulations put it—to be “the local eucharistic community of the Church in a given locality.” Which, for most of our parishes, means serving the services, preaching and teaching the gospel, and shining the light of the love of Christ to the community where we find ourselves.

Which brings us back to this notion of “outsourcing.” The gospel is very clear that, as a church (and here I mean the church as a catholic/global body), we ought to help those whose lives have been upended by natural disaster, spreading the gospel to “all nations,” evangelizing through the internet, and publishing to spread the word of God (and more).

But if our parishes are not equipped to do this, then how does it get done? It gets done through the hard work of Orthodox service and missionary organizations across the US.

As parishes, we really need to see these agencies as extensions of ourselves (as opposed to separate entities that periodically send us appeals for money). I would even argue that, if we are truly Orthodox Christian parishes, these agencies have a right to some of the resources that we generate – if we fail to support these ministries, we are actually withholding money that belongs to them. It’s very clear in the epistles of St. Paul that the churches he founded were the churches that underwrote his ministry as a traveling preacher (an early example of outsourcing).

On a personal note, at the parish where I currently serve outside of Milwaukee, and at my previous parish in Chicago, through the work of IOCC (in particular it’s Action Team ministry), my wife, Presvytera Konstantina, has been able to coordinate three groups to clean up after natural disasters— in Fayetteville, NC; Paducah, KY; and Fort Myers, FL. A fourth trip is scheduled for this May in Erwin, TN.

continued on back cover



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