

Alexei D. Krindatch

EVOLVING VISIONS  
OF THE  
ORTHODOX PRIESTHOOD  
IN AMERICA



**Patriarch Athenagoras  
Orthodox Institute**





Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute  
2311 Hearst Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94709  
tel. - 510-649-3450  
fax - 510-841-6605  
[www.orthodoxinstitute.org](http://www.orthodoxinstitute.org)  
[paoi@gtu.edu](mailto:paoi@gtu.edu)

By Alexei D. Krindatch (Akrindatch@aol.com)  
Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, Berkeley, CA.  
(www.orthodoxinstitute.org)

## **Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America: a Study Report**

### **Table of Content**

Introduction and Executive Summary.	p.2
Part 1. Who Are American Orthodox Clergy? Personal Backgrounds of Priests.	p.6
Part 2. What Keep Them Working? Sources of Joy and Satisfaction in Orthodox Priesthood.	p.16
Part. 3 With What Do Orthodox Clergy Struggle? The Challenges of Priesthood in America.	p.25
Part 4. What Do Clergy Believe Ought to be Openly Discussed in the Church?	p.37
Part 5. Who Helps and What Can Be Helpful in the Life and in Ministry of an Orthodox Priest?	p.49
Part 6. What Do Clergy Think About Various Church Issues?	p.58
6.1. Notion of Priesthood and Status of Priests	p.59
6.2. Democracy in the Church	p.65
6.3. Changes and Innovations in the Church	p.75
6.4 Ecumenical Attitudes and Relations to the Outside Non-Orthodox Community	p.85

## **Introduction and Executive Summary**

To date, very little has been done to study systematically broad patterns and trends in the American Orthodox priesthood. The survey “Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America” was designed to answer the question: “What does it mean to be an Orthodox Christian priest in America in the beginning of the third millennium?” The study completed by the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute in the spring-summer of 2006 is unique in several ways.

First, it is based on a national survey of the priests in two largest American Orthodox jurisdictions: the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America (GOA) and the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). The questionnaires were sent to all parish clergy in the Greek Orthodox Metropolises of Chicago and San Francisco and in the OCA’ Dioceses of the West and Midwest. 226 priests (115 GOA and 111 OCA) participated in this study and completed questionnaires – a response rate of 88%.

	GOA -San Francisco	GOA - Chicago	OCA-West	OCA – Mid West	Total
Number of surveys sent to parish clergy	64	65	51	78	258
Number of surveys completed and returned	58	57	41	70	226
<b>% of surveys returned</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>88%</b>

**GOA – Priests of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**

**OCA – Priests of the Orthodox Church in America**

Second, this study focused on four aspects of priesthood:

- the sources of satisfaction in the work of an Orthodox priest in America;
- the challenges and problems that parish clergy face;
- the sources of support that the Orthodox priests can rely upon if necessary;
- the issues in the life of the Church that Orthodox priests believe should be urgently and openly discussed.

Third, our survey also examined clergy approaches to the four subjects that are frequently debated in the Orthodox community in America:

- Notion of Priesthood and Status of Priest;
- Democracy and Openness in the Church;
- Changes and Innovations in the Orthodox Church;
- Ecumenical Attitudes and Relations to the Outside Non-Orthodox Community.

Fourth, this study looked on the differences among the priests in various age groups, between the cradle Orthodox and the convert clergy, and between priests who identified their theological stance and approach to the Church life as either “liberal,” or “moderate,” or “traditional,” or “conservative.”

Fifth, the survey’s questionnaire was developed in co-operation with scholars studying American Roman Catholic priests. Therefore, the obtained data allow for discerning trends that are unique for the Orthodox community and those which are similar with the Roman Catholic Church in this country.

Numerous insightful and, sometimes, unexpected study results are helpful in explaining current patterns in American Orthodox church life and in making certain predictions about possible future developments and changes. Many findings are also challenging as they provoke further questions or raise issues which need to be addressed.

For example, we learned that:

- A “reform oriented” faction among American Orthodox clergy is much smaller than the group of the clergy who are keen to “keep the things the way they are.” Only 27% of the priests said that their theological stance and approach to Church life are either “liberal” or “moderate,” in comparison with 73% who identified themselves as “traditional” or “conservative.”
- The survey data and study results *do not support* a commonly shared stereotype that American converts to Orthodoxy - raised either Catholics or Protestants - tend to be in many ways more conservative and “Orthodox” than cradle Orthodox Christians. At least, in the case of the parish clergy there are no significant differences between these two categories.
- The greatest divisions among American Orthodox clergy are based not on distinctions between GOA and OCA, and not on variations between age-groups or between cradle-Orthodox and convert clergy, but on the theological stance of the clergy. Indeed, the clergy who defined themselves as either “liberal” or “moderate” or “traditional” or “conservative” approach extremely differently the subjects of *Notion of Priesthood and Status of a Priest*, and *Democracy in the Church*, and *Innovations in the Church*, and *Ecumenism and Relation to the Outside not-Orthodox Community*.

- All categories of clergy – GOA and OCA, cradle Orthodox and convert, the younger and older priests - are similar in their top-choices of what has greatest importance for them as the source of satisfaction in the ministerial work. These four top-choices are: “Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments,” “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel,” “Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel,” and “Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives.”
- The “issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox Church” is seen as by far the most urgent and was chosen as “very important to be openly discussed in the Church” by the vast majority (74%) of all categories of clergy.
- Six major challenges of being an Orthodox parish priest in America are: “providing financially for my family,” “too much work,” “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America,” “apathy among parishioners,” “balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life,” “the way authority is exercised in the Church.” At the same time, out of these six challenges, only one concerns equally all categories of clergy: “the way authority is exercised in the Church.” This issue was equally frequently chosen as “great problem to me” by GOA and OCA clergy, by the priests in various ages, and by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy. The relative significance of five other problems in priestly work depends on the age of the clergyman, whether one is a cradle Orthodox or a “convert” priest, and on the size of the parishes. The greatest distinctions in clergy problems are between of two jurisdictions, that is GOA and OCA clergy struggle with quite different issues.
- Of all possible sources of support, the wives of priests (“presvyteras,” “matushkas”) are by far the most significant for all Orthodox clergy. Other sources of support that were chosen by more than 50% of clergy as “very important” are: “immediate family,” “parish council,” “parishioners,” and “bishop.”
- A very small proportion of all categories of Orthodox clergy – including those who identified themselves as “liberal” or “moderate” - supports an idea of intentional and thorough secularity of American public schools.

- All groups of clergy feel their priestly identity most strongly in performing sacramental ministry and leading worship. The majority of priests also view themselves as “men set apart:” they believe that ordination to the priesthood means an entirely new status which makes them different from the laity and they do not feel that this special distinct status is a hindrance in creating true Christian community;
- A vast majority of parish clergy – the GOA and OCA, and the younger and older priests, and the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy alike - *do not support* greater freedom for local parishes to experiment with forms of liturgical life and greater freedom for the individual believers to interpret Scripture and Orthodox tradition. Only less than one-third of the clergy are in favor of ordination of women to deaconate.
- 56% of priests declared their willingness to share in ministry with the laity by agreeing with the statement “The Orthodox Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry” (20% disagreed and 24% were neutral or unsure). In fact, however, most American Orthodox priests remain quite authoritarian in their attitudes to the organization of parish life and do not support “democracy in the Church”: they do not favor ideas of electing parish clergy and bishops; they require voiceless obedience from the faithful to the established rules in Church in general and in their own parishes; they do not tolerate the presence of different opinions in their parishes and the right of laity to pick-and-choose the parish which would suit them the best;

The following full study report is divided into six thematic parts focusing on six broad subjects. Each part is preceded by one page of the summarized most important findings and highlights. The full questionnaire used in the survey with the distribution of clergy answers on each question is posted on the PAOI’s web-site: [http://www.orthodoxinstitute.org/parish\\_needs.html](http://www.orthodoxinstitute.org/parish_needs.html)

## **Part 1. Who Are American Orthodox Clergy? Personal Backgrounds of Priests**

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- 59% of the OCA priests are converts in the comparison with only 14% in the GOA. Both in OCA and GOA, former Roman Catholics form the largest group of the converts while the second largest group are former Evangelical Christians.
- One quarter of the Greek Orthodox priests are not American born in comparison with only 10% among OCA clergy. 60% of Greek Orthodox priests older than 65 are born overseas.
- About half of the wives of American Orthodox clergy are working and about half of them stay home. However, proportion of the non-working clergy' wives is greater in GOA than in OCA: 55% and 40% respectively.
- The parishes of GOA and of OCA differ dramatically in size: an average OCA parish has 182 persons participating regularly or occasionally in the church life in comparison with 1099 persons in an average GOA parish.
- Both in GOA and OCA the parishes headed by convert clergy are much smaller than the parishes of the cradle Orthodox priests.
- The “reform oriented” group among American Orthodox clergy is much smaller than the group of the clergy who are keen to “keep the things the way they are:” only 27% of the priests said they are either “liberal” or “moderate,” in comparison with 73% who identified themselves as “traditional” or “conservative.”
- The most “conservative” wing among American Orthodox clergy (21%) is much more numerous than the group of most radical “liberals” (5%).

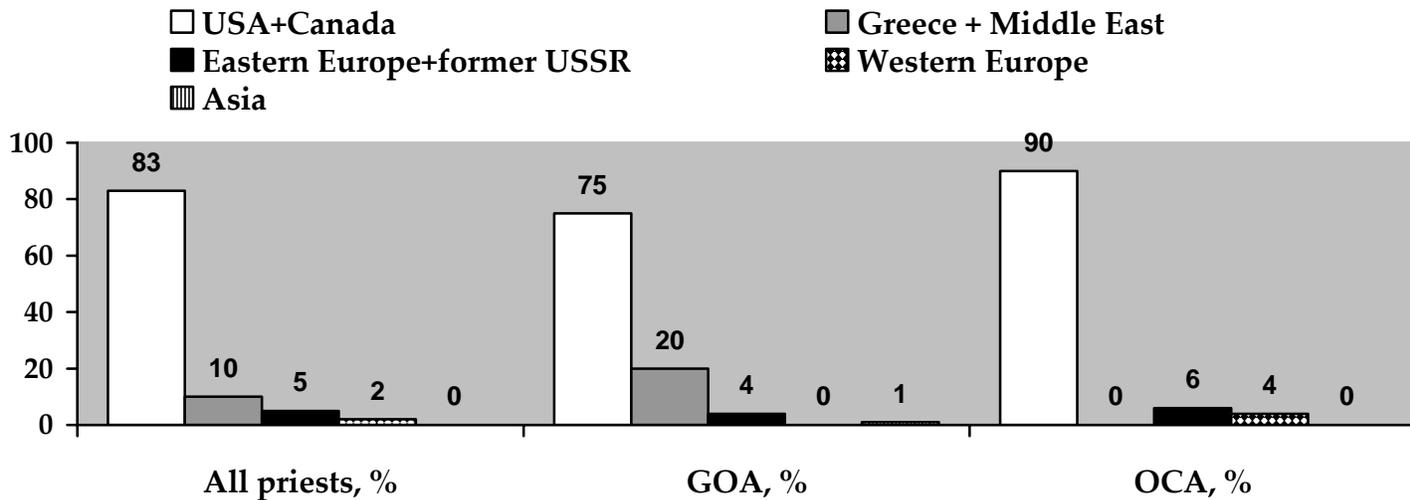
Two major American Orthodox jurisdictions – the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America (GOA) and the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) – are very distinct by the extent of the presence of the converts among their clergy - those who were born and raised in the other non-Orthodox Christian traditions. A dominant majority (59%) of the OCA priests are converts in comparison with only 14% in case of GOA. At the same time, both in OCA and GOA, former Roman Catholics form the largest group of the converts and the second largest group - again in both cases - are former Evangelical Christians.

**Tab.1 What was your Church affiliation before you became an Orthodox Christian: % of priests**

	<b>I have always been Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>I am a convert, including:</b>	Former Catholics	Former Liberal Protest.	Former Moderate Protestant	Former Evangelical Protestant	Former Agnostics
GOA, %	<b>86</b>	<b>14</b>	6	0	3	4	1
OCA, %	<b>41</b>	<b>59</b>	20	3	12	18	6
Total, %	<b>65</b>	<b>35</b>	13	1	7	11	3

GOA and OCA also differ significantly by proportion of the priests who were born overseas - outside of USA and Canada. One quarter of the Greek Orthodox priests are not American born in comparison with only 10% among OCA clergy. Predictably, the majority of immigrant clergy in GOA are persons born in Greece and Middle East (18%). In the OCA (with its Slavic/Russian roots), the priests from Eastern Europe and former USSR (6%) dominate among foreign born clergy.

**Chart 1. Where you were born? (% of priests)**



In the OCA, the proportion of immigrant clergy is nearly the same among priests in all ages. Quite differently, in GOA, the immigrant clergy form dominant majority (60%) among the senior priests who are 65 years and older, but only 11% of the GOA clergy younger than 45 are not American born..

Accordingly, 36% GOA priests say that their first “mother” language was not English in comparison with only 16% in the case of OCA clergy.

**Tab.2 What was your first “mother” language that you spoke at home as a child? (% of priests)**

	English	Any other than English language
GOA, %	64	36
OCA, %	84	16
Total, %	74	26

It should be noted, that both in GOA and OCA the proportion of priests who report not-English language as their mother language (36% and 16% respectively) is much greater than the share of the GOA and OCA clergy who are not-American born (25% and 10% respectively).

The same phenomenon was found in my earlier studies of American Orthodox Christianity (see for instance <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/krindatch.pdf>, p. 14). This fact suggests that in American Orthodox churches the clergy are more likely (but not necessarily) recruited from the persons who have stronger ethnic heritage and identity. More research is needed to confirm or disprove this thesis.

Age-wise, the priests were divided in three categories: the “youngsters” (under 45 years), the “matures” (45-64 years old) and the “seniors” (65 and older).

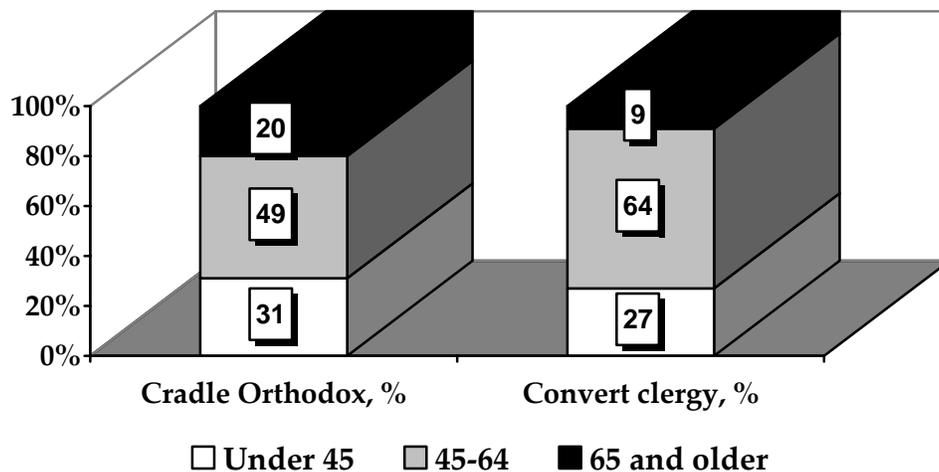
The data in below table show that the age composition of American Orthodox clergy is quite healthy: about one third are “youngsters,” more than half are “matures,” and only 16% are “seniors” who still serve full time as the parish priests. The average age of the Orthodox clergy is 51 years, and there is little difference in this respect between GOA and OCA.

**Tab.3 What is your age? (% of priests)**

	Younger than 45	45-64	65 and older	Average age, years
GOA, %	31	52	17	50
OCA, %	28	58	14	52
Total, %	30	54	16	51

There is also no significant differences in the average age of the cradle Orthodox (51 years) and the convert clergy (52) and in the proportion of the “young” priests: 31% among the cradle Orthodox and 27% among the converts. However, there are much more “seniors” in the case of the cradle Orthodox clergy (20%) than among convert clergy (9%).

**Chart 2. The Age of the Cradle Orthodox and Convert Priests (%)**



In the Orthodox Church the parish clergy are divided in two major categories: the married and unmarried celibate priests. Some of the celibate priests would also take monastic vows. The proportion of married and celibate priests vary from country to country, but in America married clergy (93%) clearly dominate over celibate (6%). There is not much difference in this respect between GOA and OCA

**Tab.4 You are: (% of priests)**

	Married Priest	Celibate Priest who are not monks	Celibate Priest who took monastic vows	Widower
GOA, %	95	2	2	1
OCA, %	91	5	3	1
Total, %	93	4	2	1

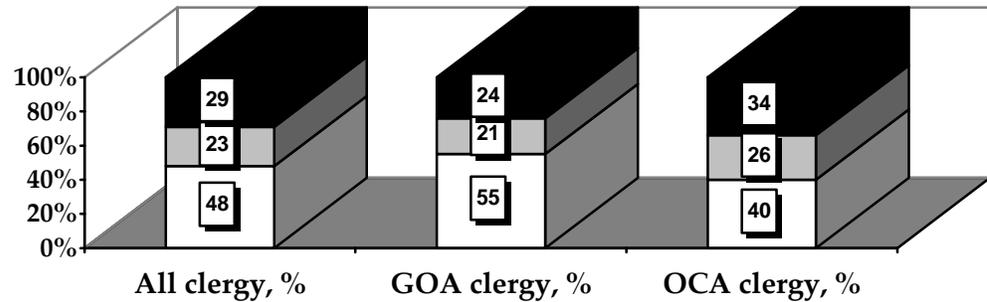
At the same time the number of celibate clergy or monk priests is significantly higher among converts (13%) than among cradle Orthodox priests (3%).

**Tab.5 You are: (% of priests)**

	Married Priest	Celibate	Priest Monk	Widower
Cradle Orthodox, %	96	2	1	1
Convert clergy, %	87	8	5	0
Total, %	93	4	2	1

Traditionally, in many Orthodox parishes the priests' wives (called "presbytera" in Greek-Byzantine or "matushka" in Slavic tradition) play a significant role and they share informally various – not sacramental and not liturgical – functions and duties with their husbands. As we will see later in this report, the American Orthodox priests consider their wives to be the major source of support in their daily parish ministries. Therefore, it was important to examine to which extent in the US, clergy wives are potentially available for the various parish chores if they would decide to get involved with their husbands ministries. In particular, do they have full or part-time secular jobs or do they stay home? The survey revealed that about half of clergy wives work (52%) and about half of them stay home (48%). However, proportion of the non-working clergy wives is greater in GOA than in OCA (55% and 40% respectively). This fact can be partially explained by the much lower salaries of the OCA clergy – the circumstance which probably does not permit their wives to stay home.

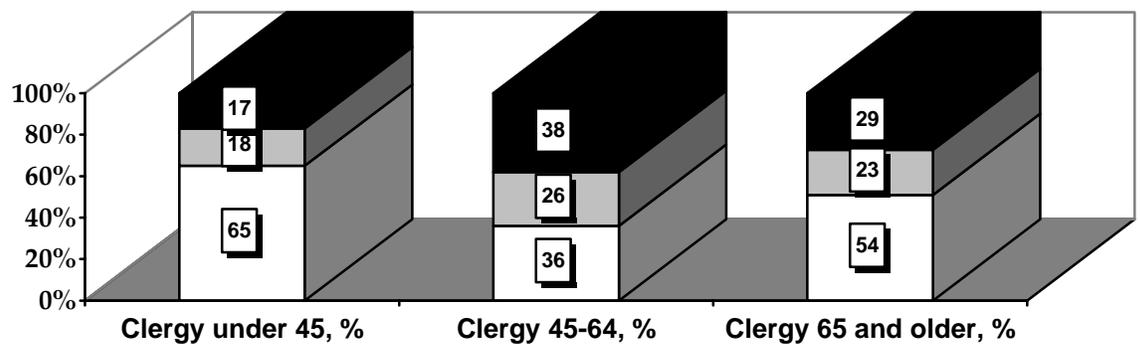
**Chart 3. The work status of the wives of the Orthodox priests (%)**



□ Wives staying home    □ Wives working part time    ■ Wives working full time

There is no difference between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in the work status of their wives, but the distinctions among various age groups of priests are significant. 65% of the wives of the young clergy (under 45 years) stay home, while 64% of the spouses of the priests in the age 45-64 are working part or full time. A possible explanation is that the wives of the younger clergy tend to stay home to be able spend time and rear their children. Another remarkable finding of the survey was that almost quarter (23%) of the wives of the senior priests (65 years and older) still work full-time.

**Chart 4. The work status of the wives of the Orthodox priests (%)**



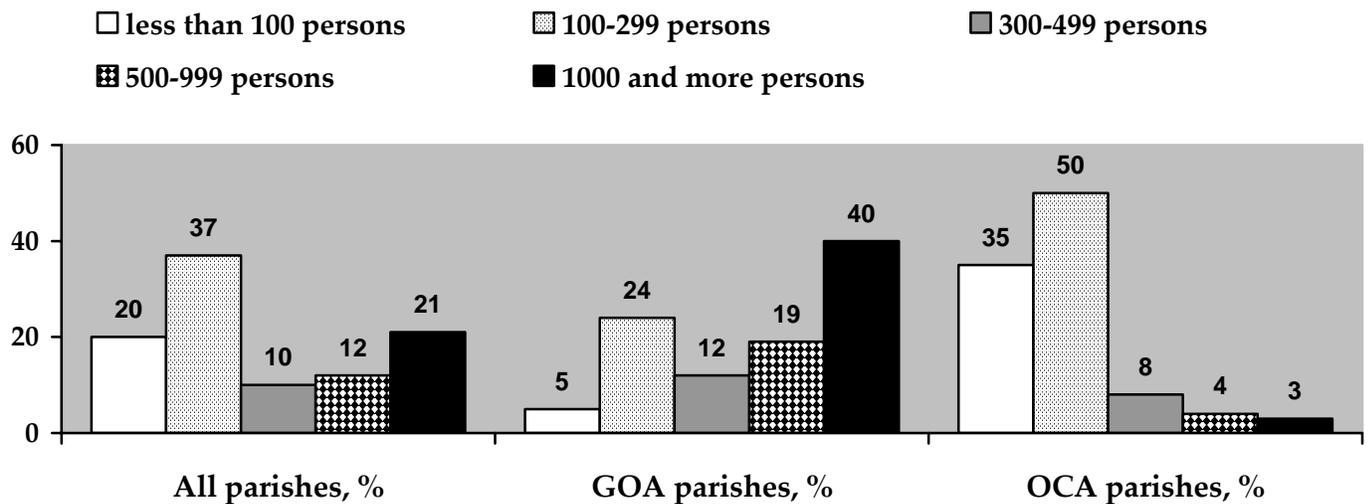
□ Wives staying home    □ Wives working part time    ■ Wives working full time

The size of a parish is one of decisive factors that has strong impact on how church life is organized. The number of parishioners determines the financial and human resources available and the range of the parish based programs. At the same time, it influences the degree of pressure put on the priest and the varieties of duties which he has to perform as well as the way the parish is administered. The major problem in estimations the size of the American Orthodox parishes is the absence of the clear and universal criteria for measuring membership. Indeed, various American Orthodox jurisdiction use different definitions of parish membership.

Further, in most cases the total number of persons associated with and participating in the Orthodox parish life is much greater than the number of those who are formally listed in parish records as “full members” (whatever it means in any given case). In order to evaluate the size of the parishes headed by the clergy participating in our study, the survey asked question: “Approximately how many persons *total* are associated *in any way* with the life of your parish: counting both adults and children, both regular and occasional attendees?” Several findings deserve particular attention.

First, the parishes of GOA and of OCA differ dramatically in size. 57% of OCA parishes have less than 300 persons associated with the parish in comparison with only 29% in the case of GOA. On the contrary, 40% of the Greek Orthodox parishes have more than 1000 persons participating in the parish life, but only 3% of the OCA parishes belong to this category. An average OCA parish has 182 persons in comparison with 1099 persons in an average GOA parish.

**Chart 5. Question: Approximately how many persons *total* are associated *in any way* with the life of your parish: counting both adults and children, both regular and occasional attendees? (% of parishes)**



Second, the parishes headed by convert clergy tend to be much smaller than the parishes of cradle Orthodox priests. This pattern is evident both in GOA and OCA. An average GOA parish headed by a cradle Orthodox priest has 1190 persons in comparison with only 382 persons in the average parish presided by the convert priests. In OCA, an average parish with cradle Orthodox priest numbers 239 persons in comparison with only 134 persons in an average parish headed by convert clergy.

**Tab6. Average number of persons in the parishes headed by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy**

	GOA parishes	OCA parishes	All parishes
Parishes headed by Cradle Orthodox priests	1190	239	903
Parishes headed by convert clergy	382	134	184
Cradle Orthodox and convert clergy combined	1099	182	656

Third, the relationship between the age of a priest and the size of a parish is different in GOA and in OCA. Generally speaking, in OCA, the “youngsters,” “matures,” and “seniors” are equally likely to minister to the smaller or to the larger parishes. Quite differently, in GOA, the older priests are much more likely to be in charge of the bigger parishes. Further, this relationship between age of a priest and the size of a parish is the same for the GOA parishes with the cradle Orthodox clergy and for the Greek Orthodox parishes presided by the convert clergy. Hence, an average GOA parish presided by the priests younger than 45 has 923 persons, by the priests in the age 45-64 – 1139 persons, and by the senior clergy older than 65 – 1369 persons.

**Tab.7 Average number of persons in the parishes headed by the clergy in various age**

	GOA parishes	OCA parishes	All parishes
Parishes headed by priests younger than 45	923	192	597
Parishes headed by priests 45-64 years old	1139	164	623
Parishes headed by priests 65 years and older	1369	186	888
All ages combined	1099	182	656

All American Orthodox jurisdictions share the same theology and doctrine, but the actual approaches of Orthodox priests to various aspects church life as well as to various social issues vary greatly from parish to parish. Based on their personal varied understandings of Orthodox doctrine and traditions, clergy (and laity alike) organize the social and religious lives of their parishes, and interact with the outside non-Orthodox community in very different ways. So far, little research has been done to examine how Orthodox parishes and individuals appropriate and “live out” Orthodox faith and tradition. In other words, we know very little how wide is the gap between “liberal” and “conservative” wings in American Orthodox Christianity and how influential each of these wings are.

In order to approach the issue of “conservatism – liberalism” among American Orthodox priests in our survey we used the hypothesis proposed by Anton Vrame (Vrame, 2005). This hypothesis suggests four types of “orthopraxy” - the way Orthodox individuals and communities live out their religious values and behave socially being influenced by their religious attitudes. These four types of religiously motivated behavior are generally based on the degree of willingness to accept or, to the contrary, reject changes and innovations.

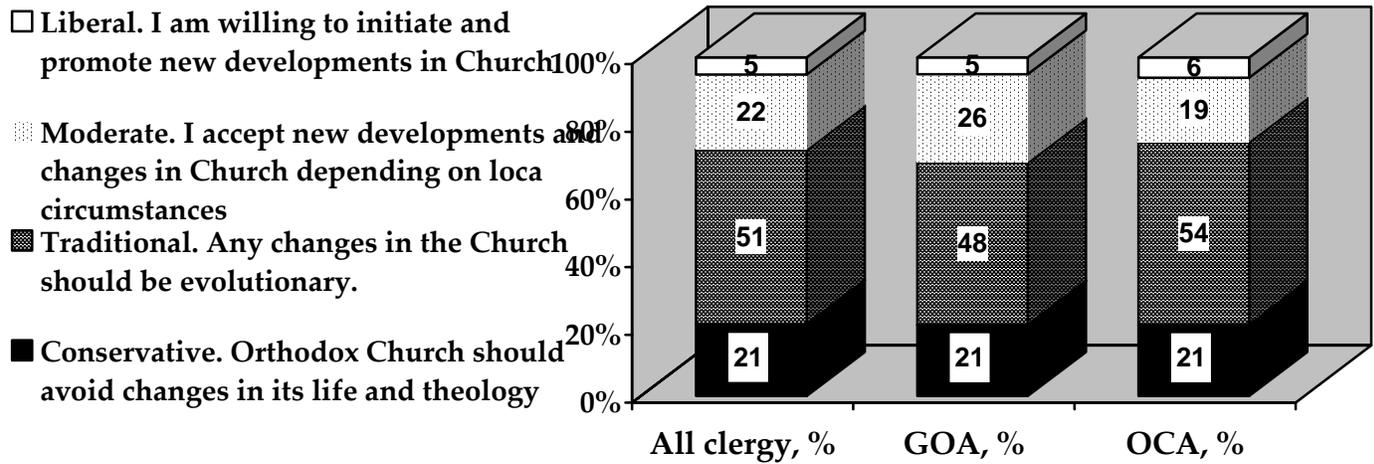
- *Conservative (Fundamentalist) Orthopraxy.* It rejects changes and emphasizes the exactness of once and forever developed practices in spite of changing local contexts. It also separates itself deliberately and eagerly from the mainstream American culture.
- *Traditional Orthopraxy.* It strives to observe Orthodox tradition and cherishes church heritage immensely, but also accepts evolutionary changes, permitting praxis to evolve slowly over time.
- *Moderate (Reform) Orthopraxy.* It supports intentional changes and is willing to “fit in” and be “accepted” by the wider American society and by mainstream American religious life.
- *Liberal (Reconstructionist) Orthopraxy.* It seeks to introduce “innovative” practices, to generally “rethink” orthopraxy and to develop a new expression for America.

The survey asked question “When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand?” The priests were given choices to identify themselves as “conservative,” “traditional,” “moderate,” and “liberal.” The survey results for all clergy and for GOA and OCA priests separately are presented below. First, it is clear that a “reform oriented” group among American Orthodox clergy is relatively small in comparison with the much stronger group of the clergy who are keen to “keep the things the way they are.” Indeed, only 27% of the priests identified themselves as either liberal (5%) or moderate (22%) in comparison with almost three quarters (72%) of respondents who said they are traditional (51%) or conservative (21%).

Second, we know from practical experiences, that in the church life and politics the most radical groups (on both sides of the spectrum) are usually the most vocal ones. In this context, the survey results show that today radical “conservative” wing among American Orthodox clergy (21%) is much more numerous than the group of radical “liberals” (5%).

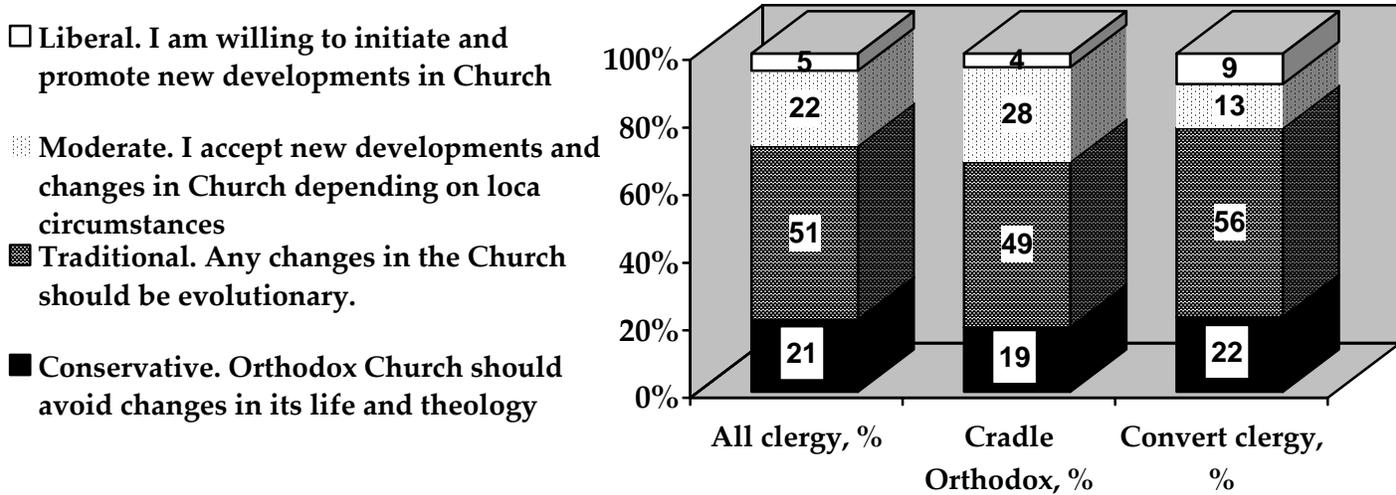
Third, two major American Orthodox jurisdictions - GOA and OCA – are very similar in terms of how present are these four groups of the priests. See chart 6.

**Chart 6. When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand? (% of priests)**



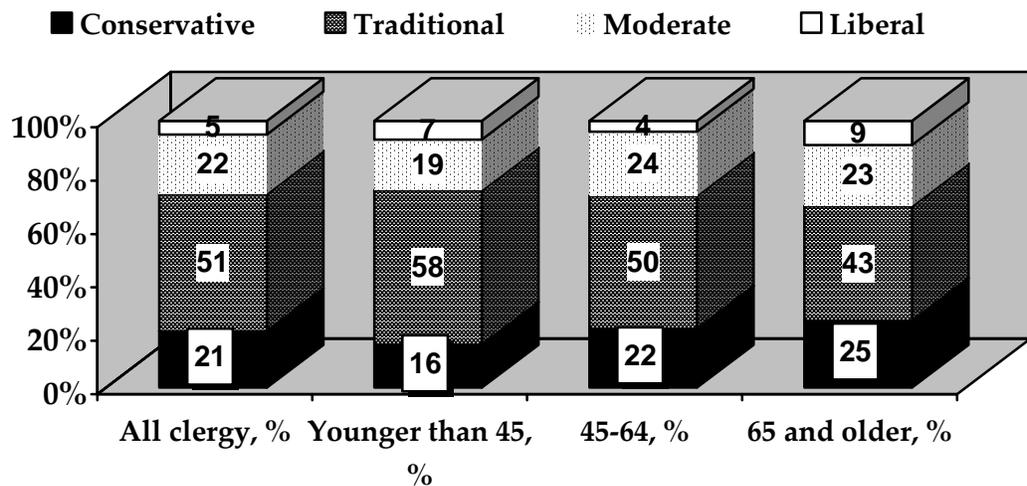
The survey allowed also to address a subject which has been long time debated in American Orthodox churches – the theory that American converts to Orthodoxy tend to be more conservative and “Orthodox” than the cradle Orthodox Christians. Indeed, 32% of cradle Orthodox clergy identified themselves as either liberal or moderate in comparison with only 22% among convert priests. On the contrary, there are more converts than cradle Orthodox priests who said that they are either conservative or traditional (78% and 68% respectively). At the same time, it should be noted that these differences in numbers are not dramatic and that there are more converts than cradle Orthodox in the case of the most “liberal” group of the priests. See chart 7.

**Chart 7. When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand? (% of priests)**



The “liberal – conservative” differences among various generations of the priests are rather subtle. Two patterns, however, seem to be present. First, the proportion of the most conservative clergy is growing with the age of the priests. 16% of “youngsters” called themselves “conservative” in comparison with 22% among “matures” and 25% among the “seniors.” Second, the highest proportion of both opposite groups – e.g. of “liberals” and of “conservatives” – is among senior priests who are 65 and older. This can be explained by the fact that based on their long life and church experiences the senior priests are more likely to make their final and definite choices in where they stand in relation to the various church matters. See chart 8.

**Chart 8. When you think about your theological position and approach to church life, which word best describes where you stand? (% of priests)**



## **Part 2. What Keep Them Working? Sources of Joy and Satisfaction in Orthodox**

### **Priesthood**

#### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Nine out of ten of both Greek Orthodox and OCA parish clergy would enter priesthood again if they would have to make their life choice anew;
- Nine out of ten of the GOA and OCA priests say that they would encourage young men who are considering priesthood as their vocation;
- The older (over 65 years) and the cradle Orthodox priests are more convinced about the rightfulness of their choices to become priests and feel more enthusiastic about encouraging young people to enter priesthood than the younger (under 45 years) and convert clergy;
- All categories of clergy – GOA and OCA, cradle Orthodox and convert, the younger and older priests - are similar in their four top-choices of what has “great importance” for them as the source of satisfaction in the ministerial work. These four top-choices are: “Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments,” “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel,” “Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel,” and “Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives.”
- All categories of clergy are also united in what are the least important sources of satisfaction in their lives and works. The three items that received highest proportions of responses “little or no importance for me” are: “Business aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects, etc.,” “Engaging in efforts at social reform,” and “Respect that comes to the priestly office.”
- The cradle Orthodox and the older priests feel more enthusiastic about their works: they select more frequently - than the convert and younger clergy - the answer “great importance for me” as the source of satisfaction with regard to almost all items included in the survey.
- In comparison with the priests younger than 45, twice as many of the priests who are 65 and older said that “Respect that comes to the priestly office” has “great importance” for them as the source of satisfaction
- 63% of clergy would be unhappy if their parish work will be restricted to only liturgical and sacramental duties.

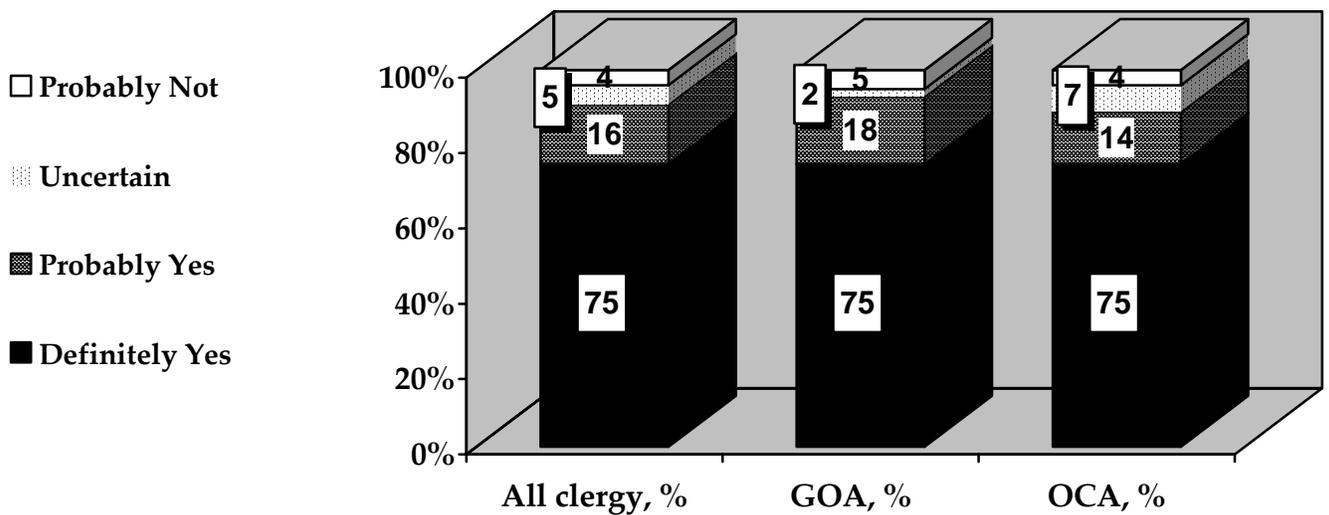
There is little doubt that in today’s America, being professional clergy is not a “dream choice” of occupation for most of the people and not something which is associated with a prestigious social position in the society. The salaries of dominant majority of clergy in most Christian churches are very modest (in comparison with the business community or with the qualified professionals in other sectors of economy) while the emotional pressure put on them is high. This is especially true in the case of American Eastern Orthodox Churches

Therefore, our survey investigated two issues:

- Are American Orthodox parish clergy satisfied with their life choices or do they regret they decision to become a priest?
- What are major sources of satisfaction and joy in the work of an Orthodox priest?

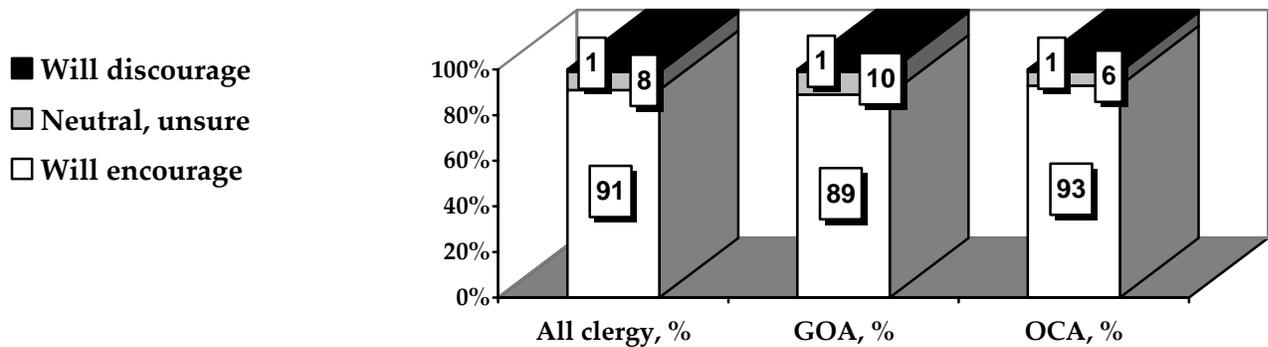
The answer on first question is definite: a vast majority of American Orthodox parish clergy would enter priesthood again if they would have to make their choices anew. Answering question “If you had your choice again, would you enter the priesthood?” three quarters of both Greek Orthodox and OCA priests answered “definitely yes” and 14-18% said “probably yes.” Only 4-5% of clergy responded “probably not.” See chart 9.

**Chart 9. If you had your choice again, would you enter the priesthood? (% of clergy)**



Further, nine out of ten of the GOA and OCA priests say that they would encourage young men who are considering priesthood as their vocation. Only 1% of clergy in both jurisdictions would discourage such a life choice made by the young people. See chart 10.

**Chart 10. Would you rather encourage or rather discourage young men who are considering priesthood as their vocation? (%)**



There are, however, some differences among the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy and among priests in various age categories in how certain they feel about their personal choices to enter priesthood and how readily they would encourage young men to become priests. The general pattern is that the older (over 65 years) and cradle Orthodox priests are somewhat more convinced about the rightfulness of their choice and feel also more enthusiastic about encouraging young people to enter the priesthood. To the contrary, a higher proportion of younger priests and of convert clergy are less sure in their past decisions to be ordained (they are more likely say “probably yes” or “uncertain” instead of “definitely yes”). See Tab.9.

**Tab.9 If you had your choice again, would you enter the priesthood? (% of priests)**

	%, Definitely Yes	%, Probably Yes	%, Uncertain	%, Probably Not
All clergy	75	16	4	5
Younger than 45	73	15	8	4
45-64	68	20	6	6
65 and older	97	3	0	0

	%, Definitely Yes	%, Probably Yes	%, Uncertain	%, Probably Not
All clergy	75	16	5	5
Cradle Orthodox	81	13	3	3
Convert clergy	63	21	8	8

Similarly, the younger and convert clergy are slightly more likely to choose the answer “Neutral, unsure” responding to the question “Would you rather encourage or rather discourage young men who are considering the priesthood as their vocation?” See Tab.10.

**Tab.10 Generally speaking, would you rather encourage or rather discourage young men who are considering the priesthood as their vocation? (% of priests)**

	%, Will encourage	%, Will discourage	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	91	1	8
Cradle Orthodox	93	0	7
Convert clergy	88	1	11

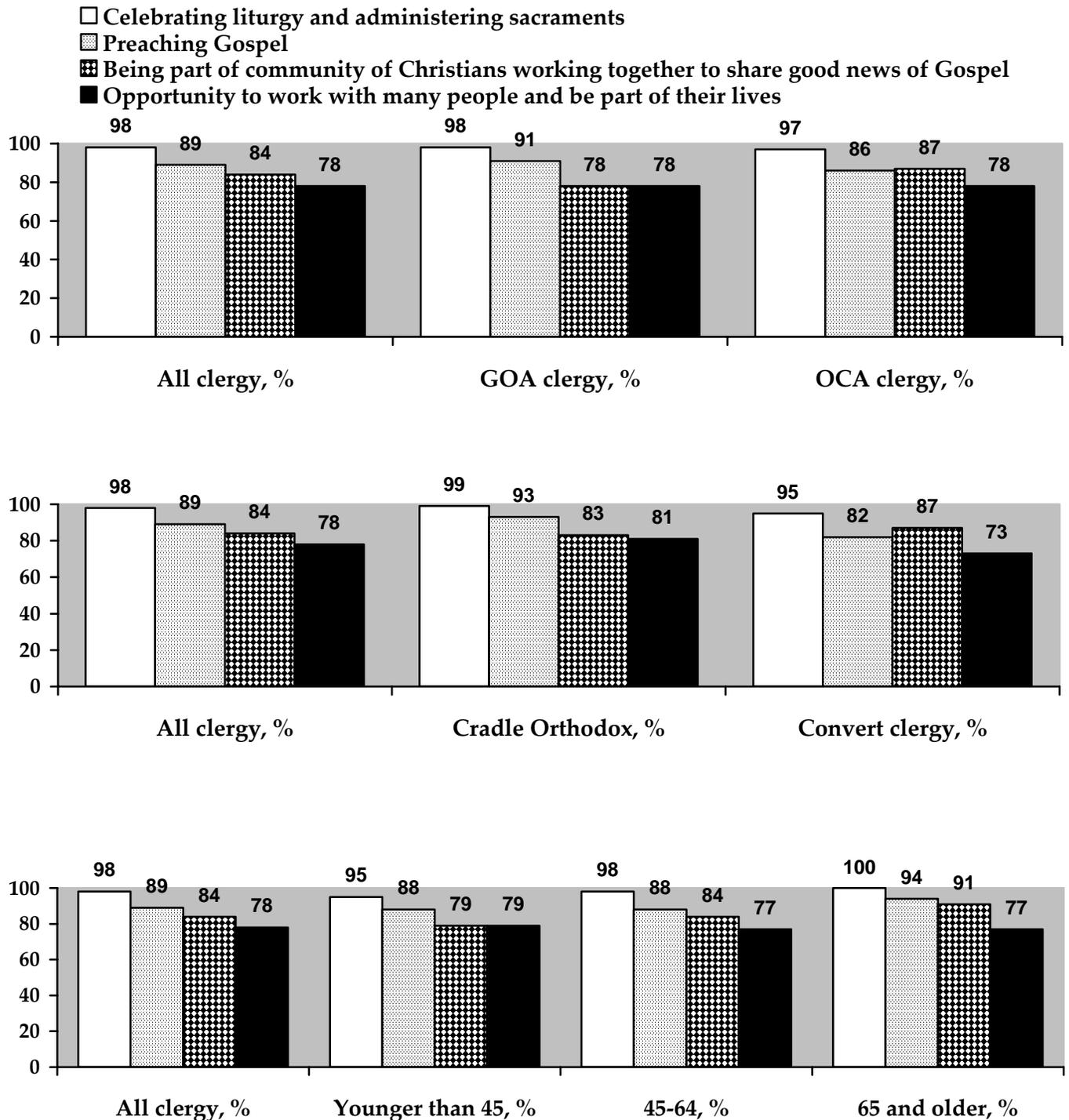
	%, Will encourage	%, Will discourage	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	91	1	8
Younger than 45	88	0	12
45-64	91	1	8
65 and older	100	0	0

Yet, the message is clear: only tiny proportion of GOA and OCA priests, of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy and of the clergy in various generations regret their life choices to become priests (those who said they would not enter priesthood again) and also no more than 1% of priests in all above categories would discourage young men considering priesthood as their vocation.

The next question is: what exactly do Orthodox priests enjoy and cherish in their ministerial work? Our survey asked the question: “There are many sources of satisfaction and joy in the life and work of a priest. Please, indicate how important each of the following is as a source of satisfaction to you.” The clergy were given 11 choices (ranging from purely liturgical functions to the business aspects of church life) and they could respond to each of the choices as “great importance for me,” “some importance for me,” and “little or no importance for me.” See chart 11.

The most significant lesson from the clergy’ answers was that ALL CATEGORIES of clergy – GOA and OCA priests, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, the “youngsters” and the “matures” and the “seniors” – were unanimous in their four top-choices of what is “very important” for them as the source of satisfaction in the ministerial work. These four top-choices are: “Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments” (selected by 98% clergy as “very important” source of satisfaction), “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel” (89%), “Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel” (84%), and “Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives” (78%). Further, these same four choices not only scored highest proportions of “very important” responses by all categories of clergy, but they were also ranked in the same order by all clergy with only one small exception (the convert clergy ranked higher “Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel” than “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel”).

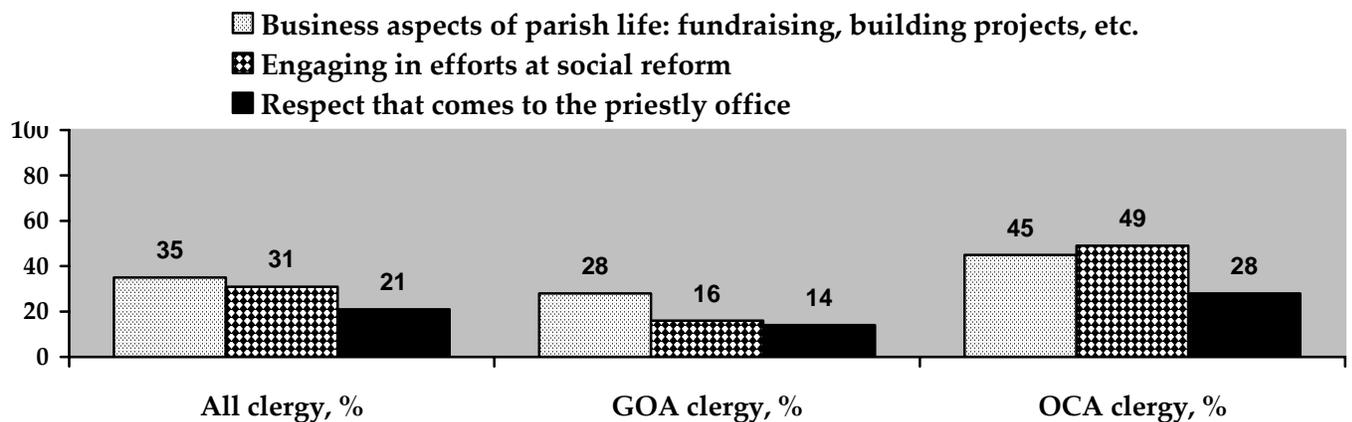
**Chart 11. Four Most Important Sources of Satisfaction in the Life and Work of American Orthodox Clergy: % of clergy who said that the following is “very important” for them as source of satisfaction**



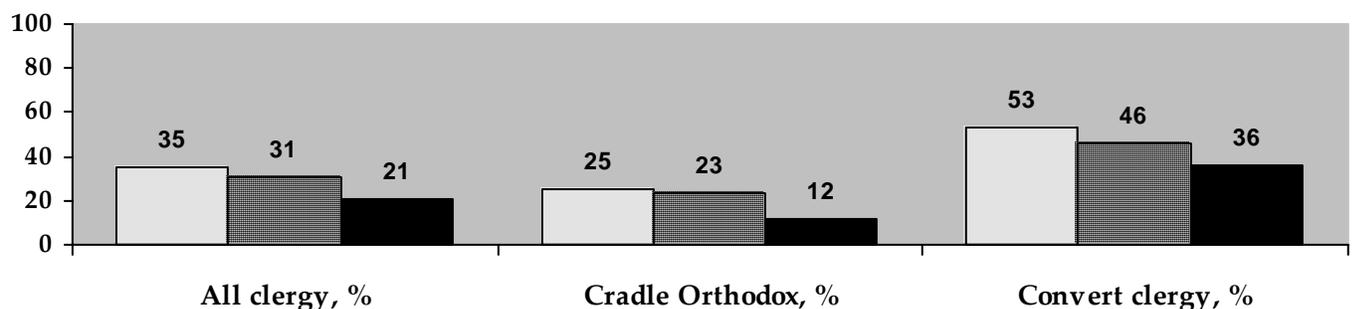
The second lesson was that - again - ALL CATEGORIES of clergy were united in what are least important sources of satisfaction in their lives and works. See charts 12-14. The three items that received highest proportions of responses “little or no importance for me” were: “Business aspects of parish life:

fundraising, building projects, etc.” (35% priests said “little or no importance” as source of satisfaction), “Engaging in efforts at social reform” (31%) and “Respect that comes to the priestly office” (21%). There was only one small exception from clergy’ full unanimity on what are least important sources of satisfaction. The senior priests (65 and older) have chosen more frequently “Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community” (6% said “not important” for them) and “Opportunity to work with many people and be part of their lives” (6%) than “Respect that comes to the priestly office” (3%). Out of three least important items chosen by the Orthodox clergy, the selection of “Respect that comes to the priestly office” raises an important further question: does the survey tell us that for 21% of priests the issue of social respect is simply not an important one or does this mean that 21% of priests feel that no respect is actually paid today to the work of a priest? More research is needed to respond this challenging question.

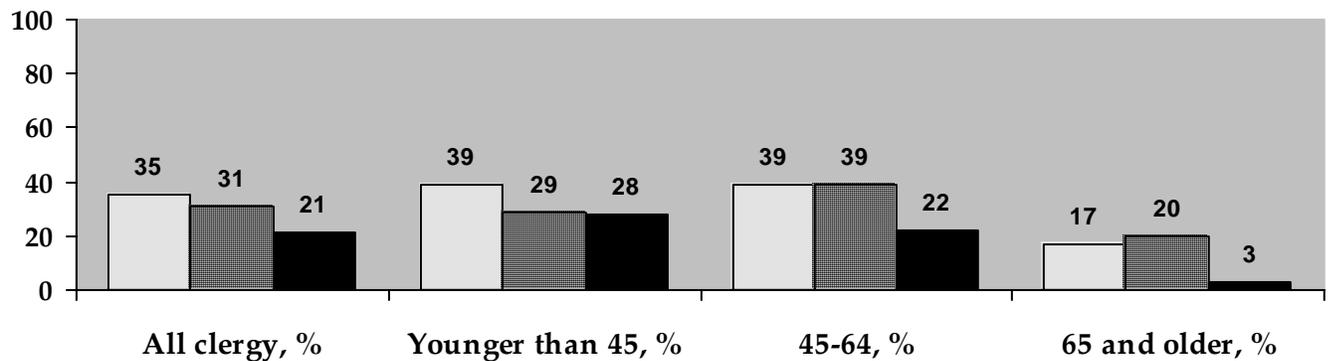
**Chart 12. Three Least Important Sources of Satisfaction in the Life and Work of American Orthodox Clergy: % of clergy who said that the following has “little or no importance” for them as source of satisfaction**



**Chart 13. Three Least Important Sources of Satisfaction in the Life and Work of American Orthodox Clergy: % of cradle Orthodox and convert clergy who said that the following has “little or no importance” for them as source**



**Chart 14. Three Least Important Sources of Satisfaction in the Life and Work of American Orthodox Clergy: % of clergy in various age who said that the following has “little or no importance” for them as source**



The data on the proportion of GOA and OCA clergy who selected the answer “great importance for me” with regard to all sources of satisfaction included in questionnaire are in the Tab 11.

**Tab.11 Question: There are many sources of satisfaction and joy in the life and work of a priest. Please, indicate how important each of the following is as a source of satisfaction to you. (% of clergy who said that the following has “GREAT IMPORTANCE” for them as a source of satisfaction in their ministry)**

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments	98	98	97
Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel	89	91	86
Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel	84	78	87
Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives	78	78	78
Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call	58	74	43
Opportunity to exercise intellectual and creative abilities	56	58	53
Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community	54	63	44
Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church	49	58	38
Respect that comes to the priestly office	33	45	20
Engaging in efforts at social reform	21	24	16
“Business” aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects...	17	20	12

The major distinction between Greek Orthodox and OCA clergy is that the GOA priests select more frequently the answer “great importance for me” with regard to almost all items included in the survey. These differences are especially pronounced in case of “Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call” (74% GOA clergy said “very important” source of satisfaction in comparison with only 43% OCA priests), “Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church” (58% versus 38%) and “Respect that comes to the priestly office” (45% versus 20%).

This fact can be – at least partially - explained by the much higher proportion of the convert priests among OCA clergy. Indeed, the differences between the answers of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy show similar pattern: the cradle Orthodox priests select more frequently than the convert clergy the answer “great importance for me” with regard to almost all items included in the survey. See Tab.12.

**Tab.12 % of clergy who said that the following has “GREAT IMPORTANCE” for them as a source of satisfaction in their ministry**

	Cradle Orthodox, %	Convert clergy, %	Total, %
Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments	99	95	98
Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel	93	82	89
Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel	83	87	84
Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives	81	73	78
Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call	70	38	58
Opportunity to exercise intellectual and creative abilities	56	56	56
Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community	62	39	54
Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church	59	30	49
Respect that comes to the priestly office	42	17	33
Engaging in efforts at social reform	23	17	21
“Business” aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects, etc.	22	7	17

The differences in “what matters” in priestly work among various generation of clergy are not as pronounced as distinctions between cradle Orthodox and convert priests. See Tab.13. Generally, the “seniors” (65 years and older) feel somewhat more enthusiastic about their vocation and they answered more frequently – than the “youngsters” or “matures” – that this is “very important” source of satisfaction for me with regard to almost all items included in the survey.

**Tab.13 % of clergy in various age who said that the following has “GREAT IMPORTANCE” for them as a source of satisfaction in their ministry**

Priests in the age:	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %	Total, %
Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments	95	98	100	98
Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel	88	88	94	89
Being part of a community of Christians who are working together to share the good news of the Gospel	79	84	91	84
Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives	79	77	77	78
Spiritual security that results from responding to the divine call	47	62	69	58
Opportunity to exercise intellectual and creative abilities	59	56	48	56
Challenge of being the leader of a Christian community	44	54	71	54
Satisfaction in organizing and administering the work of the Church	45	47	62	49
Respect that comes to the priestly office	26	31	51	33
Engaging in efforts at social reform	21	21	20	21
“Business” aspects of parish life: fundraising, building projects...	14	16	26	17

One of the most striking – and also warning – distinctions between the “youngsters” and “seniors” is the fact that twice as many of the priests 65 and older said that “Respect that comes to the priestly office” has “great importance” for them as the source of satisfaction (51% of “seniors” in comparison with 26% of “youngsters”). Conversely, 28% of the priests younger than 45 said that “Respect that comes to the priestly office” has “little or no importance for them” in comparison with only 3% among the priests older than 65.

One final notice on the sources of satisfaction in the work of an American Orthodox priest has to be made. Indeed, “Joy of celebrating liturgy and administering the sacraments” and “Satisfaction of preaching the Gospel” were chosen by all clergy as two most important sources of satisfaction, but the survey also indicated clearly: the dominant majority of clergy would be unhappy if their parish work will be restricted to only liturgical and sacramental duties. See Tab.14.

63% of clergy said that they will be dissatisfied with such situation and only 25% reported that they would be satisfied if they parish work would be restricted to celebrating liturgy and providing sacraments (12% were neutral or unsure). There was little difference in the answers on this question among GOA and OCA priests and among the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy.

**Tab.14 In the future if you would be offered to restrict your parish work to only liturgical and sacramental duties, would you be satisfied or dissatisfied? (% of priests)**

	%, Satisfied	%, Dissatisfied	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	25	63	12
GOA clergy	29	58	13
OCA clergy	21	67	12

	%, Satisfied	%, Dissatisfied	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	25	63	12
Cradle Orthodox clergy	28	61	11
Convert clergy	20	67	13

The only category of clergy who feel relatively more comfortable with the situation if they ministerial work will be limited to the sacramental and liturgical functions are the “senior” priests who are 65 years or older. 40% of them said that they would be satisfied with such situation in comparison with only 17% among “youngsters” and 25% among the “matures.” See Tab.15.

**Tab.15 In the future if you would be offered to restrict your parish work to only liturgical and sacramental duties, would you be satisfied or dissatisfied? (% of priests)**

	%, Satisfied	%, Dissatisfied	%, Neutral, unsure
All clergy	25	63	12
Priests younger than 45	17	67	16
Priests in age 45-64	25	65	10
Priests 65 and older	40	49	11

### **Part. 3 With What Do Orthodox Clergy Struggle? The Challenges of Priesthood in America**

#### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Seven major challenges of being an Orthodox parish priest in America are: “providing financially for my family,” “too much work,” “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America,” “apathy among parishioners,” “balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life,” “the way authority is exercised in the Church,” and “inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, etc.”
- Out of seven major challenges, only one is equally important for the different categories of clergy: “the way authority is exercised in the Church.” This issue was equally frequently chosen as “great problem to me” by GOA and OCA clergy, by the priests in various ages, and by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy.
- The significance of various problems in priestly work depends on the age of the clergyman, whether one is a cradle Orthodox or a “convert” priest, and on the size of the parishes. At the same time, the greatest distinctions are between the clergy of two jurisdictions themselves, that is GOA and OCA clergy face quite different problems.
- The major challenge for OCA clergy is being “underpaid” (in particular, “providing financially for my family”), whereas GOA priests are struggling with the number of problems connected to feeling of being “overworked” (“too much work,” “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life,” “lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development,” and “unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners.”
- In comparison with OCA clergy, twice as many Greek Orthodox priests report “apathy among parishioners” as “great problem to me.”
- More cradle Orthodox than the convert priests feel that “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” represent a “great problem.” Conversely, more convert than cradle Orthodox clergy say that “difficulty of really reaching people today” is a “great problem to me.”
- In both GOA and OCA, “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life” and “social isolation and loneliness of priestly life” are most frequently reported as “great problem” by the younger priests under 45 and least frequently – by the clergy who are 65 and older.
- In both GOA and OCA, there is a strong relationship between size of a parish and proportion of clergy who said that “providing financially for my family” represents a “great problem to me.” The smaller parish is the more likely priests say that “providing financially for my family” is a “great problem to me.”

- The clergy in the smallest parishes (less than 100 persons) are much more exposed than those in the medium (100-499 persons) or in the large (500+ persons) to the three particular problems: “inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.,” “difficulty of really reaching people today,” and “inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.”

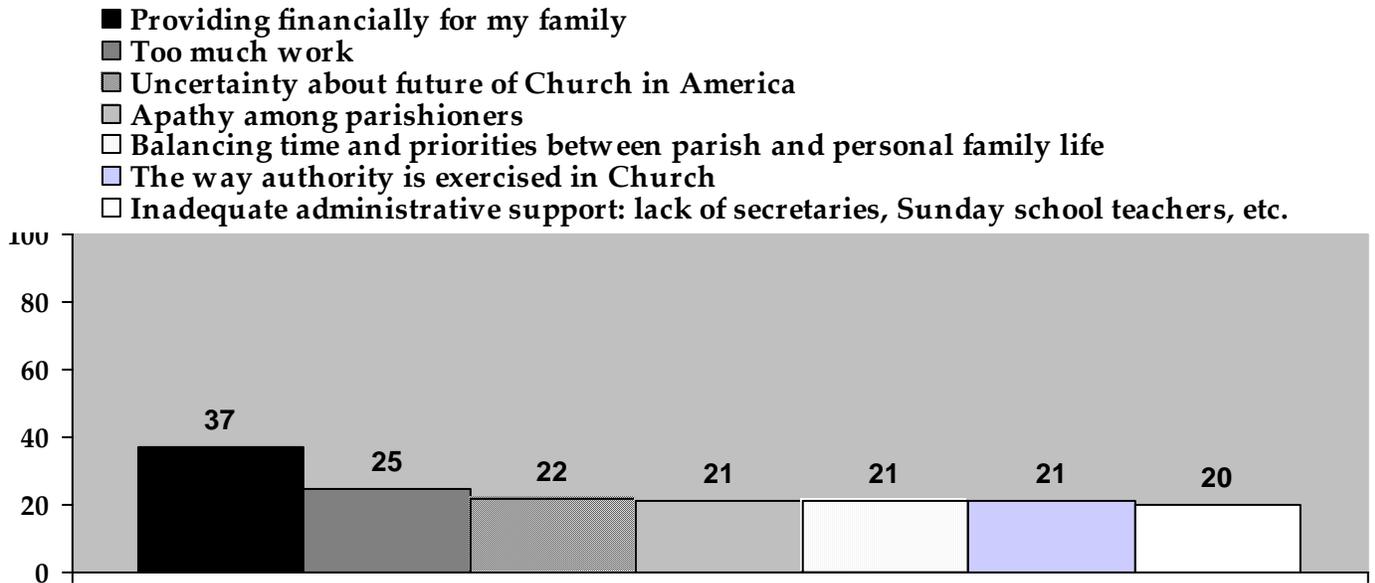
As noted in the second part of this study report, a vast majority of both GOA and OCA clergy, both younger and older priests, and both cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, are convinced in the rightfulness of their life choice to enter priesthood. Further, all categories of clergy are also uniform in their opinions on the major sources of satisfaction and joy in the work of an Orthodox parish priest. Quite differently, there are significant distinctions among various groups of clergy in what is perceived as the major problems and challenges in their priestly work.

The survey asked question “There are many problems which priests face today. Please, indicate how important the following problems are to YOU on a day-to-day basis.” The clergy were given 26 choices of possible problems and they can respond to each choice: “great problem to me,” or “somewhat of a problem to me,” or “little or no problem to me.” Out of all possible problems, one was chosen by far more frequently than any other as “great problem:” more than one third (37%) of survey participants said that “Providing financially for my family” is a great problem for them.

Six further items have been indicated as “great problem to me” by 20-25% of clergy. See chart 15. These six problems are: “too much work” (selected by 25% priests as “great problem”), “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” (22%), “apathy among parishioners” (21%), “balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life” (21%), “the way authority is exercised in the Church” (21%), and “inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, etc.” (20%).

**Chart 15. Seven Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy**

**% of priests who said that the following represent “great problem for me”**



**% of priests who said that the following represent "great problem" for me**

Further analysis revealed that out of the seven major challenges selected by more than 20% of respondents as “great problem to me,” only one is equally important for all categories of clergy: “the way authority is exercised in the Church.” This issue was equally frequently chosen as “great problem” by GOA and OCA clergy, by the priests in various age, and by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy. This should be a warning message for the leadership of two major American Orthodox churches as it indicates that there is a significant concern on the matter of “authority in the church.”

The data on the proportion of GOA and OCA clergy who selected the answer “great problem for me” with regard to all possible problems and challenges included in questionnaire are in the Tab. 16. We will discuss most remarkable findings only on those items which scored more than 10% of responses “great problem to me.”

**Tab.16 Question: There are many problems which priests face today. Please, indicate how important the following problems are to YOU on a day-to-day basis.**

**% of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”**

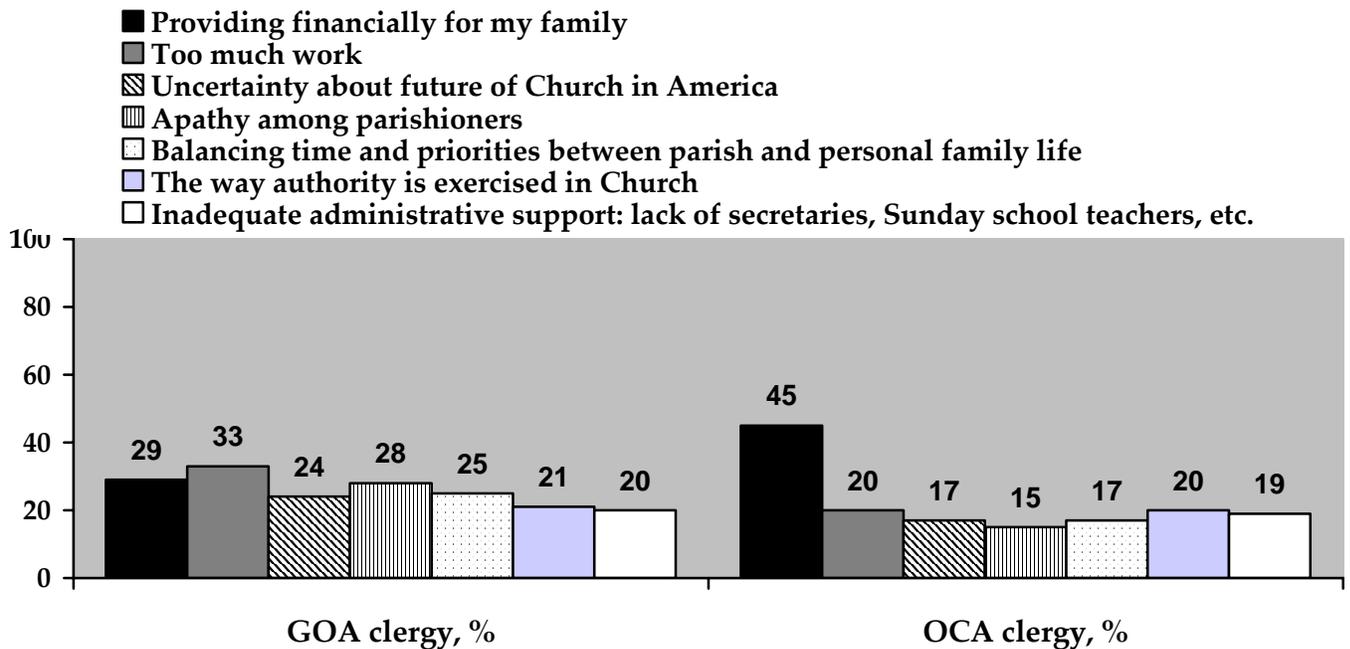
	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	37	29	45
Too much work	25	33	20
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	22	24	17
Apathy among parishioners	21	28	15
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	21	25	17
The way authority is exercised in the Church	21	21	20
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	20	20	19
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	14	21	5
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	13	19	7
Difficulty of really reaching people today	13	15	12
For married priests only: Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	11	12	10
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	11	12	11
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	10	13	7
Disagreements with parishioners about life of the parish	8	11	5
Lack of foreign language skills	8	4	12
Change in the concept of priesthood in modern society	8	11	4
Relationships with the lay leadership of the parish	7	11	4
Relevance of the work that priests do	6	7	5
Challenges of working with youth	6	5	9
Relationship with the diocesan bishop	5	6	5
Being expected to represent the church teachings and policies that I have difficulty with	3	5	2
Challenges of working with converts to Orthodoxy from other Christian churches	2	4	1
Lack of a clear idea what a priest is	2	3	1
Absence of challenge in priestly work	1	1	2
Difficulty of working with women	1	1	0
Difficulty in sharing authority	1	0	1

There are significant distinctions between the GOA and OCA clergy in what is perceived as the major challenges in priestly work. See chart 16.

First, a by far larger proportion of OCA than GOA clergy report that providing financially for their families is a “great problem,” 45% and 29% respectively. This fact barely needs further explanation, because the salaries of the OCA priests are significantly lower than in the Greek Archdiocese. In fact, a significant proportion of OCA parish clergy (especially those serving in smaller parishes) are forced to combine “full time” priestly duties with “full time” secular jobs.

Second, a larger portion of GOA than OCA clergy report that “too much work” represent a “great problem” for them: 33% and 20% respectively. This fact can be partially explained by the much larger size of an average Greek Orthodox (1099 persons) than the OCA (182 persons) parish – a subject which was discussed in the first part of this study report.

**Chart 16. Seven Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy**  
**% of GOA and OCA clergy who said that the following represent “great problem for me”**



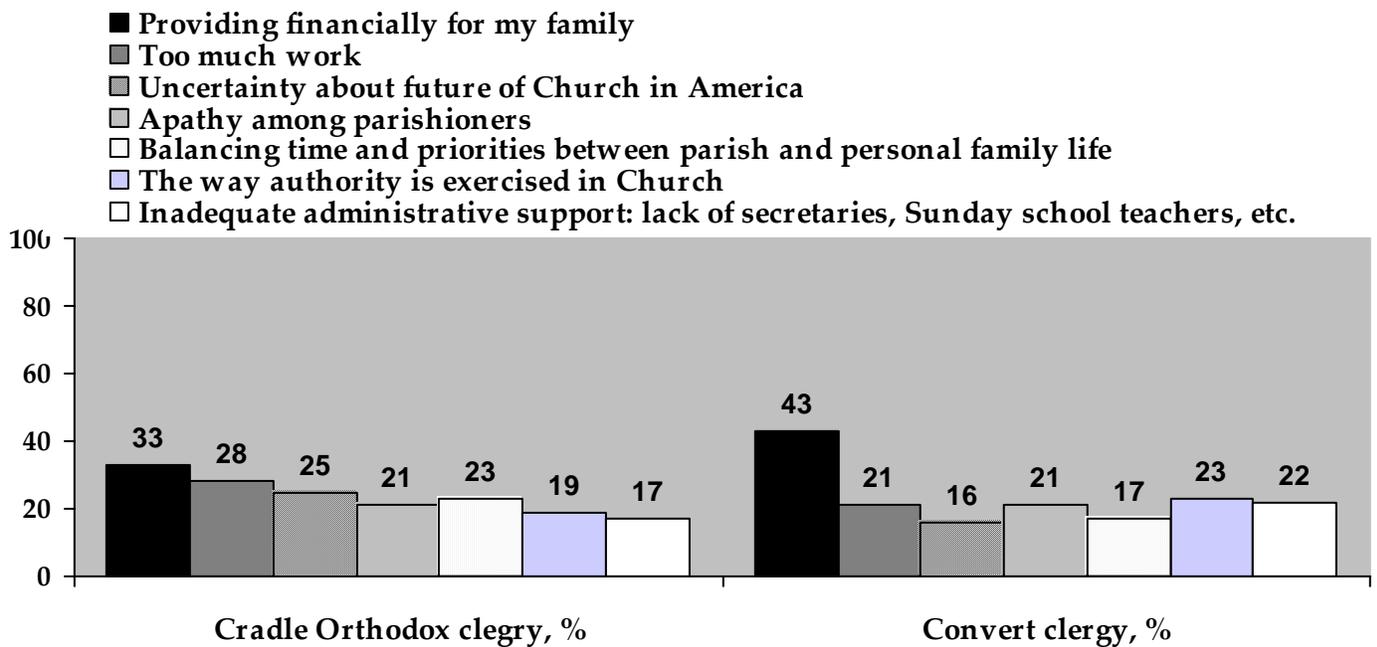
There are three other items that are related to the general problem of “overwork” and, accordingly, which were more frequently chosen as “great problem” by the GOA clergy than by the OCA priests. These are the challenges of “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life” (reported as “great problem” by 25% of GOA priests in comparison with 17% of OCA clergy), “lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development” (21% and 5%), and “unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners” (19% and 7%).

The “Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.” is felt equally strong by the GOA and OCA clergy: about one fifth of the clergy in both jurisdictions reported this item as a “great problem.” Indeed, many more GOA than OCA parishes have full-time secretaries or other paid staff. At the same time, one can imagine that the OCA priest serving without any administrative support in a parish with one hundred parishioners and his GOA colleague who has some secretarial support but works with one thousand parishioners would be equally challenged by the problem of “inadequate administrative support.”

Finally, a remarkable distinction between GOA and OCA clergy is that “apathy among parishioners” was reported as “great problem” by almost twice as many Greek Orthodox priests (28%) than by the OCA clergy (15%). Further, out of all possible problems the challenge of “apathy among parishioners” is ranked as the third most significant problem by the clergy of Greek Archdiocese (after “too much work,” and “providing financially for my family”). More research is needed to examine this perception.

Many distinctions between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in what they feel as a “great problem to me” are derivative from the differences between GOA and OCA priests. As noted in the first part of this study report there are many more convert clergy among OCA priests (59% in our sample) than among GOA clergy (14%). Therefore, the major problems of OCA clergy tend to be typical for the convert priests, whereas challenges more frequently reported as “great problem” by GOA priests are in many ways characteristic for the cradle Orthodox clergy. See chart 17.

**Chart 17. Seven Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Clergy: Cradle Orthodox and Converts (% of clergy who said that the following represent “great problem for me”)**



On the one hand, chart 17 and Tab.17 (below) indicate that the problem of being “underpaid” (and therefore being challenged to provide financially for the family) is more common among convert priests (43% said that this is a “great problem”) than among cradle Orthodox clergy (33%). On the other hand, the issue of being “overworked” (“too much work”) has been reported as “great problem” by more cradle Orthodox (28%) than by the convert clergy (21%). Similarly, the challenge of “balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life” is also more common for the cradle Orthodox than for the convert clergy.

**Tab.17 The Major Problems in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Cradle Orthodox and Converts: included are the items which scored more than 10% among all respondents as “great problem”**

**% of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”**

	Cradle Orthodox, %	Convert clergy, %	All clergy, %
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	<b>33</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>37</b>
Too much work	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>
Apathy among parishioners	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>
The way authority is exercised in the Church	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>
Difficulty of really reaching people today	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>
For married priests only: Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

Out of problems listed in the above table that have no relation to the issues of feeling either “overworked” or “underpaid,” two items seem to be perceived somewhat different by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy. More cradle Orthodox than the convert priests feel that “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” represent a “great problem” to them. Conversely, more convert than cradle Orthodox clergy report “difficulty of really reaching people today” as “great problem.”

The analysis of the data on convert and cradle Orthodox clergy for OCA priests only (where these categories of clergy present two almost equal groups) confirmed both patterns. In general, however, the distinctions among cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in what is perceived as the major challenges and problems in the work of an American Orthodox priest are less important than the denominational differences between Greek Orthodox and OCA clergy.

The picture of what is perceived as the major challenges of the priesthood in America by various generations of clergy is complex, because in many cases the GOA and OCA show various relationships between the age of clergy and the relative significance of one or the other problem. As a result, most of the patterns based on the analysis of GOA and OCA clergy as a whole are not present when one look at various generations of clergy in OCA and GOA separately.

Tab.18 below contains survey results on clergy in various age groups for GOA and OCA combined together.

**Tab.18 The Major Problems in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Age Differences**  
**Included are the items which scored more than 10% among all respondents as “great problem.”**

**% of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”**

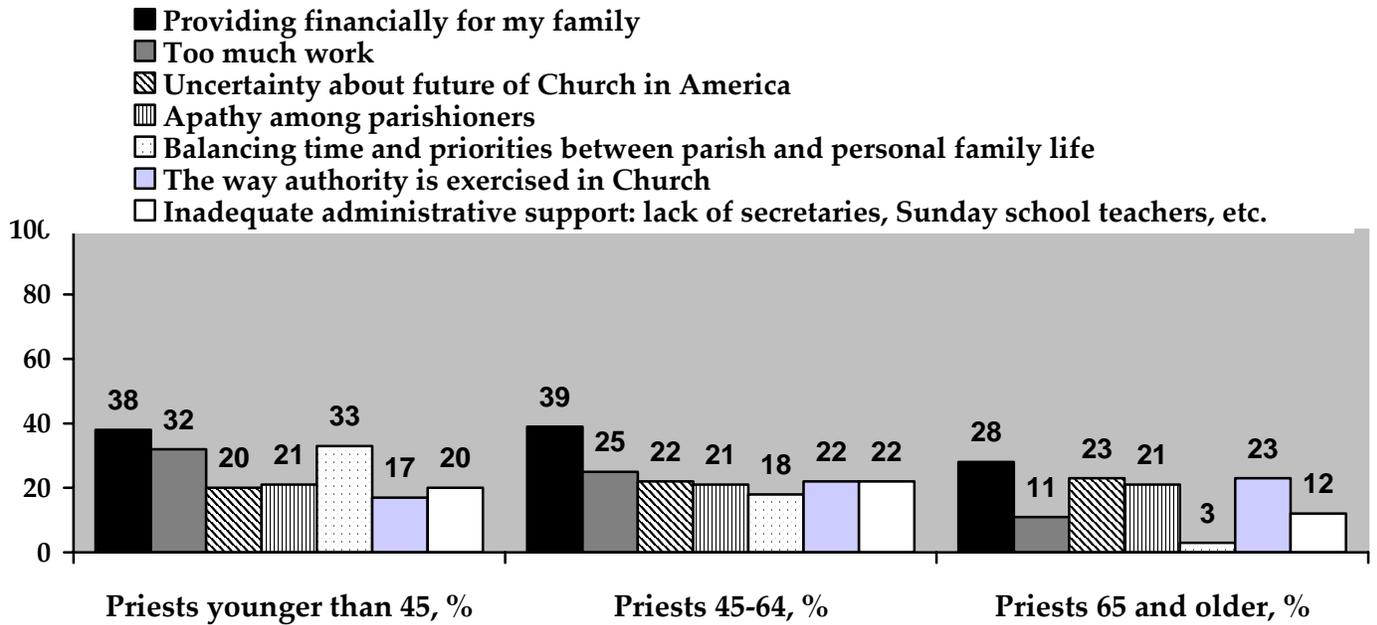
Priests in the age:	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %	All clergy, %
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	38	39	28	37
Too much work	32	25	11	25
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	20	22	23	22
Apathy among parishioners	21	21	21	21
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	33	18	3	21
The way authority is exercised in the Church	17	22	23	21
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	20	22	12	20
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	17	15	3	14
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	14	13	11	13
Difficulty of really reaching people today	14	12	15	13
For married priests only: Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	12	12	9	12
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	17	11	3	11
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	11	12	6	10

One could make several conclusions. First, the “youngsters” seem to be more exposed than the “matures” and, especially, than the “seniors” to the problems of “too much work,” “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life,” “lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development,” “unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners,” “social isolation and loneliness of priestly life.” Second, all generations of clergy appear to be equally concerned with the challenges of “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” and “apathy among parishioners.” Third, the concern about “the way authority is exercised in the church” is more present among the “matures” and “seniors.” Fourth, in an overall picture the “youngsters” seem to be more sensitive to the greater number of problems and challenges than the “matures” or “seniors.”

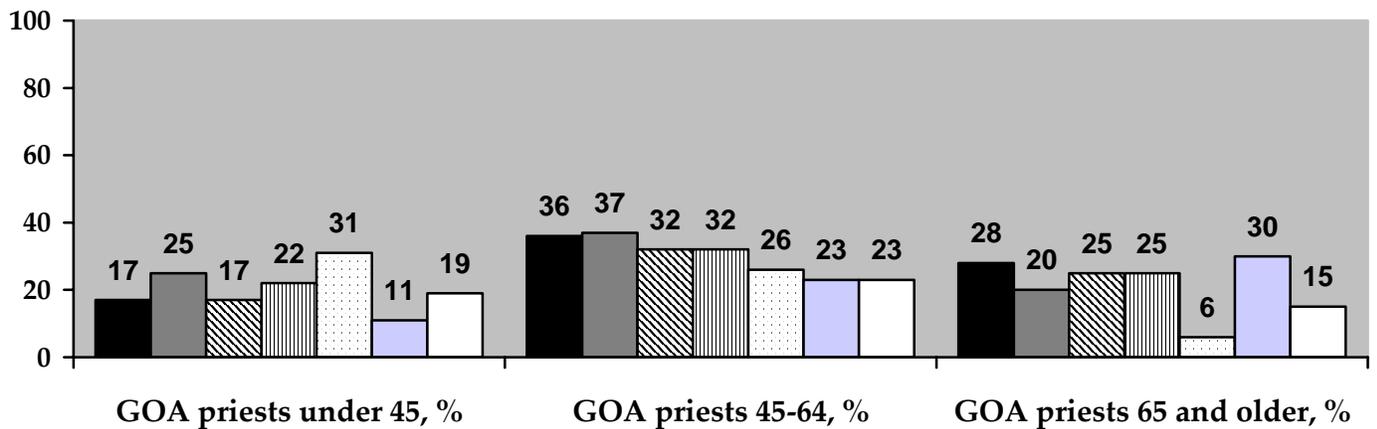
However, the analysis of data for GOA and OCA clergy separately imposes significant limitations on many of these conclusions. See chart 18.

**Chart 18. Major Challenges in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Age Differences**

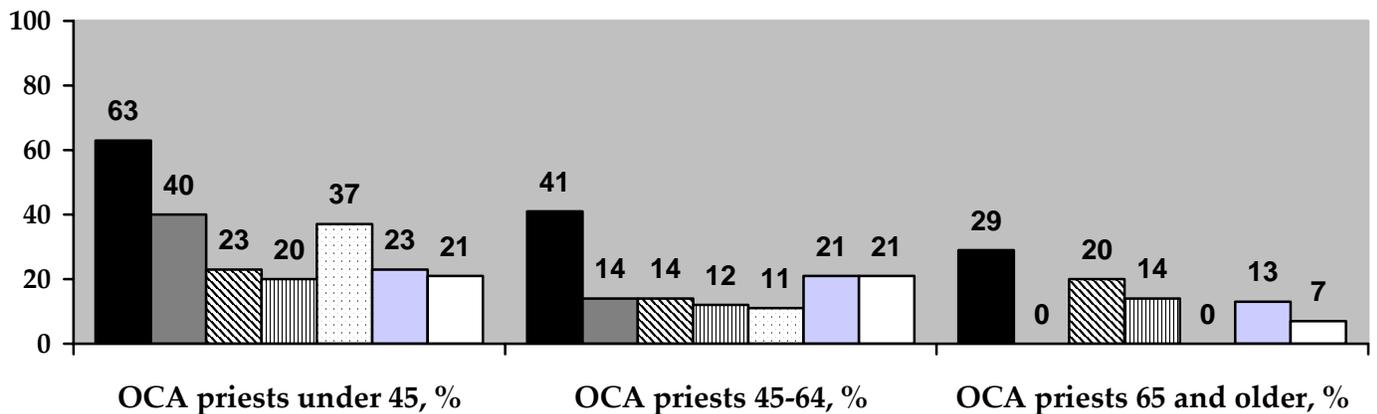
% of clergy in various age who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



**GOA:** % of clergy in various age who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



**OCA:** % of clergy in various age who said that the following represent “great problem for me”



First, there are only two consistent relationships between age of the clergy and the proportion of priests who say that this or that is a “great problem to me.” In both GOA and OCA, the issues of “balancing time and priorities between parish life and personal family life” and “social isolation and loneliness of priestly life” were most frequently reported as “great problem” by the “youngsters” and least frequently – by the “seniors.” This is an understandable situation as the younger clergy are still newly married with the younger children, requiring more of their time, while senior clergy are more likely to be “empty nested,” with no children at home and a marital relationship that is, most likely, more solidified

Second, as noted, in the whole sample of the respondents (GOA and OCA together) all generations of clergy appeared to be equally concerned with the challenges of “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” and “apathy among parishioners.” However, the separate data for GOA and OCA priests presented in the charts above show that significance of these problems varies greatly between various generations of priests within each jurisdiction. In GOA, the priests in the age 45-64 expressed greater concern for both these problems than the “seniors” or “youngsters.” In OCA, the younger generation of clergy (under 45) reported that “uncertainty about the future of the Church in America” and “apathy among parishioners” are “great problem to me” more frequently than the “seniors” or “matures.”

Third, in GOA, the issue of “how authority is exercised in the Church” is especially painful for the “seniors” than for the “matures” or “youngsters.” 30% of GOA priests in the age of 65 and older reported that “the way authority is exercised in the Church” is a “great problem to me” in comparison with 23% among the clergy who are 45-64 and only 11% among the clergy younger than 45. To the contrary, in the OCA, only 13% of “seniors” are seriously concerned with “the way authority is exercised in the Church” in comparison with 21% among “matures” and 23% among the “youngsters.” In depth analysis is needed to determine the direction of the authority problems: are clergy expressing concerns with the way *hierarchical authority* is exercised or with the way authority is exercised within an *individual parish*?

Fourth, the OCA and GOA differ significantly in which generation of clergy tend to report more frequently that this or that is a “great problem to me” with regard to most of the possible challenges. The above charts show that in GOA the “matures” are the generation of clergy which is especially exposed to most of the problems. Indeed, the GOA priests in the age 45-64 reported 5 out of 7 major challenges more frequently than the “youngsters” or “seniors” as being “great problem to me.” In OCA case, these

are the younger clergy under 45 who reported all seven major challenges more frequently than the “matures” or “seniors” as “great problem to me.”

In an overall picture, similarly to distinctions among the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, the differences between various generations of priests in what is perceived as major problems in the work of an American Orthodox priest are less important than the denominational differences between Greek Orthodox and OCA clergy.

The study looked also at the influence of the size of the parishes on the relative importance of the various problems of priesthood. Tab.19 shows the differences between the answers of clergy who serve in the parishes of the different size: in the small churches with less than 100 persons, in the medium-sized with 100-499 persons and in the large parishes with more than 500 persons.

**Tab.19 The Major Problems in the Work of American Orthodox Parish Clergy: Differences Between Clergy Serving in Parishes of Various Size.**

**Included are the items which scored more than 10% among all respondents as “great problem to me:” % of clergy who said that the following represent a “GREAT PROBLEM TO ME.”**

<b>Size of a parish:</b>	<b>Less than 100 person</b>	<b>100-499 persons</b>	<b>500 and more persons</b>	<b>Clergy in all parishes</b>
For married priests only: Providing financially for my family	<b>65</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>
Too much work	<b>29</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>25</b>
Uncertainty about the future of the Church in America	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>
Apathy among parishioners	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>21</b>
For married priests only: Balancing time and priorities between parish life and my personal family life	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>
The way authority is exercised in the Church	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>
Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc.	<b>31</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment and development	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>
Unrealistic expectations and demands of parishioners	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>
Difficulty of really reaching people today	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>
Raising children in the “fishbowl” of parish life	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>
Social isolation, loneliness of priestly life	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>
Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>

The data for the OCA and GOA clergy together and the analysis of the survey results for the GOA and OCA clergy separately revealed two major findings about relationship between size of a parish and its exposure to a particular type of the problem.

First, both in the GOA and in OCA, there is a strong relationship between size of a parish and proportion of clergy who said that “providing financially for my family” represents a “great problem to me.” The smaller the parish is the more likely the priest would report that “providing financially for my family” is a “great problem to me.”

Second, the clergy who serve in the smallest parishes with less than 100 persons are much more exposed than those in the medium (100-499 persons) or in the large (500+ persons) to the three particular problems:

- Inadequate administrative support: secretaries, Sunday school teachers, candidates for parish board/Council, etc;
- Difficulty of really reaching people today;
- Inadequate liturgical support: chanters, choir, altar boys, etc.

In the OCA, twice as many of priests in the small parishes reported “inadequate administrative support” as “great problem” (28%) than their fellow priests in the medium sized (13%) or in the large (14%) parishes. In the GOA, the gap between proportion of clergy in the small, medium and large parishes reporting “inadequate administrative support” as “great problem” is even larger: 50% and 23% and 15% respectively.

Similarly, 33% of GOA priests in the small parishes say that “difficulty of really reaching people today” is a “great problem” in comparison with only 13% of their colleagues who serve in the medium and 15% of those in large parishes. The respective data for OCA are: 19% in comparison with 3% and 0%. Half of Greek Orthodox clergy in the small parishes perceive an “inadequate liturgical support” as “great problem” in comparison with only 10% of priests in the medium and 12% of clergy in the large parishes. The similar data for OCA priests are: 11% and 3% and 0%.

Summing up, the relative significance of various problems in the priestly work depends on the age of clergy, on the differences between the cradle Orthodox and the convert priests, and on the size of their parishes. At the same time, the factor of denominational distinctions between GOA and OCA seem to be the most important one for the degree of exposure of the parish clergy to the different type of problems.

## **Part 4. What Do Clergy Believe Ought to be Openly Discussed in the Church?**

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- The “issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox Church” was chosen as “very important to be openly discussed in the Church” by the vast majority (74%) of all categories of clergy (e.g. GOA and OCA priests, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy).
- All categories of clergy are similar in choosing the second and third important subjects for an open Church discussion: “Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church” and “Clarification, standardization of salaries and benefits.”
- All categories of clergy are also uniform in their two top choices of what they “don’t want to be discussed:” “Ordination of women” and “Ordination prior to marriage.”
- The major distinction between Greek Orthodox priests and OCA clergy is that the OCA clergy are more reluctant to bring to the public discussion the issues related to the priests’ personal matters such as “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” “Problems of overwork,” etc.
- Convert clergy are more reluctant than the cradle Orthodox priests to discuss openly the subjects of “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests” and “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests.”
- Older priests feel greater urgency than younger clergy to open a discussion on all subjects connected with the *general church policies and issues* such as “Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church,” “The process of selecting bishops,” “The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes,” “Sharing ministry with laity,” “Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level,” etc.
- Younger priests are more eager to talk about the *personal problems of clergy* such as “Clarification, standardization of salaries and benefits,” “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” and “Problems of overwork.”
- There is a strong relationship between the theological stance of the clergy and their willingness to discuss openly “ordination of women,” “process of selecting bishops,” “sharing ministry with laity,” “ordination prior to the marriage,” “family problems of Orthodox priests,” and “relationship between mainstream American culture and the traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church.” The “conservative” and “traditional” clergy are much more likely to say that

these subjects are “not important to be discussed” or they “don’t want it to be discussed.” The priests who defined themselves as “moderate” and “liberal” reported more frequently that these matters are “very important to be discussed.”

Numerous Church related subjects are frequently - and sometimes hotly - debated among both Orthodox clergy and laity. These subjects range widely from the business aspects of parish life and the clergy’s personal matters to various sensitive issues of national Church policies. This study examined the opinions of the Orthodox parish clergy about what is most important to bring to a public forum and to discuss openly. The survey asked the question “Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?” The clergy were given the list of 19 possible subjects for discussion and they can respond “very important to be discussed,” “somewhat important to be discussed,” “not important to be discussed,” “do not want it to be discussed.” The responses to this question provide a number of significant insights. See chart 19 and Tab.20.

There is only one subject which has been chosen by the vast majority (74%) of clergy as “very important to be openly discussed.” This is the “issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church.” Further, all categories of clergy - GOA and OCA, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, younger and older priests – were unanimous in their opinions about importance of an open discussion on this issue. There was also a remarkable agreement among all categories of clergy about second and third important subjects for an open Church discussion: “Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church” (selected by 44% of clergy as “very important to be discussed”) and “Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits” (41%).

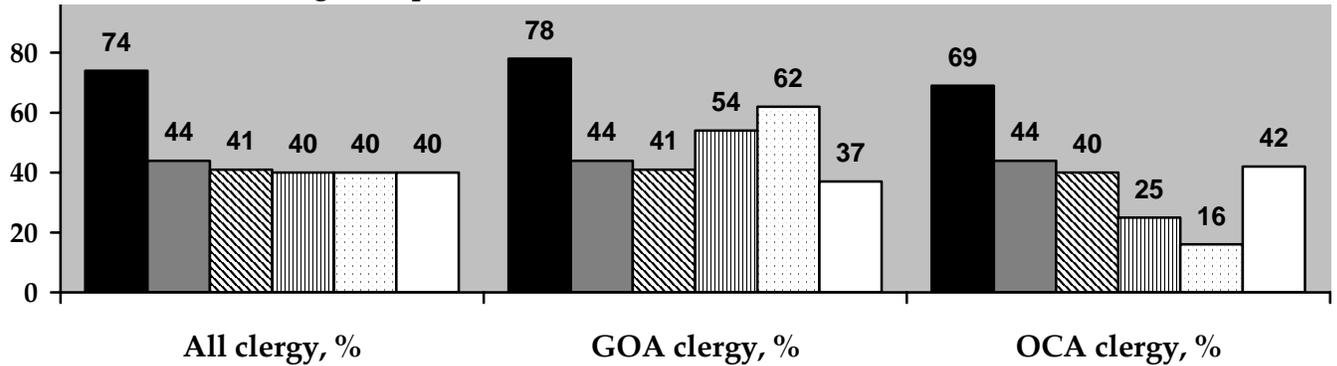
This clergy’ unanimity on three most important subjects for an open discussion should give a clear indication for the national Church leadership at what requires particular attention, consideration and, perhaps, some action.

Three further subjects scored 40% of clergy votes as “very important” for an open church discussion: “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests,” and “The process of selecting bishops.” At the same time, in the case of these three items, various groups of clergy expressed different opinions about their importance for an open discussion.

**Chart 19. Six Most Important Subjects for an Open Discussion in the Church**

**% of clergy who said that these subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT” to be discussed**

- Issue of youth and young adults leaving Orthodox Church
- Relationship between mainstream American culture and requirements of the Orthodox church
- ▨ Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits
- ▨ Family problems of the Orthodox priests
- ▨ Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests
- Process of selecting bishops



The above chart and clergy opinions on all 19 possible topics for an open discussion included in the survey (see Tab.20 on the next page) show one remarkable distinction between GOA and OCA priests. In general, Greek Orthodox priests are much more eager and OCA clergy are more reluctant to bring to the public discussion those issues which are related to the priests’ personal matters. Indeed, “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” “Problems of overwork,” and “The lack of clear professional standards for priests” have been more frequently chosen by the GOA than OCA clergy as “very important to be discussed.”

This major difference between GOA and OCA clergy provokes an important question: are Greek Orthodox priests actually more exposed to the various personal problems than the OCA clergy, or do the latter ones simply believe that priests’ personal matters should be kept “quiet?” Why are also almost half (44%) of the Greek Orthodox clergy seriously concerned with the issue of “the image and esteem of the priesthood today” and feel that this subject is “very important to be discussed” in comparison with only 14% of OCA clergy? More in depth research is needed to answer these important questions.

In comparison with the “personal matters” of the priests, most of the topics connected with general church policies and problems scored comparable number of OCA and GOA clergy responses as “very important to be discussed.” These are the subjects “issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church,” “relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church,” “process of selecting bishops,” “issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes,”

“representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level,” and “recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy.” These subjects reflect the issues and concerns equally shared by various American Orthodox communities.

**Tab.20 Question: Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?**

**% of clergy who said that the following subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT TO BE DISCUSSED”**

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	74	78	69
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	44	44	44
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	41	40
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	40	54	25
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	40	62	16
The process of selecting bishops	40	37	42
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	38	45	30
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	35	39	31
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	34	43	25
Problems of overwork	33	44	21
Sharing ministry with laity	31	37	26
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	30	32	27
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	29	44	14
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	26	25	27
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	25	30	20
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	21	29	13
Ordination prior to marriage	14	17	10
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	11	14	7
Ordination of women	7	8	6

The OCA and GOA clergy – both cradle Orthodox and convert – were also quite uniform in their two top choices of what they “don’t want to be discussed:” “Ordination of women” and “Ordination prior to marriage.” Further, out of 19 possible subjects, these were the only items rejected for potential discussion by a significant proportion of clergy. 42% of all clergy (41% in GOA, 43% in OCA) said that they don’t want discuss “ordination of women” and 32% of priests (36% in GOA, 27% in OCA) do not want discussion on “Ordination prior to marriage.”

The differences between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy in their opinions on what is “very important” to be openly discussed in the Church are almost an ideal mirror of the distinctions between GOA and OCA priests. See Tab.21. This is understandable, because of the much higher proportion of the converts among OCA priests (59%) than among GOA clergy (14%). Convert clergy are much more reluctant and the cradle Orthodox priests are more eager to discuss openly various priests’ personal problems. At the same time, in case of various general church matters and issues, there is no significant difference between proportions of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy who said that this or that subject is “very important to be discussed.” As noted, cradle Orthodox and convert clergy are also similar in their rejection to discuss two issues: “ordination of women” (39% of cradle Orthodox and 45% of convert clergy don’t want it to be discussed) and “ordination prior to marriage” (36% and 26%)

**Tab.21 Question: Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?**

% of clergy who said that the following subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT TO BE DISCUSSED”

	All clergy, %	Cradle Orthodox, %	Convert clergy, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	74	76	70
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	44	42	47
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	45	35
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	40	49	25
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	40	53	17
The process of selecting bishops	40	40	40
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	38	40	33
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	35	36	34
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	34	42	21
Problems of overwork	33	41	21
Sharing ministry with laity	31	30	32
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	30	32	27
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	29	33	23
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	26	26	26
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	25	29	18
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	21	27	11
Ordination prior to marriage	14	17	9
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	11	13	8
Ordination of women	7	6	8

The striking similarity in the opinions expressed by the OCA and convert clergy, on the one hand, and by the GOA and cradle Orthodox priests, on the other hand, raises a question of the relationship between “resilience of denominational heritage” and “importing another’s denominational culture.” In other words, are the opinions of convert clergy based on the denominational tradition of the OCA which is – presumably - different from the GOA? Or, vice versa, is the whole denominational culture of OCA heavily influenced by the high proportion of the convert clergy who may be “importing” attitudes from their former denominations? Further, is there any way to separate these two factors?

A partial answer on this question can be obtained by the comparison of the responses of the convert and cradle Orthodox clergy within OCA where these two categories form size-wise comparable groups. See Tab.22.

**Tab.22 % of OCA clergy who said that the following subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT TO BE DISCUSSED”**

<b>OCA clergy only:</b>	All OCA clergy, %	OCA Cradle Orthodox,%	OCA Convert clergy, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	71	73	69
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	45	36	52
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	52	33
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	26	27	25
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	17	23	13
The process of selecting bishops	44	48	42
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	30	28	32
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	31	34	31
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	25	33	20
Problems of overwork	22	26	20
Sharing ministry with laity	26	18	32
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	28	27	28
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	14	14	15
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	27	27	27
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	21	23	20
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	14	14	14
Ordination prior to marriage	10	14	8
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	8	9	7
Ordination of women	6	2	8

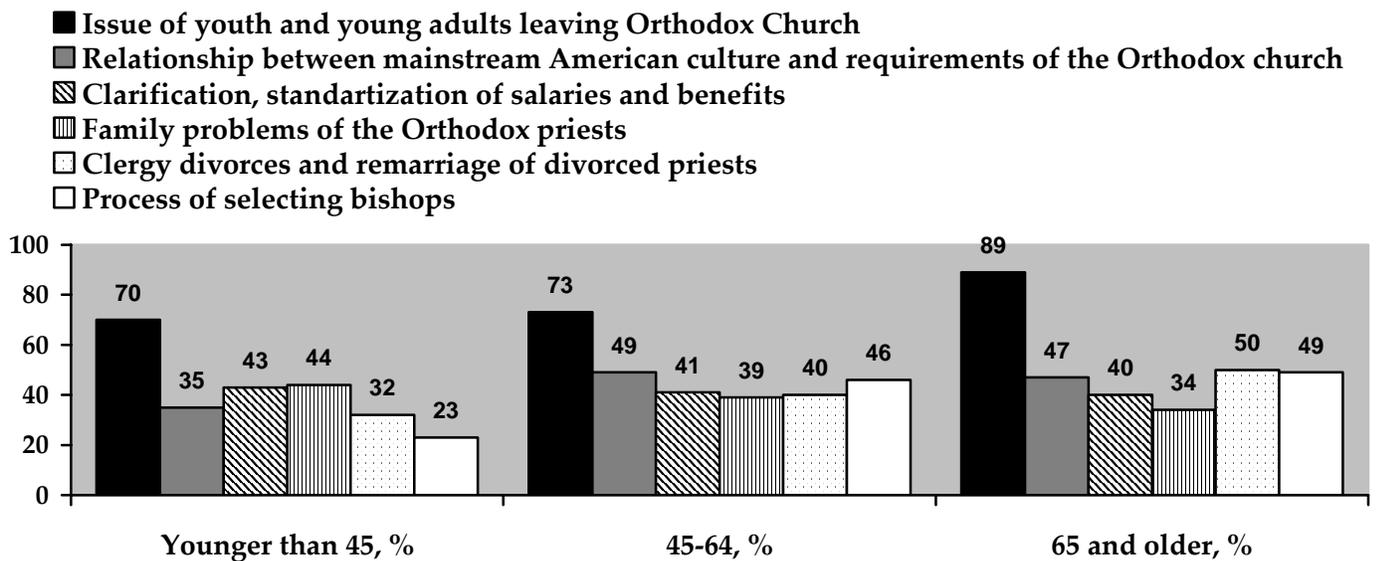
The data tell us that out of six issues which OCA clergy were more reluctant to discuss than GOA priests (“Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” “Problems of overwork,” and “The lack of clear professional standards for priests”), four were fairly similarly responded by the OCA convert and the cradle Orthodox clergy: “Family problems of the Orthodox priests” (27% of cradle Orthodox and 25% of convert clergy said “very important to be discussed”), “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests” (28% and 32%), “Problems of overwork” (26% and 20%) and “The lack of clear professional standards for priests” (14% and 14%).

At the same time, OCA convert clergy were still much more reluctant than OCA cradle Orthodox priests to discuss openly two most challenging and “politically charged” subjects - “Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests” (only 13% of convert clergy say that this is “very important to be discussed” in comparison with 23% among the cradle Orthodox priests) and “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests” (20% and 33%).

Chart 20 and the Tab.23 on the next page show that the age of the clergy also has significant influence on what various generations of priests believe is “very important to be discussed.”

**Chart 20. Six Most Important Subjects for an Open Discussion in the Church: Generation Differences**

**% of clergy in various age who said that these subjects are “VERY IMPORTANT” to be discussed**



**Tab.23 Question: Numerous issues relating to the priesthood are being discussed today and may have impact on your life as a priest. How important would an *OPEN DISCUSSION* be in the Church in the following areas?**

% of clergy in various age who said that the following subjects are “very important to be discussed”

Clergy in age:	All clergy, %	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %
Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church	74	70	73	89
Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church	44	35	49	47
Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits	41	43	41	40
Family problems of the Orthodox priests	40	44	39	34
Clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests	40	32	40	50
The process of selecting bishops	40	23	46	49
Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests	38	35	42	29
The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes	35	29	36	44
Problems of sexual misconduct by priests	34	32	33	37
Problems of overwork	33	37	31	31
Sharing ministry with laity	31	26	32	40
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level	30	17	33	41
The image and esteem of the priesthood today	29	26	29	37
Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy	26	19	28	34
Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level	25	11	28	43
The lack of clear professional standards for priests	21	17	21	29
Ordination prior to marriage	14	8	15	23
Recruiting priests from abroad (e.g. priests who are “new immigrants.”)	11	1	12	24
Ordination of women	7	11	5	6

Two patterns should be noted in particular. First, in the case of almost all subjects connected with *general church policies and issues*, the older the priests are the stronger urgency they feel to bring these subjects to an open discussion. Indeed, the “seniors” have chosen more frequently than the “matures” and the “matures” – in turn - have chosen more frequently than the “youngsters” as “very important to be discussed” the following subjects: “Issue of youth and young adults leaving the Orthodox church,” “Relationship between mainstream American culture and traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church,” “The process of selecting bishops,” “The issue of “ethnic” versus “American” parishes,” “Sharing ministry with laity,” “Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the national Church level,” “Recruiting priests from converts to Orthodoxy,” “Representation of the parish priests at decision making on the diocesan level,” “The lack of clear professional standards for priests,” “Ordination prior to marriage,” “Recruiting priests from abroad.”

Second, the picture is quite different in the case of various matters which are related to the *personal problems* of clergy. The subjects of “Clarification, standartization of salaries and benefits,” “Family problems of the Orthodox priests,” “Emotional and psychosexual maturity of priests,” “Problems of sexual misconduct by priests,” and “Problems of overwork” have been chosen either equally frequently by the various generations of clergy or even by the greater proportion of “youngsters” than “seniors” as “very important to be discussed.”

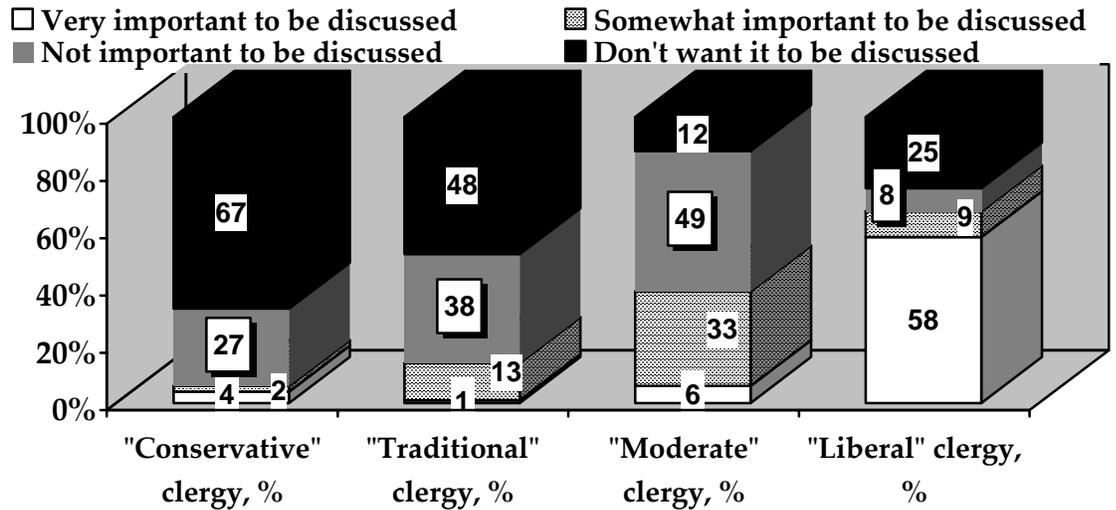
With some minor exceptions, these two patterns are present among various generations of clergy within both GOA and OCA (e.g. if the data for OCA and GOA clergy are analyzed separately). The message is clear: either younger clergy are naturally more “apolitical” than their fathers, or they are simply overwhelmed with daily family and work routines, but in any case the “youngsters” are less inclined (or less concerned) to raise their voices and to express openly their opinions on various church policies and issues than the “matures” or, especially, than the “seniors.”

Similarly to the situation with the GOA and OCA clergy, and with the cradle Orthodox and convert priests, only two subjects have been rejected by significant proportion (more than 20%) of clergy in all generations as “don’t want it to be discussed.” These subjects are “ordination of women” (45% of “youngsters,” 36% of “matures” and 57% of “seniors” don’t want it to be discussed) and “ordination prior to marriage” (39%, 27% and 44%).

The analysis of the survey data revealed one more important finding. There exists a strong and *statistically significant relationship* between theological position of the clergy and their willingness to have an open discussion on such sensitive issues as “ordination of women,” “process of selecting bishops,” sharing ministry with laity,” “ordination prior to the marriage,” “family problems of Orthodox priests,” and “relationship between mainstream American culture and the traditions and requirements of the Orthodox Church.” See charts 21-26. The clergy who identified themselves as “conservative” and “traditional” (see part 1 of this report) are much more likely to say that these subjects are either “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.” Conversely, the priests who defined themselves as “moderate” and “liberal” reported much more frequently that these matters are “very important to be discussed.”

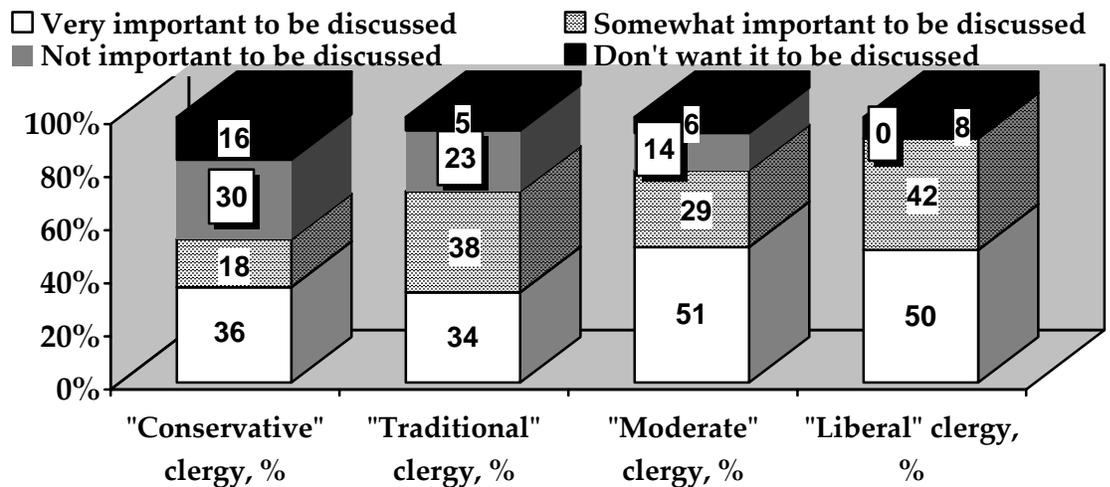
**Chart 21. Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “ordination of women”**

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”



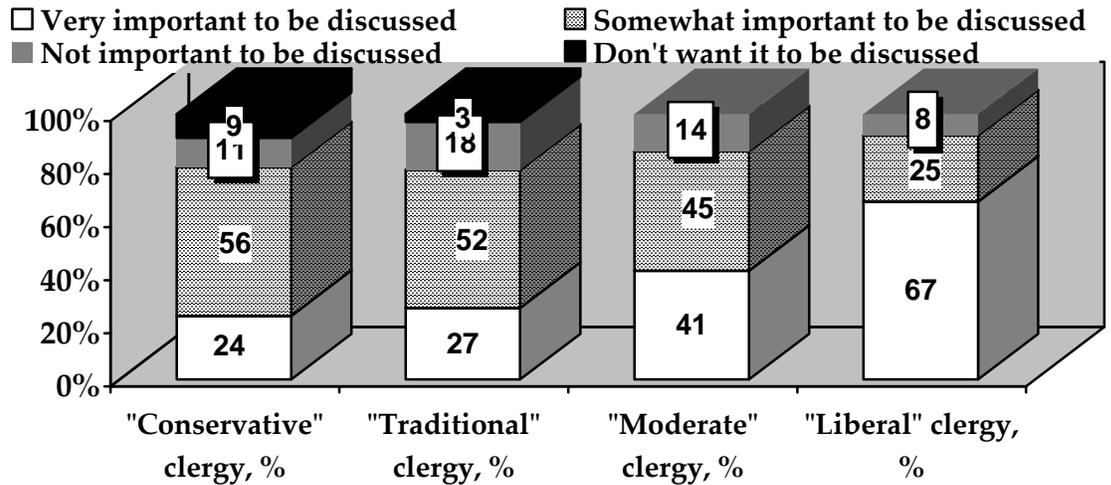
**Chart 22. Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly “process of selecting bishops”**

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”



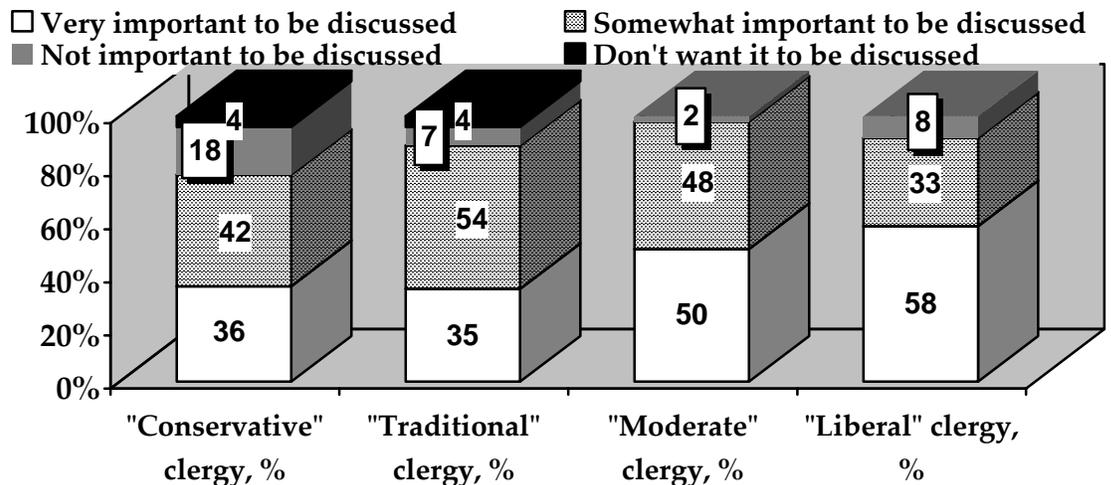
**Chart 23. Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “sharing ministry with laity”**

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”



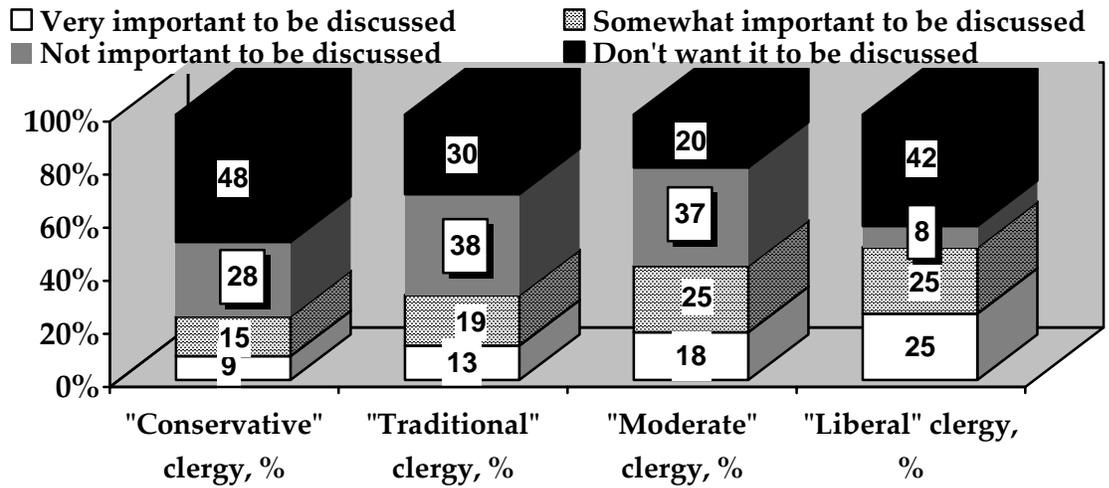
**Chart 24. Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “family problems of the Orthodox priests”**

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”



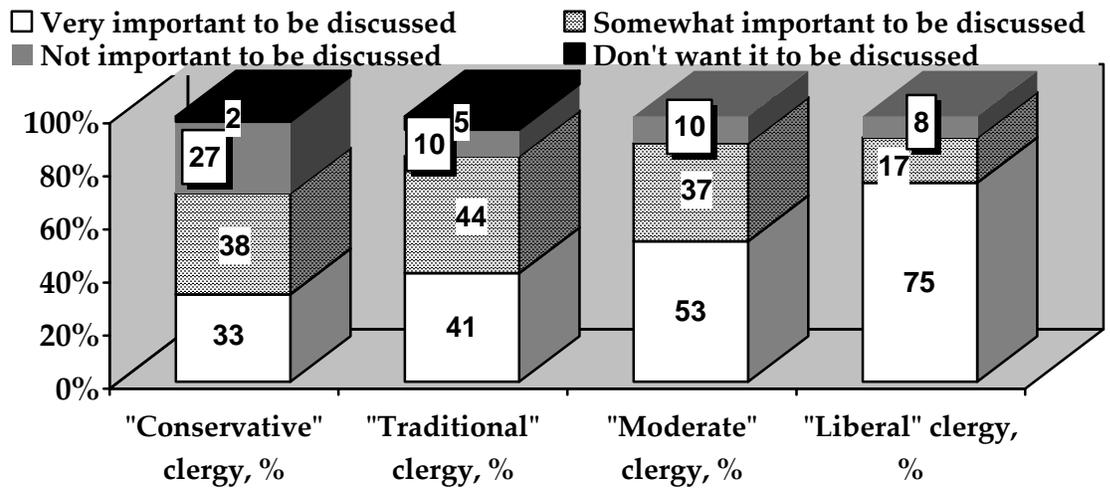
**Chart 25. Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “ordination prior to marriage”**

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”



**Chart 26. Theological stance of clergy and their willingness to discuss openly the subject “relationship between mainstream American culture and requirements and traditions of the Orthodox Church”**

% of clergy who said either “very important to be discussed” or “somewhat important to be discussed” or “not important to be discussed” or “don’t want it to be discussed.”



## **Part 5. Who Helps and What Can Be Helpful in the Life and in Ministry of an Orthodox Priest?**

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Of all possible sources of support, the clergy wives (presvyteras, matushkas) are by far the most significant for all Orthodox clergy;
- Other sources of support that were chosen by more than 50% of clergy as “very important” are: “immediate family,” “parish council,” “parishioners,” and “bishop;”
- Support coming from relatives - both from immediate and extended families – plays a much greater role in the lives of GOA priests than among OCA clergy;
- Support coming from inside of the Church (from parish councils, from parishioners and from fellow priests) is more important for the OCA than for the GOA priests;
- Older priests benefit more than younger clergy from the help coming from their parishioners and from their diocesan bishops;
- The “conservative” and “traditional” priests feel greater support coming from their bishops and from their fellow priests than “moderate” and “liberal” clergy;
- “Having more opportunity for personal spiritual development” was reported as the most desirable change (as “would be very helpful”) by the vast majority of both Greek Orthodox and OCA clergy;
- The other desirable improvements in clergy’ lives are: “Having more time available to spend with my family,” “Having greater feeling of fraternity among priests,” “Having ‘trained’ deacons sharing pastoral duties,” and “Having more opportunity to share concerns and to communicate regularly with priests in other parishes and dioceses”;
- In comparison with the younger (under 45) and middle-age (45-64) clergy, the “senior” priests (65 and older) expressed the most strong desire to be involved in decision making on the diocesan level and to be entirely independent in the decision making within their parishes;
- More cradle Orthodox than convert priests feel that “having more time to spend with the families” would be very helpful for them;
- “Conservative” and “traditional” clergy are more inclined to simply accept the realities of their personal and Church lives as they are, while more of “moderate” and “liberal” priests are looking for changes and improvements.

One way or another, all parish priests need personal support in their daily work – a support which helps them to feel more confident performing multiple parish duties. Our study examined the major sources of support in the lives of American Orthodox priests. In other words, who do clergy feel they can rely upon if necessary? Tab.24 shows responses to a question about various possible sources of support. The priests were asked to rate these sources in importance as “strong support,” “some support,” and “little or no support.”

**Tab.24 Question: In your priestly ministry, HOW MUCH SUPPORT do you experience from each of the following sources?**

**% of clergy who said that they experience “STRONG SUPPORT” from the following**

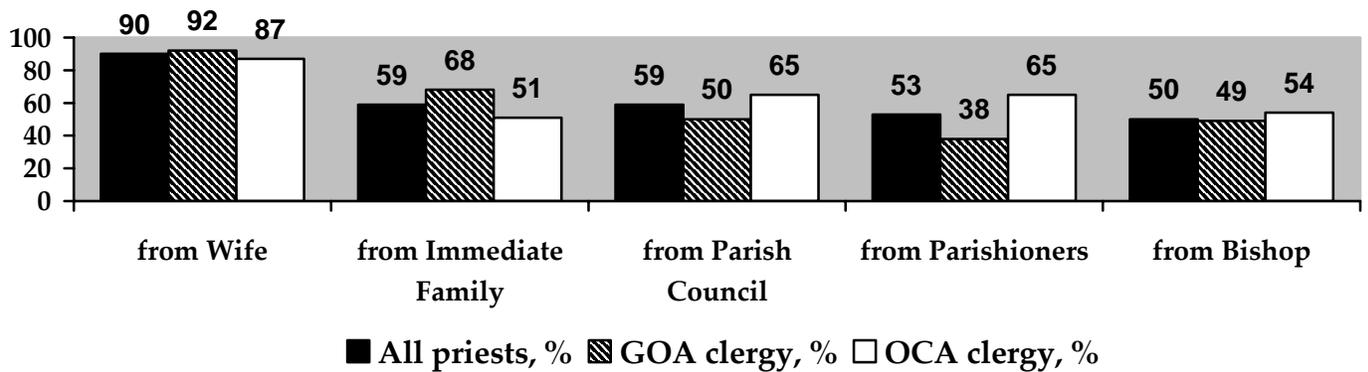
	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
For married priests only: from your wife	<b>90</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>87</b>
From your immediate family: children, siblings, parents.	<b>59</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>51</b>
From your parish council	<b>59</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>65</b>
From your parishioners	<b>53</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>65</b>
From your bishop	<b>50</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>
From fellow priests	<b>36</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>42</b>
From non-priest friends	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>
From your extended family: in-laws, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.	<b>29</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>20</b>
From your local community in general	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>
From the national headquarters of GOA and OCA	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
From the non-Orthodox Christian clergy in your local community	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>

Several findings should be mentioned. First, by far the most significant source of support for all Orthodox clergy is their wives. About 90% of both GOA and OCA priests say that they experience “strong support” from their spouses. The questionnaire also asked clergy to express their opinion on the statement “I see my wife as a *partner sharing in my ministry* in the parish.” A vast majority - 77% in GOA and 81% in OCA - of priests agreed with this statement. A future research area would be clergy wives themselves, specifically investigating how they see their roles as partners in their husbands’ ministries.

Second, four further sources of support that were chosen by more than 50% of clergy as “very important” are: “immediate family,” “parish council,” “parishioners,” and “bishop.” See chart 27.

Third, both GOA and OCA clergy feel that very little - if at all - support comes from their national Church headquarters. Only 5% of OCA and 6% of GOA priests said that they receive “strong support,” while 46% of GOA and 59% of OCA clergy reported “very little or no support” from their national Church headquarters.

**Chart 27. Five Most Important Sources of Support**  
 (% of priests saying that they experience "STRONG SUPPORT" from following)



Fourth, there is a remarkable distinction between Greek Orthodox and OCA priests in the significance of support coming from inside the Church (from their parishes or from fellow clergy) and from their relatives. The support from relatives - both immediate and extended families – plays a much greater role in the lives of GOA priests than among OCA clergy. On the contrary, the support coming from inside the Church (from parish councils, from parishioners and from fellow priests) is more important for the OCA than for the GOA priests. Also, 58% of the Greek Orthodox priests agreed with the statement “What is lacking today is that closeness among priests which used to be present” in comparison with only 36% among OCA clergy. The question which needs to be answered is: why do GOA clergy believe they cannot rely on support from their parishes and from fellow priests to the extent that the OCA clergy can?

All age groups of clergy reported equally strong support coming from relatives - their wives and their families. See Tab.25. At the same time, the survey indicated that the older priests benefit more than the younger clergy from the help obtained from their parishes and from their diocesan bishops. Two thirds of “senior” (65 years and older) clergy reported “strong support” from their parishioners in comparison with only 47% among the younger (under 45) and 53% among the middle-aged (45-64) priests. Similarly, two third of the senior clergy feel “strong support” coming from their bishops in comparison with 53% in the case of the younger and 45% in the case of the middle-aged priests. Also, twice as many of the senior priests (21%) report strong support from their national church headquarters than the younger and middle-aged priests (8-9%). We conclude that the life experience of the senior clergy allow them to use most fully the human resources of their parish communities and also to interact most efficiently with their diocesan bishops.

**Tab.25 The Age of Clergy and Significance of the Different Sources of Support: % of clergy in various age who said that they experience “STRONG SUPPORT” from the following**

Priests in the age:	All clergy, %	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %
For married priests only: from your wife	<b>90</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>88</b>
From your immediate family: children, siblings, parents)	<b>59</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>59</b>
From your parish council	<b>59</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>65</b>
From your parishioners	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>65</b>
From your bishop	<b>50</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>65</b>
From fellow priests	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>
From non-priest friends	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>38</b>
From your extended family: in-laws, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>
From your local community in general	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>
From the national headquarters of GOA and OCA	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>
From the non-Orthodox Christian clergy in your local community	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>

The survey revealed a clear relationship between the theological stance of the priests and importance of support coming from the fellow priests and from the diocesan bishops. See Tab.26. The “conservative” priests are more likely to say that they receive “strong support” from their bishops (62%) than the priests who defined themselves as either “traditional” (54%) or, especially, as “moderate” or “liberal” (38%). Similarly, 42% of “conservatives” report “strong support” coming from their fellow priests, but only 37% of “traditional” and only 26% of “moderate” and “liberal” clergy feel the same way.

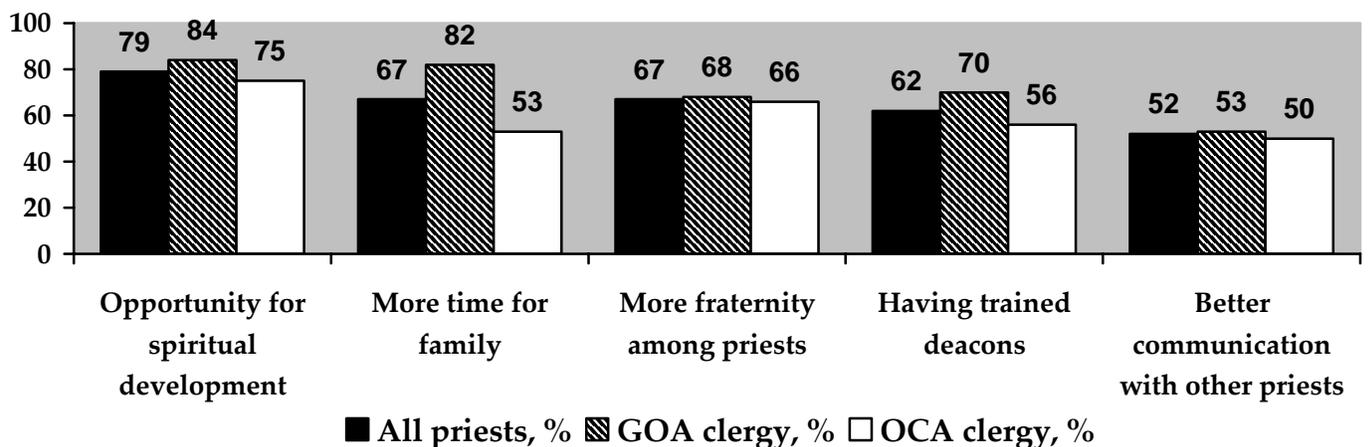
**Tab.26 Theological Position of Clergy and Significance of the Different Sources of Support: % of clergy who said that they experience “STRONG SUPPORT” from the following**

	All clergy, %	Conservative clergy, %	Traditional clergy, %	Moderate and liberal, %
For married priests only: from your wife	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>90</b>
From your immediate family: children, siblings, parents)	<b>59</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>51</b>
From your parish council	<b>59</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>
From your parishioners	<b>53</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51</b>
From your bishop	<b>50</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>38</b>
From fellow priests	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>26</b>
From non priest friends	<b>31</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>35</b>
From your extended family: in-laws, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>
From your local community in general	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>
From the national headquarters of GOA/OCA	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
From the non-Orthodox Christian clergy in your local community	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

Does this finding mean that the most conservative priests rely more on *all* fellow Orthodox clergymen? Or does this indicate that the feeling of fraternity and mutual support *among* conservative priests is stronger than among traditional or moderate or liberal clergy? Does it mean that conservative priests rely more heavily on their bishops? Or is there an opposite effect, that bishops may tend to be “conservative” and therefore relate more closely to the clergy who share their views? We need more data to respond to this question.

Another question examined clergy opinions on what kinds of supports or changes would help them in their parish ministry. See chart 28. Remarkably, a vast majority of both Greek Orthodox (84%) and OCA (75%) clergy selected most frequently “Having more opportunity for personal spiritual development” as “would be very helpful” in their ministry. Put differently, for the overwhelming majority of priests, the routines of the parish and family lives leave no time for their personal spiritual fulfillment. Four other items were also chosen by more than half of GOA and OCA clergy as would be “very helpful” in the parish ministry: “Having more time available to spend with my family,” “Having greater feeling of fraternity among priests,” “Having “trained” deacons sharing pastoral duties,” and “Having more opportunity to share concerns and to communicate regularly with priests in other parishes and dioceses.” In other words, priests are longing to have more space for personal family lives, more communication and mutual support among fellow clergy, and somebody sharing professionally in their multiplied parish duties.

**Chart 28. Five Most Desired Changes in Clergy Lives**  
 (% of priests saying that this would be "VERY HELPFUL" in their ministry)



The aforementioned five top choices of what would be most helpful in the parish ministry are the same for the GOA and OCA clergy. At the same time, Greek Orthodox priests expressed significantly stronger desire than the OCA priests for “having more time to spend with the family” (82% of GOA clergy said “would be very helpful” in comparison with 53% among OCA priests), and for “having “trained” deacons sharing pastoral duties” (70% and 56% respectively).

This is consistent with our previous conclusions that the problems of overwork and finding proper balance between parish duties and their personal family lives is more urgent for GOA than for OCA clergy (see the chapters on problems facing priests and on the subjects that ought to be discussed in the Church).

The data Tab.27 show also that twice as many of the GOA (37%) priests than of OCA (17%) clergy feel also that greater participation in the decision making in their dioceses would be very helpful in their parish ministry.

**Tab.27 Question: Would any of the following be helpful in your priestly ministry?**  
 (% of clergy who said that the following would be *VERY HELPFUL* in their parish ministry)

	All clergy, %	GOA, %	OCA, %
Having more opportunity for personal spiritual development	<b>79</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>75</b>
Having more time available to spend with my family	<b>67</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>53</b>
Having greater feeling of fraternity among priests	<b>67</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>66</b>
Having “trained” deacons sharing pastoral duties	<b>62</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>56</b>
Having more opportunity to share concerns and to communicate regularly with priests in other parishes and dioceses	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>50</b>
Having opportunity for training in leadership skills: conflict management, communications, etc.	<b>46</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>44</b>
More opportunity to discuss theological and pastoral issues in a public forum	<b>42</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>37</b>
Having opportunity to be free from involvement in business affairs in a parish, so that I can concentrate on liturgical life of a parish and spiritual needs of parishioners	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>
Having greater freedom to run the parish as I see best	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>
Having greater opportunity for participation in decision making in my diocese/metropolis	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17</b>
Having opportunity for training in organizational and financial skills: budgeting, investing, insurance, etc.	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>

The Tab.28 shows remarkable distinctions between various generations of clergy in what they feel would be most helpful for them. Understandably, the younger clergy (under 45) expressed strongest desire to have more time available for their families. The middle-aged clergy are longing in particular for “more opportunity for personal spiritual development.” The most senior priests (65 and older) are especially nostalgic for “having greater feeling of fraternity among priests.” Predictably, the oldest priests are least concerned with the necessity to have training in leadership skills, but, at the same time, they expressed most strong desire to be involved in the decision making on the diocesan level and to be entirely independent in the decision making within their parishes.

**Tab.28 The Age of Clergy and Desired Changes in the Church and in Their Personal Lives**  
 (% of clergy in various age who said that the following would be “VERY HELPFUL” in parish ministry)

<b>Priests in the age:</b>	All clergy, %	Younger than 45, %	45-64, %	65 and older, %
Having more opportunity for personal spiritual development	<b>79</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>62</b>
Having more time available to spend with my family	<b>67</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>
Having greater feeling of fraternity among priests	<b>67</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>85</b>
Having “trained” deacons sharing pastoral duties	<b>62</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>60</b>
Having more opportunity to share concerns and to communicate regularly with priests in other parishes and dioceses	<b>52</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>60</b>
Having opportunity for training in leadership skills: conflict management, communications, etc.	<b>46</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>26</b>
More opportunity to discuss theological and pastoral issues in a public forum	<b>42</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>46</b>
Having opportunity to be free from involvement in business affairs in a parish, so that I can concentrate on liturgical life of a parish and spiritual needs of parishioners	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>
Having greater opportunity for participation in decision making in my diocese/metropolis	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>41</b>
Having greater freedom to run the parish as I see best	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>
Having opportunity for training in organizational and financial skills: budgeting, investing, insurance, etc.	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>

We compared cradle Orthodox and convert priests in what changes they feel would be helpful in their ministry. The most remarkable difference between two is that cradle Orthodox clergy expressed a much stronger desire to have more time to spend with their families than the convert priests. 77% of the cradle Orthodox said that “Having more time available to spend with my family” would be very helpful for them in comparison with only 49% among the converts. We also controlled for the facts that the GOA priests expressed stronger desire than the OCA priests to have more time for their families and that there are much more cradle Orthodox among GOA priests than among OCA clergy.

Still, this pattern (greater desire to have more time for family life on the part of the cradle Orthodox clergy) is present and consistent among both GOA and OCA priests, as well as within groups of clergy who serve in the parishes of the different size categories.

Tab.29 shows that theological stance of the clergy and their approaches to the Church life also has an influence on what “conservative,” “traditional” and “moderate” or “liberal” priests report as would be “very helpful.” The major distinction between these categories is that the “moderate” and “liberals” tend to say “would be very helpful” more frequently than the “traditional” or, especially, “conservative” priests with regard to almost all items included in the question on “what would be helpful.” We conclude that the “conservative” and “traditional” clergy are more inclined to simply accept the realities of their personal and Church lives as they are, while more “moderate” and “liberal” priests are looking for the changes and improvements

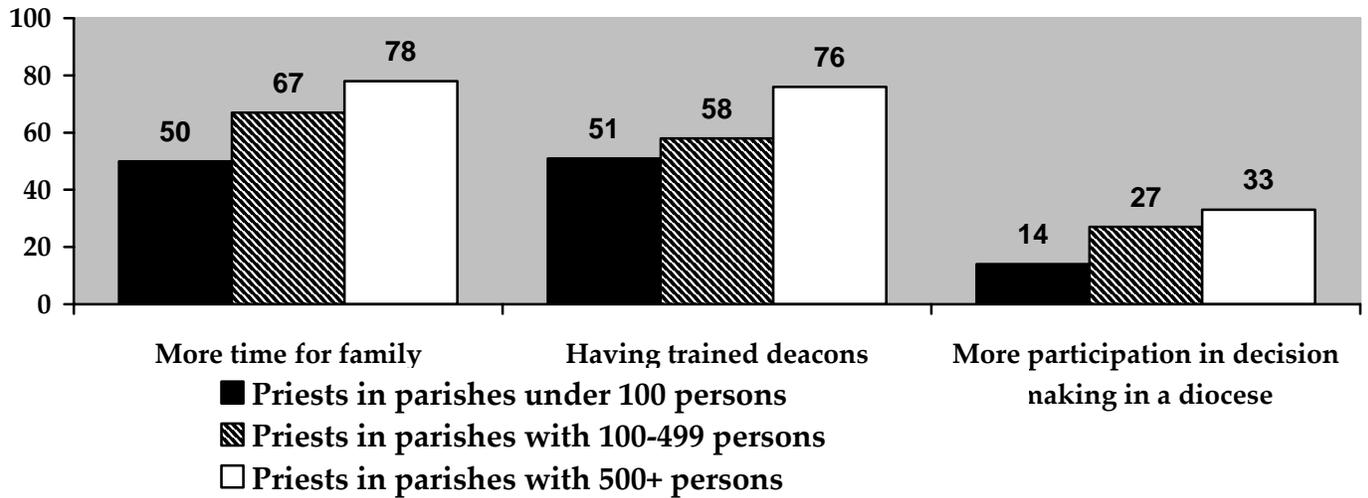
**Tab. 29 Theological Position of Clergy and Desired Changes in the Church and in Their Personal Lives**

**% of clergy with various approaches to Church life who said that the following would be “VERY HELPFUL” in parish ministry**

	All clergy %	Conser- vative, %	Traditional, %	Moderate and liberal, %
Having more opportunity for personal spiritual development	<b>79</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>88</b>
Having more time available to spend with my family	<b>67</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>74</b>
Having greater feeling of fraternity among priests	<b>67</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>69</b>
Having “trained” deacons sharing pastoral duties	<b>62</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>69</b>
Having more opportunity to share concerns and to communicate regularly with priests in other parishes and dioceses	<b>52</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>52</b>
Having opportunity for training in leadership skills: conflict management, communications, etc.	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>56</b>
More opportunity to discuss theological and pastoral issues in a public forum	<b>42</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>46</b>
Having opportunity to be free from involvement in business affairs in a parish, so that I can concentrate on liturgical life of a parish and spiritual needs of parishioners	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>
Having greater freedom to run the parish as I see best	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37</b>
Having greater opportunity for participation in decision making in my diocese/metropolis	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>44</b>
Having opportunity for training in organizational and financial skills: budgeting, investing, insurance, etc.	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>

The size of the parishes in which clergy serve also plays a significant role in what was reported by the priests as would be “very helpful.” See chart 29.

**Chart 29. The Size of a Parish and Most Desired Changes in Clergy Lives**  
 (% of priests saying that this would be "VERY HELPFUL" in their ministry)



In particular, in comparison with the smaller parishes (less than 100 persons), there were significantly more clergy from the mid-size (100-499 persons) or, especially, large (500 and more persons) churches who said that “having more time to spend with my family” (50%, 67% and 78% respectively), “having trained deacons sharing pastoral duties” (51%, 58% and 76% respectively) and “having greater opportunity for participation in decision making in my diocese” (14%, 27% and 33% respectively) would be “very helpful” in their ministry. Indeed, the priests serving in the larger churches are more overwhelmed with their pastoral duties which results in the lack of time for their families and in stronger desire to have trained deacons who would help them. At the same time, one can assume that the clergy from the largest parishes also command greater authority in the Church (than the priests from the smaller communities) and, consequently, they feel more “entitled” to be involved in the decision making not only in their own parishes, but also on the diocesan level.

## **Part 6. What Do Clergy Think About Various Church Issues?**

Both in the “Old World” and in America, the Orthodox Churches are struggling with the same dilemma: how to balance the established traditions and norms of church life with modern social realities and how to meet the changing expectations (or even demands) of the new generations of their faithful without compromising fundamental principles and rules. This goal of reconciling old traditions with modern realities is especially difficult in the US, because American Orthodox Churches are also challenged with the necessity to relate adequately to the mainstream of American religion and culture. Put differently, in the US, Orthodox Churches form a community which is in many ways distinct from mainstream America. The question is: how to keep this distinctiveness, and the Orthodox traditions and heritage without separation and isolation from society at large?

Our survey examined clergy attitudes and opinions on different issues regarding possible changes and developments in church life. The questionnaire asked priests if they agree or disagree with various statements. These statements can be conventionally divided in four categories: “Notion of Priesthood and Status of Priest,” “Democracy and Openness in the Church,” “Changes and Innovations in the Orthodox Church,” and “Ecumenical Attitudes and Relations to the Outside Non-Orthodox Community.”

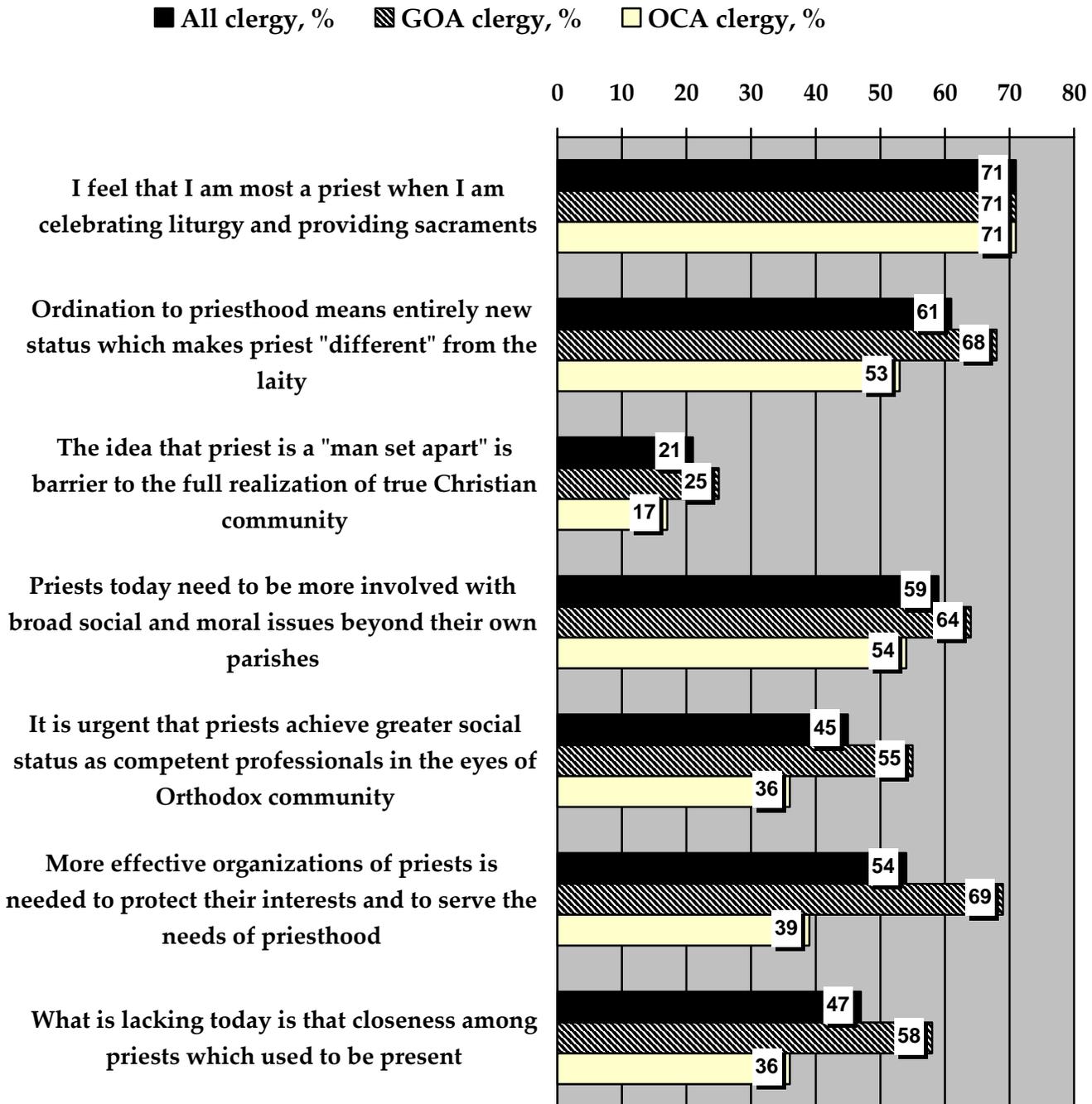
## **6.1. Notion of Priesthood and Status of Priests**

### ***HIGHLIGHTS:***

- All categories of clergy feel their priestly identity most strongly in performing sacramental ministry and leading worship;
- The majority of GOA and OCA priests view themselves as “men set apart:” they believe that ordination to the priesthood means an entirely new status which makes them different from the laity and they do not feel that this special distinct status is a hindrance in creating true Christian community;
- The majority of priests recognize the significance of social ministry as an integral part of their vocation;
- In comparison with the OCA clergy, many more Greek Orthodox priests feel a need for more prestigious image of priesthood in society, for better protection of their interests, and for greater solidarity and unity among themselves;
- The older priests are more concerned with the issue of a greater social prestige of priestly vocation and with the better protection of the interests of priestly community than the middle-aged and younger clergy;
- Cradle Orthodox clergy are major proponents of the idea of the broader social involvement of the priests and they express strong desire for the improvement in social prestige of priestly vocation, while the convert clergy adhere to the old, single-focused sacramental-liturgical model of priesthood, and relatively few of them are concerned with the social prestige of priestly vocation in the eyes of wider society;
- The traditional and conservative clergy are stronger proponents of clear separation between clergy and laity in the Church than liberal and moderate priests;
- The liberal and moderate clergy are much more in favor of greater social involvement of clergy and they feel greater need for professionalization and higher social image of priesthood than traditional and conservative priests.

Seven statements examined opinions of the clergy on the status of a priest. The responses of GOA and OCA clergy – the proportions of those who agreed with these statements – are summarized in chart 30.

**Chart 30. % of GOA and OCA priests who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:**



The first statement - “I feel that I am most a priest when I am celebrating liturgy and providing sacraments” -reflects the core identity of a priest. An overwhelming majority (71%) of clergy agreed with this statement and there was little difference in responses between GOA and OCA priests, between various age groups of clergy and between cradle Orthodox and convert priests.

All clergy feel their priestly identity most strongly in performing sacramental ministry and leading worship. Indeed, providing sacraments and leading worship are the roles which are exclusive to priests (and closed to laity) and in which the uniqueness of the priesthood is clearly visible. These sacramental-liturgical functions are not only the situations in which priests feel most authentically as priests, but they also serve as the major sources of satisfaction in the work of the clergy as noted earlier.

The second and third statements - "Ordination to the priesthood means an entirely new status which makes priests 'different' from laity" and "The idea that priest is a man 'set apart' is a barrier to the full realization of true Christian community" - deal with the same issue: how distinct is the status of a priest from the laity and how clear should be the borders between clergy and people in the pews. These statements tell us about clergy approaches to the theology of priesthood and which model of priesthood the clergy favor more: the "cultic model" or the "servant-leadership model." The responses to these statements show that a majority of priests view themselves as "men set apart." 68% of GOA and 53% of OCA clergy believe that ordination to the priesthood means an entirely new status which makes them different from the laity. No more than one-fourth of the GOA (25%) and OCA (17%) priests feel that this special distinct status is a hindrance in creating true Christian community. Clearly, the cultic model is dominant among American Orthodox priests.

The fourth statement - "Priests today need to be more involved with broad social and moral issues beyond their own parish's level" - indicates clergy opinions on significance of the social ministry as a part of their priestly duties. It should be noted that this statement does not undermine the importance of the sacramental liturgical functions of the priesthood, but suggests that clergy should also be socially involved. 59% of all clergy (64% of GOA and 54% of OCA) agreed with this statement, and only 21% of priests (17% of GOA and 25% of OCA) disagreed. The fact that majority of Orthodox clergy recognize significance of the social ministry is an important finding, because the idea of social ministry as an integral part of priestly vocation is relatively new for American Orthodox Churches. Indeed, according to the national "Ministry in America" study published in 1980, the Orthodox clergy identified most completely with the "sacramental-liturgical model" of priesthood. In this model, clergy were called to have a *singular focus* on the transcendent and holy: on leading sacramental worship, providing communion, and teaching. At that time, counseling, social outreach and the development of community services were subtly disregarded or even discouraged in many American Orthodox parishes (Harakas 1980).

The fifth statement - “It is urgent that priests achieve greater social status as competent professionals in the eyes of Orthodox community” is related to the image of priesthood in the wider society. It voices a concern that priests should become more like other professionals, more competent in their defined areas, and, as a result, higher in status in society generally. More than a half (55%) of Greek Orthodox priests agreed with this statement in comparison with only slightly more than one-third (36%) among OCA clergy. In other words, the GOA clergy are more concerned with the professionalization of priesthood than OCA priests. This pattern, greater desire of the GOA clergy to organize priesthood more like professional community, is also confirmed by the sixth statement about the need for professional organizations which would protect the interests and serve the needs of the priests. 69% of GOA clergy agreed with this statement in comparison with only 39% among OCA priests.

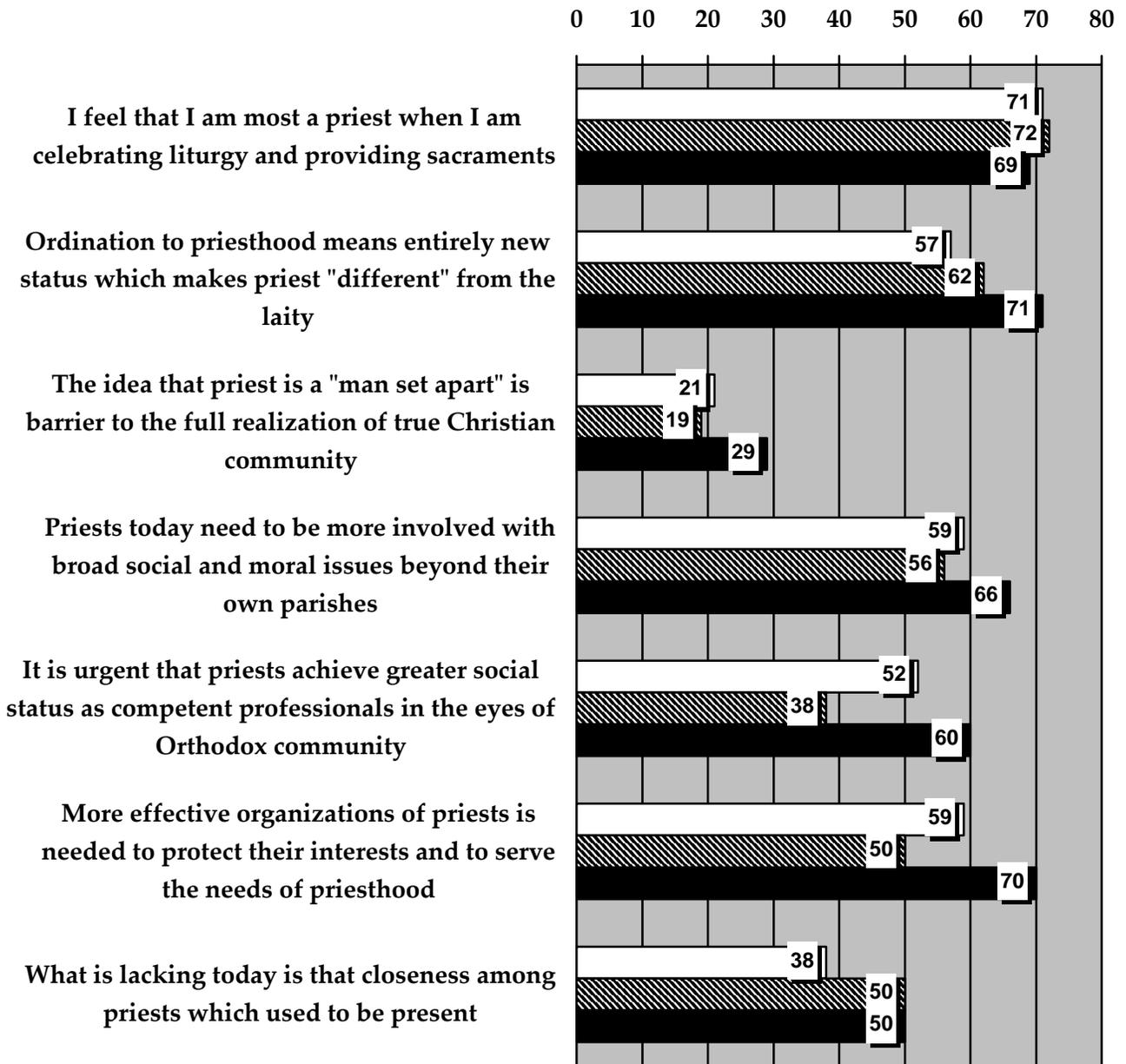
The last statement – “What is lacking today is that closeness among priests which used to be present” – tells us if there is a sense of community among Orthodox fellow priests, or, to the contrary, if the clergy are concerned with the absence of solidarity and mutual support among themselves. Again, the GOA and OCA priests feel different about this issue. A majority (58%) of Greek Orthodox clergy feel lack of the sense of unity among them in comparison with only 36% in the case of OCA priests.

Summing up, the GOA and OCA priests have similar theological attitudes to the status of the priest (first, second and third statements), and they both equally embrace the idea of social ministry as integral part of priestly vocation. What distinguishes the GOA and OCA clergy is their very different level of satisfaction with the current status of priesthood and with situation in priestly community. Clearly, a majority of GOA priests are longing for greater solidarity and unity among themselves, for better protection of their interests and for more prestigious image of priesthood in society. Conversely, most of OCA clergy are satisfied with the current situation.

We looked at age differences among clergy in degree of their agreement with seven statements about status of priesthood. Several findings should be noted. See chart 31 on the next page.

**Chart 31. Age of the Clergy and their Attitudes to the Status of Priesthood:**  
 % of priests in various age groups who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:

□ Priests younger than 45, %    ▨ Priests 45-64 years old, %    ■ Priests 65 years and older, %



First, all age groups were relatively uniform in their agreement with the first and fourth statements. In other words, the sacramental ministry and leading worship are equally quintessential for the younger, middle-aged and senior clergy, but, at the same time, all generations of priests recognize also the importance of their social ministry to the wider society.

Second, the position of the oldest (65 and older) priests on relationship between clergy and laity in the Church is distinct from the middle-aged and younger clergy. The senior priests agree more likely with the statement about special, distinct from the laity, status of a priest.

At the same time, however, the senior clergy also agreed most strongly that “The idea that the priest is a ‘man set apart’ is a barrier to the full realization of true Christian community.” Our guess is that this apparently contradictory position of the older priests can be explained by the fact that they base their responses not on formal theology of priesthood but on their personal convictions and experiences. Put differently, the senior clergy have a more traditional approach to the status of the priest and they support idea of clear distinction between clergy and laity, but yet their life experiences tell them that good communication lines are important for building a healthy and vibrant parish.

Third, the oldest priests are also most concerned with the needs for a greater social prestige of priestly vocation (fifth statement) and for the better protection of the interests of priestly community (sixth statement). Why? Do the life experiences of senior clergy tell them that it is important to keep up with the changing social realities? Or are older priests simply nostalgic for the good old times when clergy used to command more social authority? More research is needed to respond to this question.

There were some remarkable distinctions in the attitudes to the priesthood between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy. Many more cradle Orthodox than convert priests agreed that “Priests today need to be more involved with broad social and moral issues beyond their own parish’s level” (68% and 44% respectively) and that “It is urgent that priests achieve greater social status as competent professionals in the eyes of Orthodox community” (55% and 30% respectively). In other words, the cradle Orthodox clergy are the major proponents of the mainstreaming of the Orthodox priesthood in the USA: they voice the idea of the broader social involvement of the priests and expressed strong desire for the greater social prestige of priestly vocation. Conversely, the convert clergy adhere more to an older, single-focused sacramental-liturgical model of priesthood, and relatively few of them are concerned with the social prestige of priestly vocation in the eyes of wider society.

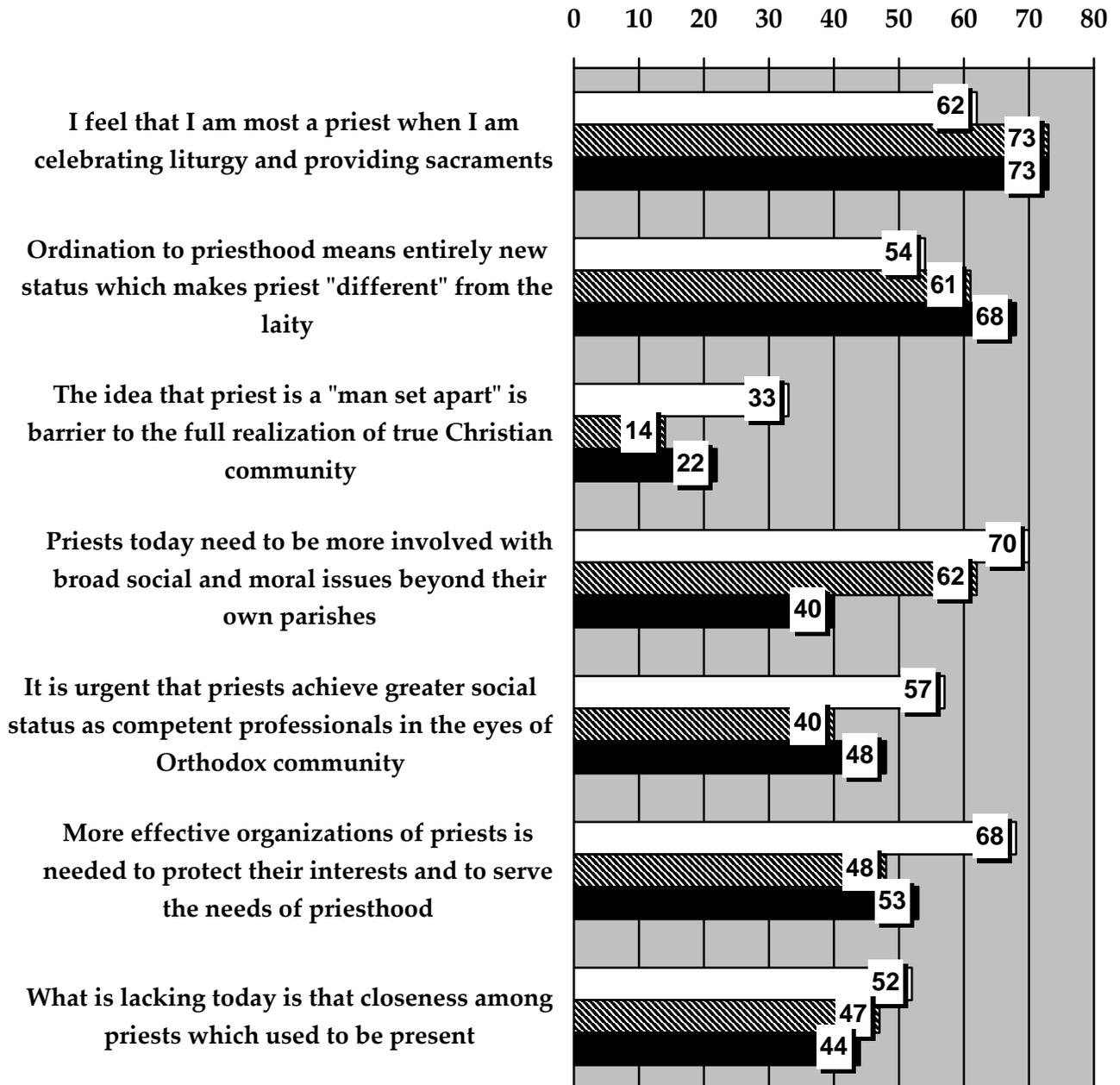
In comparison with the differences between GOA and OCA clergy, between various generations of priests and even between the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, the theological position of clergy is, probably, most influential factor for clergy attitudes to the notion of priesthood and to the status of the priests.

Chart 32 shows the degree of agreement with seven statements about priesthood by the clergy who identified their theological stance and approaches to the Church life either as “liberal” or “moderate” or as “traditional” or as “conservative.”

### Chart 32. Theological Stance of the Clergy and Their Attitudes to the Status of Priesthood

% of priests with various theological approaches who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:

□ "Liberal" and "Moderate" clergy, %    ▨ "Traditional" clergy, %  
 ■ "Conservative" clergy, %



Only in case of two statements, liberal and moderate, traditional and conservative clergy expressed relatively the same degree of agreement: “I feel that I am most a priest when I am celebrating liturgy and providing sacraments” and “What is lacking today is that closeness among priests which used to be present.”

The traditional and conservative clergy are stronger proponents of clear separation between clergy and laity in the Church than liberal and moderate priests. In comparison with 54% among liberal and moderate, 61% of traditional and 68% of conservative clergy feel that “Ordination to priesthood means an entirely new status which makes priest ‘different’ from laity.” Conversely, one third of liberal and moderate priests believe that “The idea that the priest is a man ‘set apart’ is a barrier to the full realization of true Christian community,” but only 14% of traditional and 22% of conservative clergy agreed with this statement.

The liberal and moderate clergy are much more in favor of greater social involvement of clergy than traditional and conservative priests. 70% of liberal and moderate clergy agreed that “Priests today need to be more involved with broad social and moral issues beyond their own parishes,” but only 62% of traditional and only 40% conservative priests did so. Finally, in comparison with the conservative and traditional clergy, the liberal and moderate priests feel greater need for professionalization and higher social image of priesthood, as well as for better protection of the interests of priestly community.

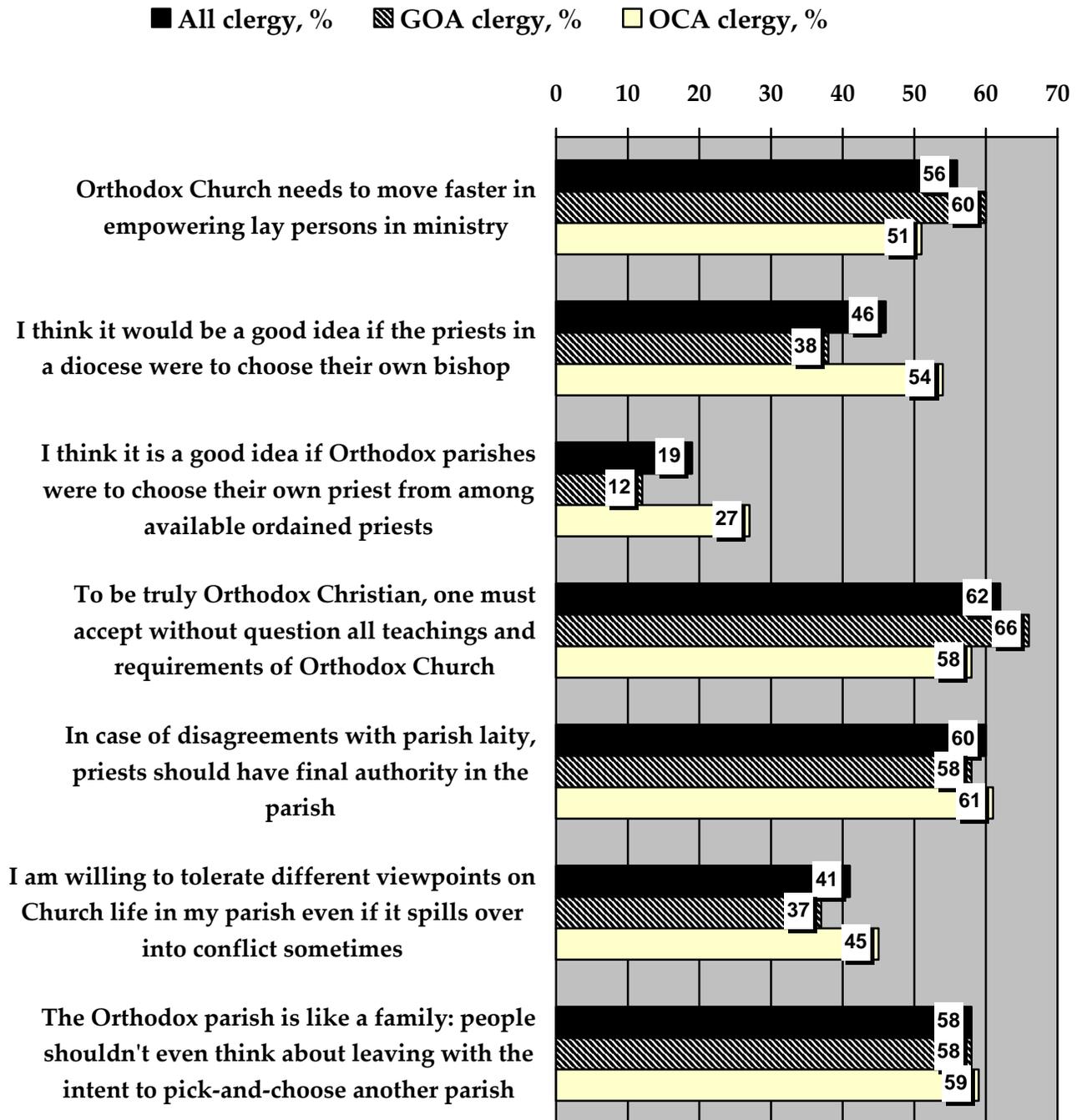
## **6.2. Democracy in the Church**

### ***HIGHLIGHTS:***

- A majority of American Orthodox priests do not believe in democracy in the Church: they do not support ideas of electing parish clergy and bishops; they require voiceless obedience from the faithful to the established rules in Church in general and in their own parishes; they do not favor the presence of different opinions in their parishes and the right of laity to pick-and-choose the parish which would suit them the best;
- More OCA than GOA clergy are in favor of electing bishops by the diocesan clergy and parish priests by parishioners;
- The older priests are more likely than the younger clergy to support ideas of sharing in ministry with the laity, and electing bishops and parish clergy;
- Comparing to older clergy, the younger priests feel more comfortable to have different opinions on Church life in general and in their own parishes, to share decision making in a parish with the laity and to allow faithful to pick-and-choose the parishes which would be most satisfactory for them;
- The convert clergy are more willing than cradle Orthodox priests to tolerate different viewpoints on the Church life in their parishes;
- The theological stance of the clergy, the differences in attitudes between priests who defined their position on Church life as “liberal,” “moderate,” “traditional,” or “conservative,” is by far the most important factor for the approaches of clergy to the various issues on democracy in the Church.

Seven statements explored opinions of clergy on the broad subject of *Democracy in the Church*. The percentages of OCA and GOA clergy who agreed, either strongly or somewhat, with these statements are in chart 33.

**Chart 33. % of GOA and OCA priests who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements on Democracy in the Church:**



Unlike most other Christian Churches, in American Orthodoxy, laity have relatively “little say” in comparison with clergy. Similarly, the idea of sharing in ministry with the laity is less accepted among American Orthodox priests than among Catholic and Protestant clergy. Further, at this point, there is no established practice of *professional lay* ministers in American Orthodox churches. Therefore, it was important to find out that the majority of both GOA and OCA priests support an idea of more proactive involvement of people in pew in the Church life. Indeed, 56% of all clergy (60% of GOA and 51% of OCA) agreed with the statement “The Orthodox Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry” (20% disagreed and 24% were neutral or unsure).

While GOA and OCA clergy are similar in their opinions on possibility of greater sharing in ministry with laity, they differ significantly in the approach to the sensitive topic of who should choose bishops for a diocese.

Today, this procedure varies from one American Orthodox church to the other. In the GOA, a list of three candidates for an open diocesan seat is composed by the American synod of Greek Orthodox Bishops. This list is submitted to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople who resides in Istanbul. The Synod of Bishops in Istanbul elects one of the three proposed candidates (what usually happens) or it can also suggest some different name. In the OCA, the process of consecration and appointment of a bishop is entirely under control of its American based bishops. In both jurisdictions, however, neither laity nor parish clergy have influence on electing the bishops.

We learned from the survey that majority of OCA priests (54%) feel that diocesan bishops should be chosen by the clergy in a diocese, but only 38% of Greek Orthodox priests agreed with the statement “I think it would be a good idea if the priests in a diocese were to choose their own bishop.” Similarly, comparing to GOA priests, twice as many OCA clergy supported an idea of choosing the parish priests by parishioners (12% and 27% respectively agreed with the statement “I think it would be a good idea if Orthodox parishes were to choose their own priests from among available ordained priests”).

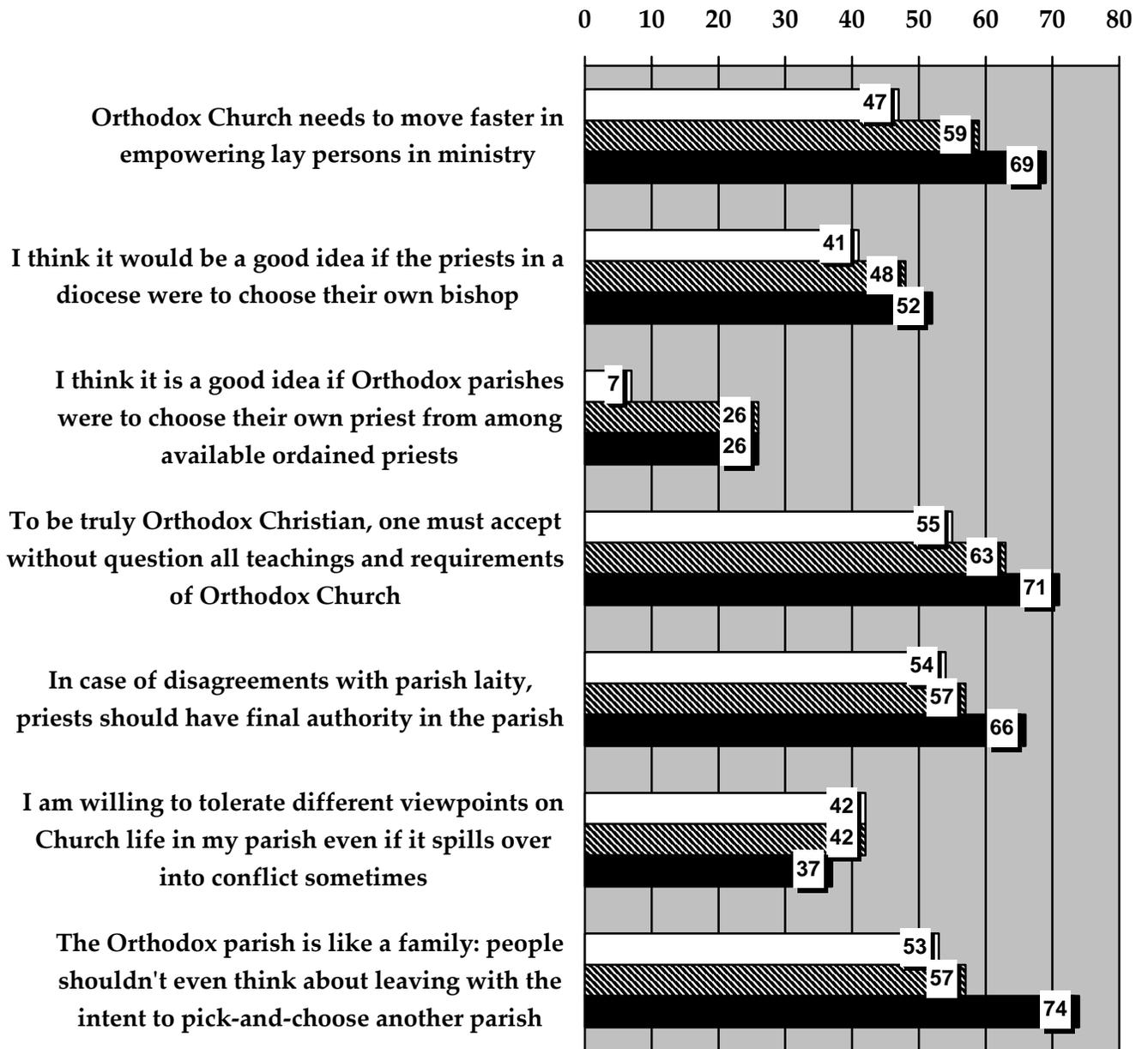
It should be noted, however, that both in GOA and OCA the group of priests who wish to elect their own bishops is much larger than the number of clergy who would let parishioners pick and choose their parish priests.

The survey tells us also that – in spite of their declared willingness to share in ministry with the laity – a dominant majority of both GOA and OCA clergy remain quite authoritarian in their attitudes to the organization of Church life. Not only most of them agree with the general statement “To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teachings and requirements of Orthodox Church” (66% GOA and 58% OCA priests), but they also believe that “In the case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish:” this is position of 58% GOA and 61% OCA clergy. Conversely, less than a half of GOA (37%) and OCA (45%) priests said that they are “willing to tolerate different viewpoints on Church life in my parish even if it spills over into conflict sometimes.” The fact that most clergy adhere to an idea of humble obedience on part of parishioners was also confirmed by their strong agreement on the statement “The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn’t even think about leaving with the intent to “pick-and-choose” another parish” (this was opinion of 58% GOA and 59% OCA clergy).

The picture of age differences in the attitudes of clergy to the subject of *Democracy in the Church* is somewhat inconsistent. See chart 34 on the next page.

**Chart 34. Age of the Clergy and their Attitudes to the Democracy in the Church:**  
 % of priests in various age groups who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:

□ Priests younger than 45, %    ▨ Priests 45-64 years old, %    ■ Priests 65 years and older, %



On the one hand, the younger (under 45) clergy showed more conservative approaches and they were less likely to agree than the middle-aged (45-64) and, especially, older clergy (older than 65) with the three statements: “The Orthodox Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry,” “I think it would be a good idea if the priests in a diocese were to choose their own bishop,” and “I think it is a good idea if Orthodox parishes were to choose their own priest from among available ordained priests.”

At the same time, the younger clergy are less keen than the older priests to emphasize the voiceless obedience of the church rules by the laity. Indeed, in comparison with the clergy 65 years and older, fewer priests in the age 45-64 and younger than 45 agreed with the statements “To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teachings and requirements of Orthodox Church” (71%, 63% and 55% respectively), and “In the case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish” (66%, 57%, 54%), and “The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn’t even think about leaving with the intent to “pick-and-choose” another parish” (74%, 57% and 53%).

A partial explanation for these two contradictory patterns could be the fact that the younger clergy - who have less experience and authority in the Church – prefer to be on the “safe side.” They are less likely to challenge openly the established rules and practices on the national Church level (the statements about sharing in ministry with laity, about electing bishops and priests) than more influential and outspoken senior priests. At the same time, when asked about their personal opinions about patterns of life in their local parishes, the younger clergy were more inclined to share authority with laity and to allow parishioners to pick-and-choose the parish which would be most satisfactory for them, while the older and more experienced priests believe more strongly in their superior authority of a priest and in the implicit submission to this authority of the people in pews.

Finally, it should be emphasized that in spite of the noted generation differences, the priests who expressed authoritarian attitudes to the norms of the local parish life (three last statements in the chart) comprise an absolute majority in all age groups of clergy.

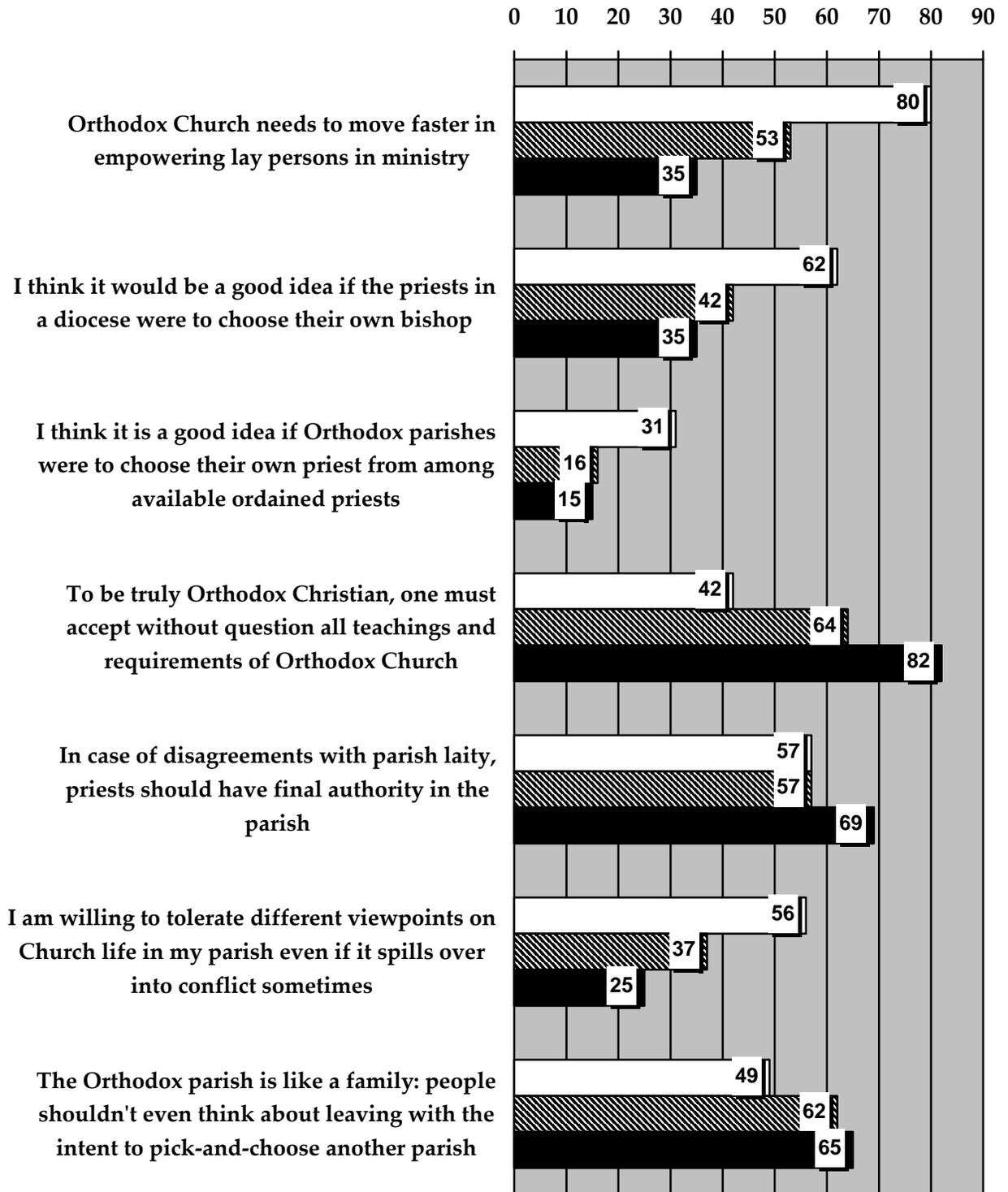
There was only one difference in responses to the statements about *Democracy in the Church* between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy: significantly more convert (50%) than cradle Orthodox (35%) priests said that they are “willing to tolerate different viewpoints on Church life in my parish even if it spills over into conflict sometimes.” We think this reflects the differences in the social upbringing between converts (who grew up in the mainstream individualistic American culture with the inherited notion of everybody’s equal right to hold own opinion and willingness to negotiate the disagreements) and the cradle Orthodox (who grew more likely in the communities where ideas and rules are commonly shared by everybody).

The survey found most strong and clear relationship between theological stance of the clergy and their approaches to the various issues connected with the subject *Democracy in the Church*. See chart 35 on the next page.

### Chart 35. Theological Stance of the Clergy and Their Attitudes to the Democracy in the Church

% of priests with various theological approaches who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:

□ Liberal and Moderate clergy, %   ▨ Traditional clergy, %   ■ Conservative clergy, %



Predictably, in comparison with “moderate” and “liberal” clergy, the priests who defined their theological position and approaches to the Church life as “conservative” or “traditional” were much less likely to support statements about empowering laity in ministry, electing bishops and parish priests, and tolerating different viewpoints in a local parish. To the contrary, fewer “moderate” and “liberal” than “traditional” and “conservative” clergy agreed with the statements “To be truly Orthodox Christian, one must accept without question all teachings and requirements of Orthodox Church,” “In case of disagreements with laity, priests should have final authority in the parish,” and “The Orthodox parish is like a family: people shouldn’t even think about leaving with the intent to pick-and-choose another parish.”

However, even among “moderate” and “liberal” clergy, the absolute majority of priests believe in the implicit superior authority of clergy over laity in the local parish: 57% of liberal and moderate priests agreed with the statement “In case of disagreements with parish laity, priests should have final authority in the parish.”

To sum up, clergy responses to seven statements about *Democracy in the Church* show that majority of American Orthodox priests do not feel that Church is about democracy: they do not support ideas of electing parish clergy and bishops; they require voiceless obedience from the faithful to the established rules in Church in general and in their own parishes; they do not favor the presence of different opinions in their parishes and the right of the laity to pick-and-choose the parish which would suit them the best.

### **6.3. Changes and Innovations in the Church**

#### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- A vast majority of GOA and OCA clergy - the younger and older priests, and the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy alike - *do not support* greater freedom for local parishes to experiment with the forms of liturgical life and greater freedom for the individual believers to interpret Scripture and Orthodox tradition;
- Less than one-third of the clergy would support women ordination to deaconate;
- Twice as many GOA (35%) than OCA (16%) clergy would allow divorced and widowed priests to be re-married;
- Only 16% of priests think that requirement to be married prior to ordination is unnecessary;
- Almost half of parish clergy feel that the rule about required celibacy for the bishops should be changed;
- In the case of all issues dealing with the eligibility to the priesthood, the Greek Orthodox clergy are more in favor of the liberalization of the current rules than the OCA priests;
- The younger priests under 45 were significantly *less supportive* of ordination prior to marriage, of the possibility to remarry for divorced and widowed clergy, and of allowing married clergy to become bishops than the middle-aged (45-64) and most senior priests (65 and older);
- Similar to the subject of *Democracy in the Church*, the opinions of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy on the possible innovations in the Church were astonishingly alike;
- In their approaches to various innovations and changes in the Church, the “conservative” and “traditional” priests are largely in the same camp, while attitudes of “liberal” and “moderate” clergy put them far away from what can be described as the mainstream of the Orthodox Church.

A close read of Orthodox history demonstrates remarkable flexibility and adaptability in Church life (Taft 2006). The commonly shared perception held, even by Orthodox, however, is that Orthodox Christianity praisers adherence to tradition and emphasizes continuity and stability. Generally, changes and innovations in the Church are accepted rather grudgingly and only if proven absolutely necessary and approved properly by Church hierarchy. This distinct feature of Orthodox Christianity can be seen both as its strength and, at the same time, as its major challenge. Indeed, two difficult questions to answer are: how to keep a proper balance between a supposedly once-and-forever established tradition and changing social realities; and how to adapt the assumingly universal traditions and rules to the various local contexts in which Orthodox Church functions. Here, in America, these questions are especially urgent for three reasons.

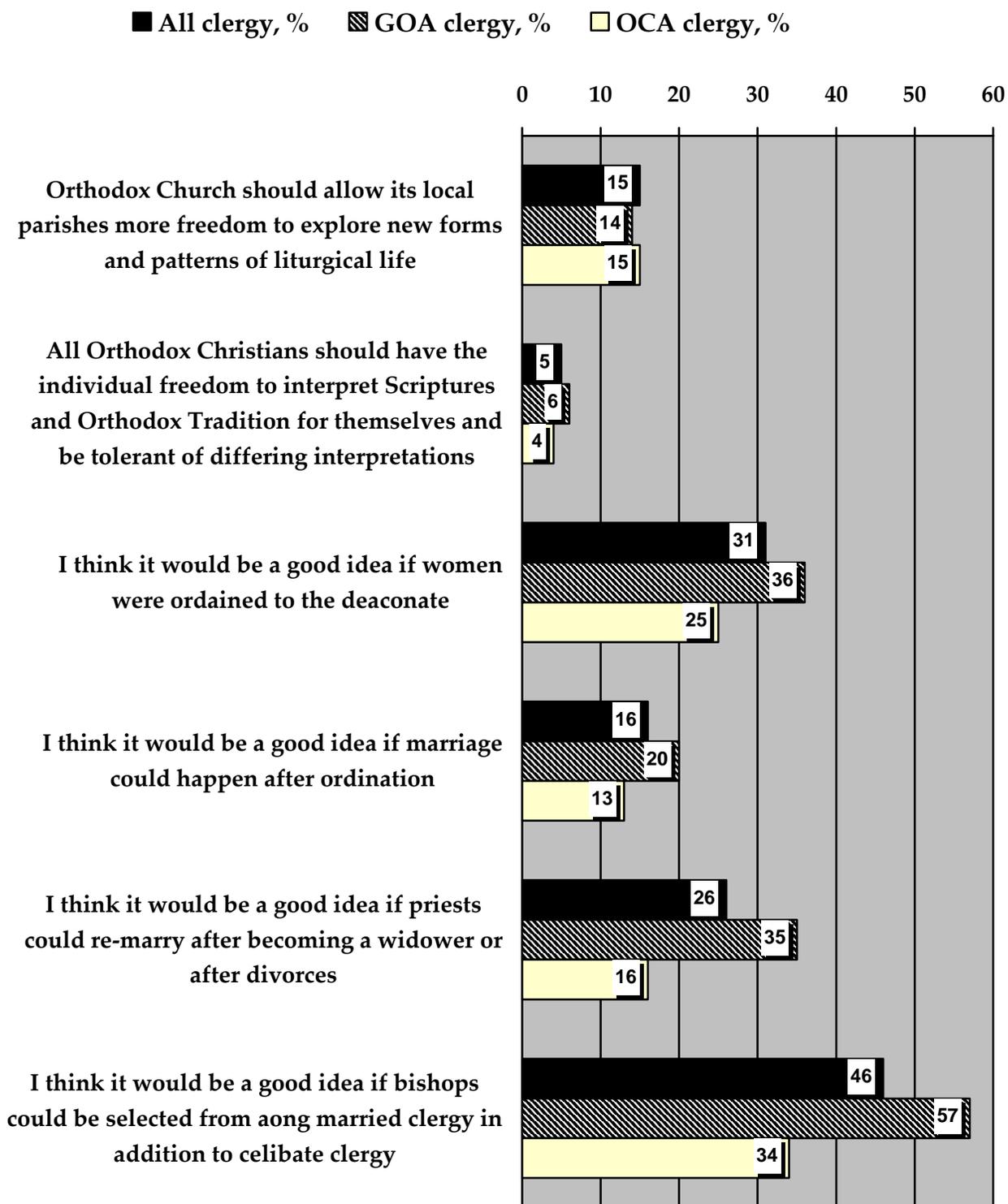
First, the Orthodox Christianity in the US is a minority religious culture. Being a minority, the Orthodox community has in many ways to compromise and to comply with the mainstream American culture in order to avoid social marginalization. Accordingly, in Church life, hierarchs, clergy and lay leaders alike cannot pretend that, for instance, the issues of ordination of women or of same sex marriage among the Church members are simply not present. This is especially true if American Orthodox Churches claim not to be anymore the Churches of the certain ethnic diasporas. Indeed, the strong ethnic identity and the sense of close-knit community which is both culturally and religiously distinct from the wider society were fundamental for the earlier generations of Orthodox believers in US. In the past, this helped American Orthodox Churches to keep established patterns of church life, to avoid changes and to expect taken-for-granted obedience of their faithful. Today, when the strength of the ethno-cultural values and sentiments declined significantly, the Orthodox Churches cannot count anymore on this factor nor on the unconditional loyalty of their members.

Second, the United States is a country where religious pluralism has been historically one of the foundational principles upon which the society was built. As Peter Berger pointed, the conditions of an ever-expanding market of religious options force churches to compete in retaining or gaining the adherence of the free-to-choose population. And this task proved to be especially difficult for churches with a claim to exclusive authority and a history of relying on the state to enforce a religious monopoly which was definitely the case of Orthodoxy. Further, on the level of religious consciousness, religious pluralism means the shift from religion as a taken-for-granted reality to religion as a matter of personal voluntary and deliberate choice (Berger 2003, p.34). Put differently, it would be socially perfectly acceptable for Orthodox Christians in America to abandon the Church which reject any innovations and which is unwilling to meet changing expectations and aspirations of the new generations of her faithful.

Third, the notion of unquestionable hierarchical authority is fundamental for the Orthodox Church. In spite of this, however, and for a number of historic reasons, the factor of “congregationalism” has been always present in American Orthodox parishes. According to Fr. Tomas Hopko, “Orthodox parishes and dioceses in North America today are voluntary associations of like-minded Orthodox Christians organized for purposes *determined by their members*.” The reality is that “a parish belongs to the diocese of its choice, most often *on its own terms*.” Therefore, “when an Orthodox parish in the United States experiences a dispute which leads to a division of its members into more ‘parishes,’ the resulting ‘parishes’ usually end up in different dioceses.” (Hopko 2003, pp. 1-2). In other words, in America, the individual parishes have relative flexibility and freedom in making locally decision to either embrace certain innovations or to avoid any changes in the Church life. Accordingly, clergy sometimes adapt the tradition as they see fit to meet a very specific local need, e.g. creating a “ritual” when there is no existing ritual.

Because of these circumstances, it was especially important to examine personal attitudes of the local parish priests towards innovations in the Church. Our survey offered clergy six statements on various possible changes in the life of the Church. The proportion of priests who agreed with these statements is shown in chart 36.

**Chart 36. % of GOA and OCA priests who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements on Changes and Innovations in the Church:**



The first two statements touch similar problems: greater freedom for the local parishes to experiment with forms of liturgical life and greater freedom for individual Orthodox believers to interpret Scripture and Tradition.

Both statements challenge strong hierarchical church authority and necessity to get approval from the bishops for any such innovations. They also reflect a more individualized approach to faith, more commonly found in Protestant Churches.

Very few of both GOA (15%) and OCA (14%) priests agreed that “Orthodox Church should allow its local parishes more freedom to explore new forms and patterns of liturgical life.” In other words, the survey tells us that only a tiny minority of clergy feel need for a greater freedom to experiment and to decide locally about innovations in liturgy. The question which remains at this point unanswered: why do priests not support idea of the greater flexibility of the individual parishes in how worship is organized? Is this because they are really satisfied with the present situation and truly keen on keeping liturgical life unchanged? Or are clergy afraid of the potential situation when they may face but would not be prepared to deal with the grass-roots initiatives of their parishioners? There also may be a problem with how a priest understands the statement “Orthodox Church should allow its local parishes more freedom to explore new forms and patterns of liturgical life.” Do clergy understand it to mean completely new forms of worship found in other Christian churches OR adaptations of Orthodox liturgical life? Further research is required.

Not surprisingly, even fewer priests (4% of OCA, 6% of GOA) supported the statement that “All Orthodox Christians should have the individual freedom to interpret Scripture and Orthodox Tradition for themselves and be tolerant of differing interpretations.” We conclude that a vast majority of parish clergy want to keep the current situation in which experimentation with liturgical life or interpretation of the Scripture is largely seen as a prerogative of the Church hierarchs.

The remaining four statements deal with the broad issue of who is eligible to enter the priesthood: either as deacons or as priests or as bishops. We saw in part 4 of this report that only 7% of priests feel that issue of “ordination of women” ought to be openly discussed in the Church. Both GOA and OCA clergy were also uniform in making subject “ordination of women” their top choice as something that they don’t want to be discussed at all. Clergy responses to the statement “I think it would be a good idea if women were ordained to deaconate” show that less than one-third of all clergy (36% among GOA and 25% among OCA priests) would allow women to enter even lowest rank of the priesthood and to serve in the Church as deacons.

The Orthodox Church has two basic rules regulating relationship between marital status and eligibility for the priesthood. The first rule is that a man must marry prior to his ordination to the diaconate, if he plans to be married at all. The other option is that one can be ordained after taking vows of celibacy, but in any case the bachelors (e.g. somebody who still considers marriage in the future) cannot enter priesthood.

As a result, there has always been a number of young seminary graduates perfectly qualified and desiring to become priests who were unable to be ordained because they had not yet found their mate but did not want to remain celibates either. The second requirement is that divorced or widowed clergy (priests and deacons) cannot remarry. The negative outcome of this rule is obvious: if a divorced or widowed priest enters openly new relationship and marries, he would be normally expected to leave priesthood.

The fourth (“I think it would be a good idea if marriage could happen after ordination”) and fifth (“I think it would be a good idea if priests could re-marry after becoming a widower or after divorces”) statements voice the abandonment of these two requirements. However restrictive these rules are, only one quarter of clergy (26%) would allow divorced or widowed priests to re-marry and even smaller proportion of respondents (16%) feel that requirement to be married prior to ordination is unnecessary.

Two nuances, however, should be noted. First, our study examined only approaches of the clergy who are currently in “good standing,” but we did not ask opinions of the persons who happened to be on the “other side of the barricade:” the young seminary graduates who are forced to postpone ordination until their marriage and the priests who were divorced. As of widowers, there were only few in our sample and we cannot make statistically significant conclusions out of their answers.

Second, there were many more GOA (35%) than OCA (16%) clergy who would allow divorced and widowed priests to be re-married. This fact is consistent with the other finding discussed earlier in the part 4 of this study report: as many as 62% of GOA priests say that the topic of “clergy divorces and remarriage of divorced priests” is urgent to be openly discussed in the Church, but only 16% of OCA priests feel the same way. We conclude that one way or other the American Greek Orthodox clergy are presently more exposed to the problem of divorces than the OCA priests.

The last statement (“I think it would be a good idea if bishops could be selected from among married clergy in addition to celibate clergy”) challenges current requirement of celibacy to be eligible to the highest rank in the Orthodox Church. In today’s American situation (where the proportion of celibate clergy is very low), this requirement resulted in an acute shortage of the worthy candidates who can even be considered to fill up the most important and influential positions in the Church. In addition, there has been an international discussion of this issue by scholars. And it is a fact of history that for the first seven centuries of Christian history bishops were selected from both married and monastic clergy. Hence, almost half of the parish clergy (46%) feel that the rule about required celibacy for the bishops should be changed, but again there was a significant difference between approaches of OCA and GOA priests.

In comparison with only one third of OCA clergy (34%), a clear majority of Greek Orthodox priests (57%) agreed with the statement “I think it would be a good idea if bishops could be selected from among married clergy in addition to celibate clergy.”

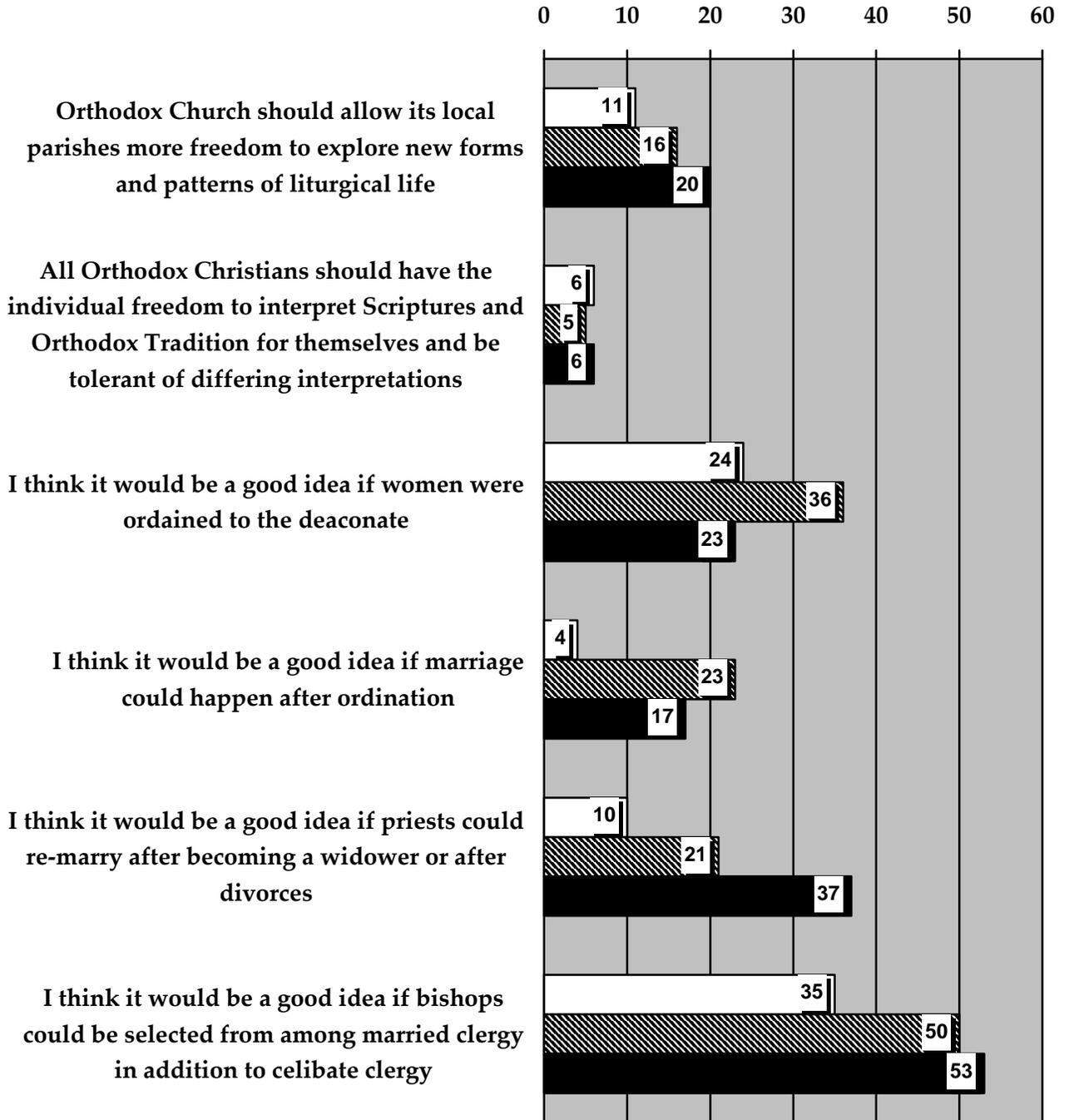
Overall, GOA and OCA priests expressed very similar - and rather negative - opinions on first two statements regarding possibility of a greater freedom for local parishes to experiment with liturgical life and greater freedom for individual believers to interpret Scripture. At the same time, in the case of four statements dealing with the eligibility to the priesthood, the Greek Orthodox clergy were more in favor of suggested possible changes than the OCA priests.

What about age differences? Are younger priests more inclined to experiment and to promote changes and innovations in the Church? Chart 37 shows that the general answer on this question is “No.”

**Chart 37. Age of the Clergy and their Attitudes to the Changes and Innovations in the Church:**

**% of priests in various age groups who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:**

□ Priests younger than 45, %    ▨ Priests 45-64 years old, %    ■ Priests 65 years and older, %



There were no significant age differences in responses to the statements about greater freedom for the local parishes to experiment with forms of liturgical life and about greater freedom for individuals to interpret Scripture. The younger, middle-aged and the older clergy alike were equally reluctant to agree with these statements.

The statement about possibility of women ordination to the diaconate scored stronger support among middle-aged clergy (36% of priests in age 45-64 agreed with this statement) than among both younger (24%) and older (23%) priests.

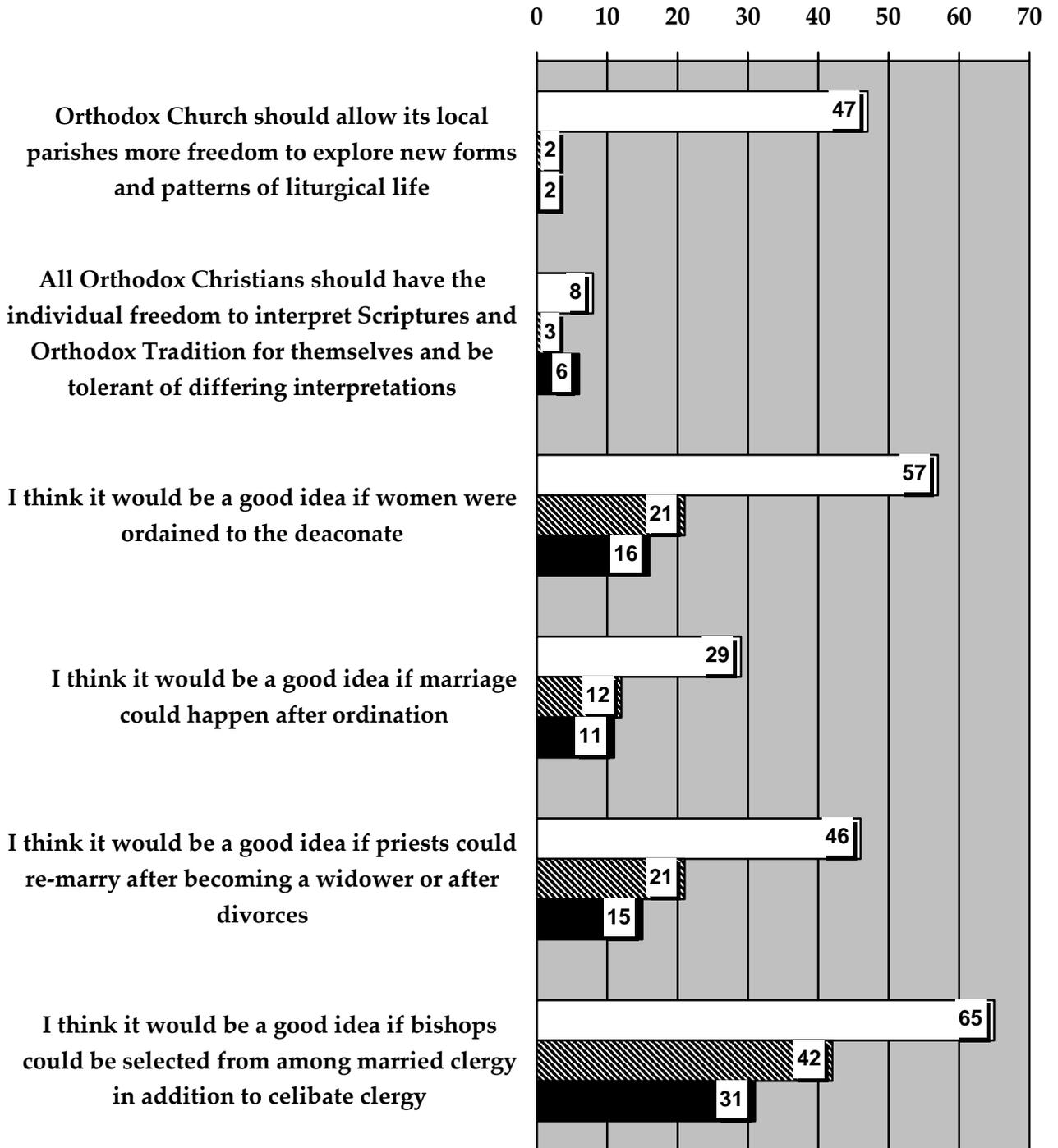
In the case of the last three statements, there was the same clear pattern. The younger priests under 45 were significantly less supportive of ordination prior to marriage, of remarriage of divorced and widowed clergy, and of allowing married clergy to become bishops than the middle-aged (45-64) and most senior priests (65 and older). Consistently with their responses to the statements on *Democracy in the Church*, the younger American Orthodox clergy maintain also generally more traditional and conservative attitudes on *Changes and Innovations in the Church* than the generations of their fathers and grand-fathers.

Also similar to the statements on *Democracy in the Church*, the opinions of the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy on six possible innovations in the Church were astonishingly alike. The only exception was the fact that somewhat more cradle Orthodox (52%) than convert clergy (39%) supported election of bishops from among married clergy.

Finally, chart 38 shows that in comparison with distinctions between GOA and OCA clergy, between various generations of priests and between cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, the theological stance of the priests – their self-identification as being either “conservative,” or “traditional,” or “moderate,” or “liberal” – is most stronger predictor for the differences in responses to the statements about changes and innovations in the Church. As one can expect, the clergy who identified themselves as “liberal” and “moderate” were much more likely to agree with all six statements than the “traditional” or, especially, “conservative” priests. However, in addition to this predictable relationship, one more peculiarity should be noted. By and large, the responses of “traditional” and “conservative” clergy were relatively similar to each other but clearly distinct from the answers of “liberal” and “moderate” priests. Put differently, in their approaches to various innovations and changes in the Church, the “conservatives” and “traditionals” are largely in the same camp, while attitudes of “liberals” and “moderates” put them far away from what can be described as the mainstream of the Orthodox Church.

**Chart 38. Theological Stance of the Clergy and Their Attitudes to Changes and Innovations in Church**  
 % of priests with various theological approaches who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:

□ Liberal and Moderate clergy, %    ▨ Traditional clergy, %    ■ Conservative clergy, %



## **6.4 Ecumenical Attitudes and Relations to the Outside Non-Orthodox Community**

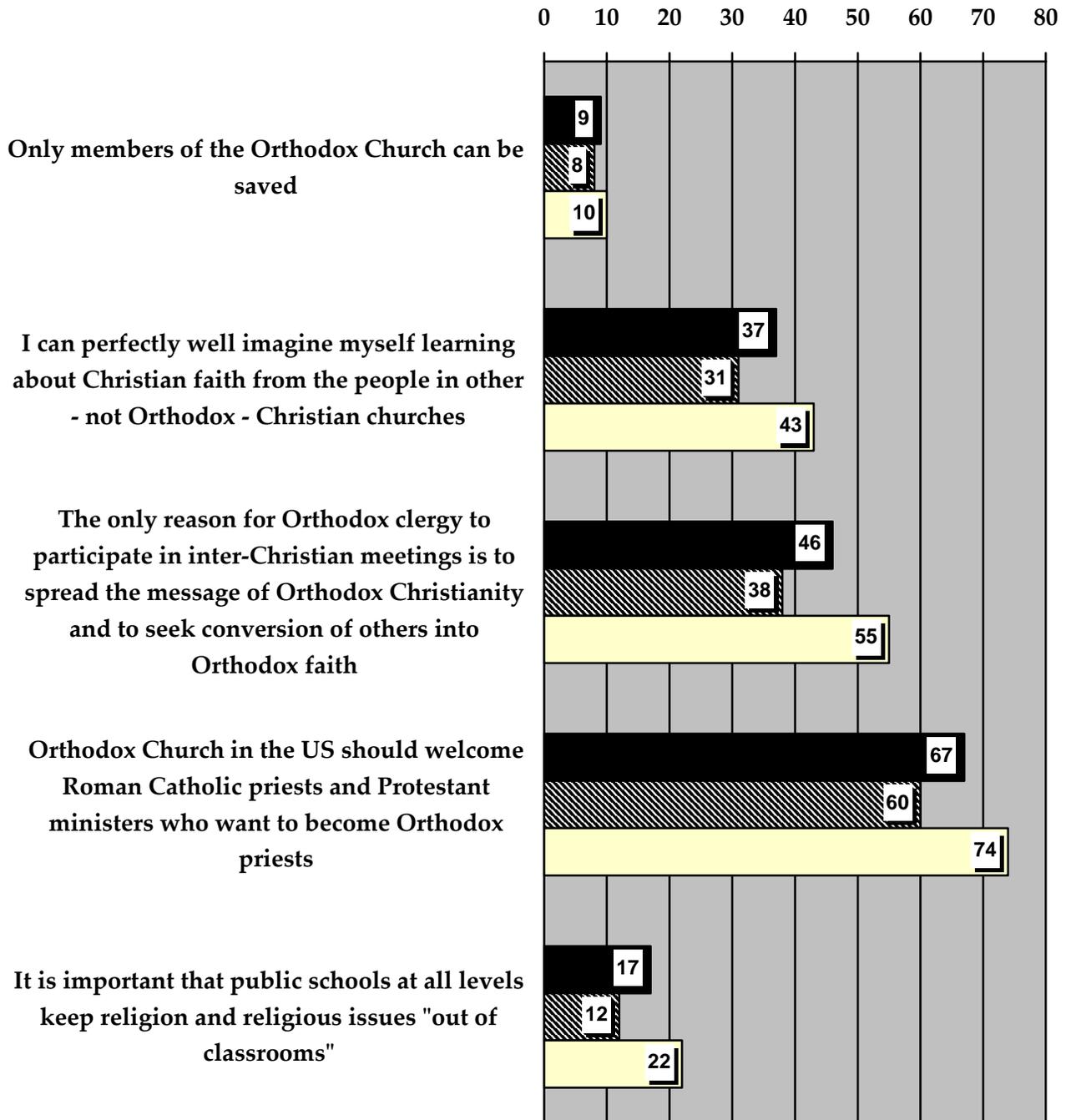
### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Among both GOA and OCA priests, and among cradle Orthodox and convert clergy, and among all generations of priests no more than 10% take the “hard-line” position that “Only members of the Orthodox Church can be saved;”
- Most clergy *do not feel* that communication with the religiously different “others” and participation in inter-Christian meetings are necessary or useful;
- Convert clergy are more skeptical about the usefulness of ecumenical contacts than their cradle Orthodox fellow priests;
- A vast majority of GOA and OCA clergy - cradle Orthodox and convert priests alike - favor having more former Catholic and Protestant clergy among their fellow Orthodox priests;
- Older Orthodox priests are the most and the younger clergy are the least likely to welcome former Catholic and Protestant clergy into the Orthodox Church;
- The greatest differences in clergy attitudes towards ecumenism and in their approach to the outside non-Orthodox community are based on the theological stance of the clergy, that is on distinctions between the priests who identified themselves as either “liberal,” or “moderate,” or “traditional,” or “conservative;”
- A very small proportion of all categories of Orthodox clergy – including those who identified themselves as “liberal” or “moderate” - supports an idea of intentional and thorough secularity of the American public schools.

As noted in the previous chapter, a strong notion of “distinctiveness” and sense of a close-knit community which is ethnically, culturally and religiously different from the wider society were fundamental for the earlier generations of Orthodox believers in the US. To a certain degree, this self-perception remains intact in many American Orthodox parishes. How do Orthodox parish clergy relate themselves to the outside non-Orthodox community? What are their approaches to the ecumenical contacts? Five statements in our questionnaire explored this issue. See chart 39.

**Chart 39. % of GOA and OCA priests who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:**

■ All clergy, %    ▨ GOA clergy, %    □ OCA clergy, %



Clearly, among both GOA and OCA priests there are very few (8-10%) radical “hard-liners” who would agree with the first statement that “Only members of the Orthodox Church can be saved.” At the same time, while tolerating and accepting validity of the other religious cultures, most of clergy do not feel that communication and interaction with the religiously different “others” are necessary or useful.

Only slightly more than one-third of the priests (37%) agreed with the statement “I can perfectly well imagine myself learning about Christian faith from the people in the other – not-Orthodox – churches,” while almost half (46%) of clergy believe that “The only reason for Orthodox clergy to participate in inter-Christian meetings and discussions is to spread the message of Orthodox Christianity and to seek conversion of others into the Orthodox faith.”

There was a peculiar difference in responses to these two statements between OCA and GOA clergy. Significantly more OCA than GOA priests agreed with both statements. This difference can be explained by the much greater proportion of convert clergy among OCA (59%) than among GOA (14%) priests. Indeed, when we looked at the answers provided by the cradle Orthodox and convert clergy we found the same patterns. Predictably, more convert (42%) than cradle Orthodox (25%) priests said that “I can perfectly well imagine myself learning about Christian faith from the people in the other – not-Orthodox – churches.” At the same time, however, convert clergy are more skeptical about the usefulness of ecumenical contacts than their fellow cradle Orthodox priests. In comparison with 41% among the cradle Orthodox clergy, 55% of convert clergy feel that “The only reason for Orthodox clergy to participate in inter-Christian meetings and discussions is to spread the message of Orthodox Christianity and to seek conversion of others into the Orthodox faith.”

We believe that this somewhat contradictory position on the part of convert clergy reflects their personal life stories (e.g. they can well imagine learning about and turning into other’s faith) combined with their professional priestly experience (e.g. they do not feel that there is much practical outcome from the formal ecumenical meetings and discussions) and with the negative attitudes that Evangelical Protestants have toward ecumenism in general (one-third of convert clergy in our sample were former Evangelical Christians).

While most clergy appear to be reluctant and/or skeptical in their approaches to inter-religious contacts, an absolute majority of them approve having more converts among their fellow priests. 60% of GOA and 74% of OCA priests, and 64% of the cradle Orthodox and 75% of convert clergy supported the statement “The Orthodox Church in the US should welcome Roman Catholic priests and Protestant ministers who want to become Orthodox priests.”

The last statement – “It is important that public schools at all levels keep religion and religious issues “out of classrooms” – explored clergy’s vision of relation between religion in general and society at large.

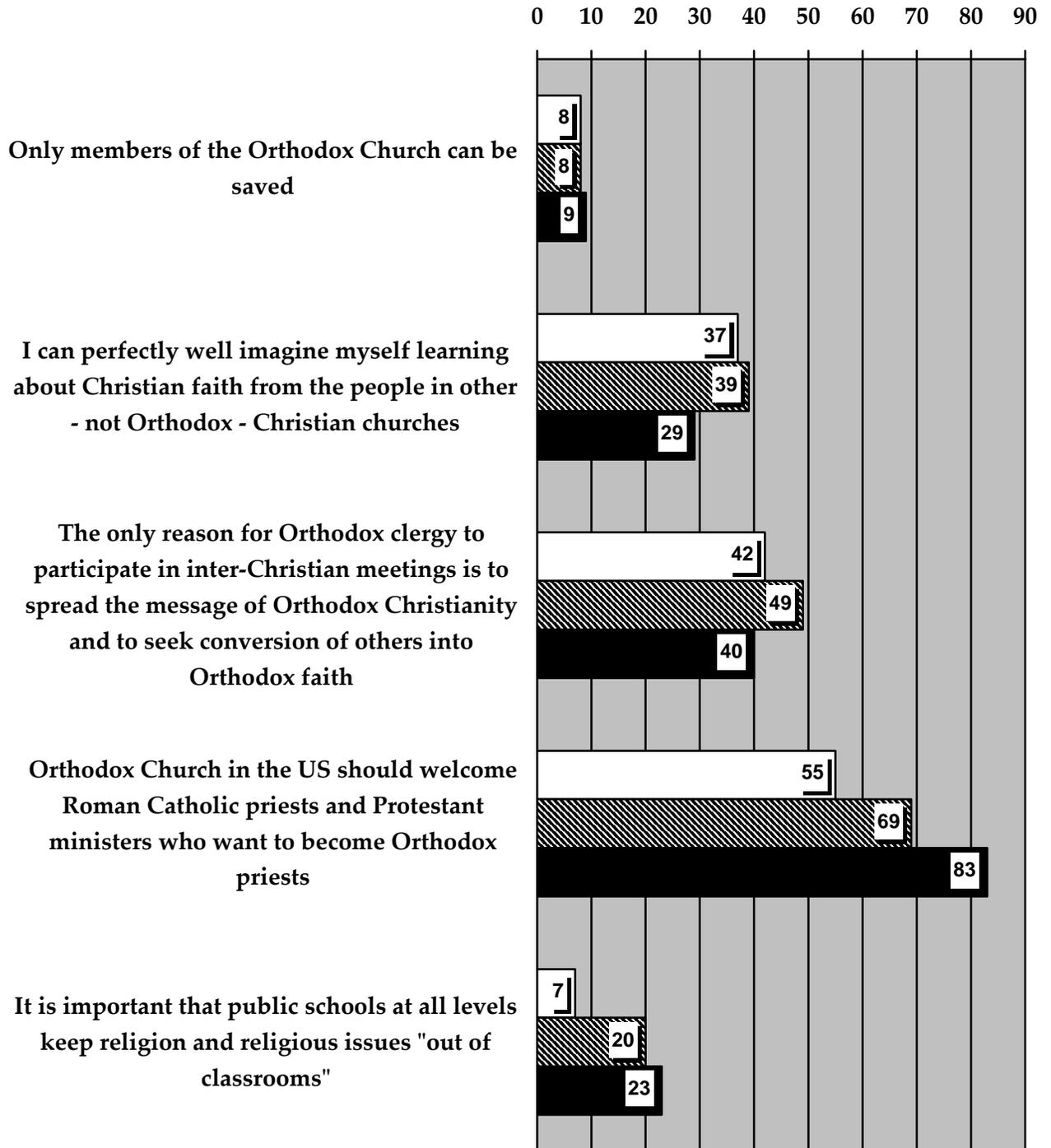
What we have learned is that only a very small proportion of Orthodox clergy favors an idea of intentional and thorough secularity of the American public schools. Indeed, only 12% of GOA and 22% of OCA priests, and only 18% of the cradle Orthodox clergy and 16% of convert clergy agreed that “It is important that public schools at all levels keep religion and religious issues “out of classrooms.”

As for age differences, the younger (under 45), the middle-aged (45-64) and the older (65 and older) priests responded differently to the statements about welcoming former Catholic and Protestant clergy in the Orthodox church and about separation of religion from the public schools. See chart 40.

**Chart 40. Age of the Clergy and their Ecumenical Attitudes and Relation to the Outside not-Orthodox community:**

**% of priests in various age groups who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:**

□ Priests younger than 45, %    ▨ Priests 45-64 years old, %    ■ Priests 65 years and older, %



First, there is a clear relation between the age of the priests and their willingness to accept former Catholic and Protestant clergy as their fellow Orthodox priests. The older Orthodox priests are the most and the younger clergy are the least likely to welcome former non-Orthodox clergy into Orthodox Church. Indeed, 83% of the older priests agreed with the statement “The Orthodox Church in the US should welcome Roman Catholic priests and Protestant ministers who want to become Orthodox priests” in comparison with 69% among middle-aged and only 55% among younger priests.

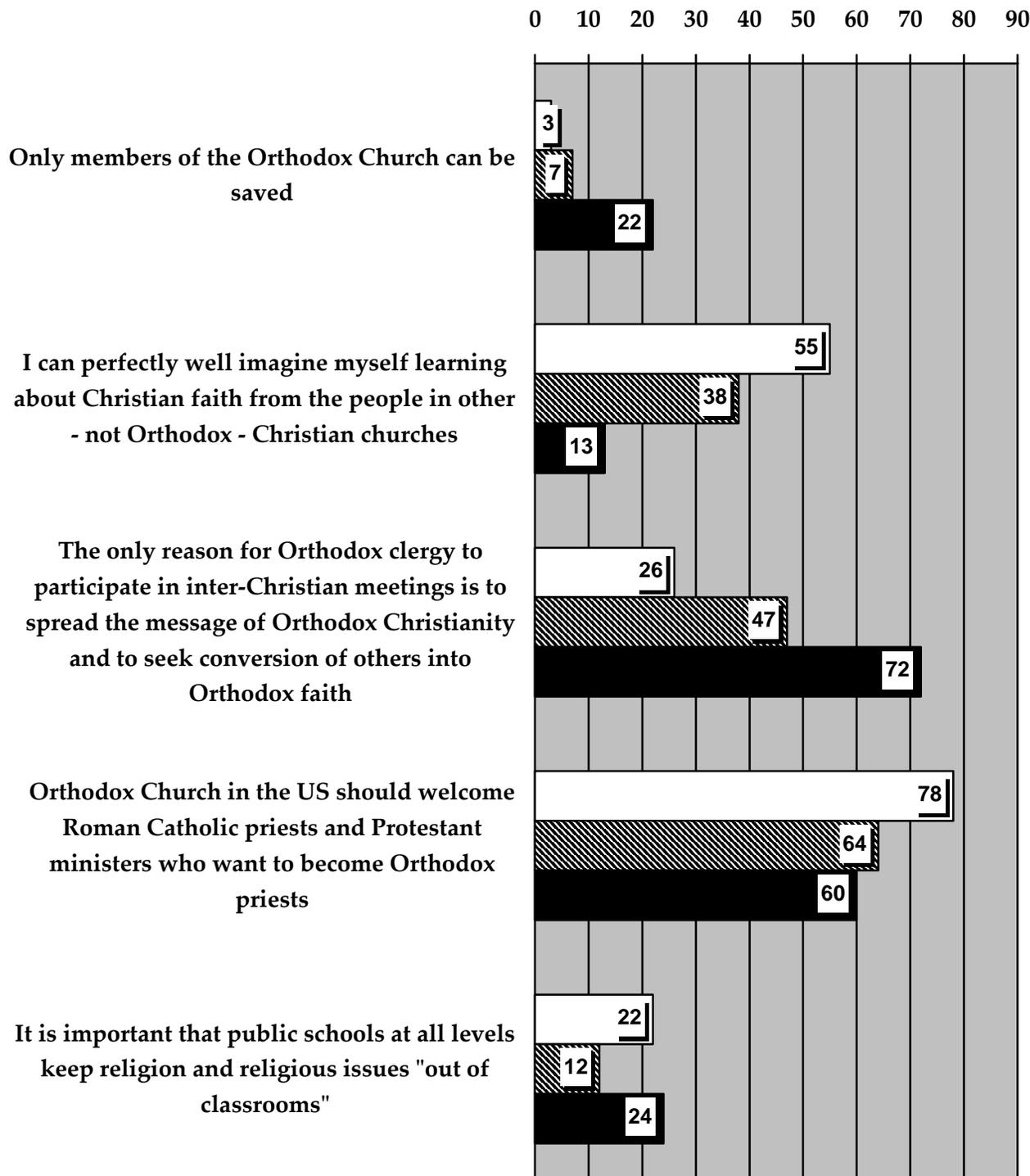
Second, a dominant majority of clergy in all ages do not support idea of separation of religion from the public school, but the younger priests were in particular reluctant to accept the statement “It is important that public schools at all levels keep religion and religious issues “out of classrooms.” Only 7% of priests younger than 45 agreed with this statement in comparison with 20% among the middle-aged and 23% among the older clergy.

Both patterns are consistent with what we have discovered on issues of *Innovations in the Church* and *Democracy in the Church*: for one or the other reason the younger generation of American Orthodox clergy tends to be in many ways more “orthodox” than their fathers or grandfathers.

Similarly to what we saw in the case of statements on *Notion of Priesthood* or on *Democracy in the Church* or on *Innovations in the Church*, the greatest differences in clergy’s attitudes towards ecumenism and in their approaches to the outside not-Orthodox community are based not on distinctions between GOA and OCA, and not on variations between age-groups or between cradle-Orthodox and convert clergy, but on the theological stance of the clergy. In the other words, the clergy who defined themselves as either “liberal” or “moderate” or “traditional” or conservative” responded extremely differently to all but one statement dealing with *Ecumenical Attitudes and Relation to the Outside not-Orthodox community*. See chart 41.

**Chart 41. Theological Stance of the Clergy and their Ecumenical Attitudes and Relation to the Outside not-Orthodox community**  
 % of priests with various theological approaches who agreed (“agreed strongly” and “rather agreed”) with the following statements:

□ Liberal and Moderate clergy, %    ▨ Traditional clergy, %    ■ Conservative clergy, %



Virtually none (3%) of “liberal” and “moderate” clergy agreed that “Only members of the Orthodox Church can be saved,” but more than one-fifth of the “conservative” priests feel this way.

Conversely, more than a half (55%) of “liberal” and “moderate” clergy said that “I can perfectly well imagine myself learning about Christian faith from the people in other – not-Orthodox – Christian churches,” but only 13% of conservative priests agreed with this statement.

Almost three quarters (72%) of “conservative” priests deny the usefulness of the inter-Christian contacts by agreeing with the statement that “The only reason for the Orthodox clergy to participate in inter-Christian meetings and discussions is to spread the message of Orthodox Christianity and to seek conversion of others into Orthodox faith,” but only one quarter (26%) of the “liberal” and “moderate” clergy would take such a stance.

Finally, significantly more of the “liberal” and “moderate” clergy (78%) feel that “Orthodox Church in the US should welcome Roman Catholic priests and Protestant ministers who wanted to become Orthodox priests,” than this is among “traditional” (64%) or “conservative” (60%).

The only exception from the clear relation between theological stance of the priests and their responses was the last statement “It is important that public schools at all levels keep religion and religious issues “out of classrooms.” Equal proportion of “liberal” or “moderate” (22%) and “conservative” (24%) clergy agreed with this statement, whereas fewer “traditional” priests (12%) did so.

This is difficult to explain, but most important finding from the last statement is that vast majority of all clergy – GOA and OCA, cradle Orthodox and converts, “liberal” and “moderate” and “traditional” and “conservative” alike – do not support separation of religion from the public schools.

One should note that the statement “It is important that public schools at all levels keep religion and religious issues “out of classrooms” allows for a wide range of interpretation and the participants of our survey can understand it quite differently from allowing religious instructions in the public school, to learning *about* various religion, or endorsing the idea of worship in the public school, etc. We do not have enough data for the thorough explanation of clergy’s responses to this statement. One message is clear, however, that is all categories of Orthodox parish clergy do not object penetration of religion – in one form or the other – the territory of the public schools.

References:

- Berger, Peter. 2003. "Orthodoxy and Pluralistic Challenge." In *The Orthodox Parish in America*. Ed. by Anton C.Vrame. Brookline, MA: Holy Orthodox Press.
- Harakas, S. 1980. "Orthodox Church." In *Ministry in America. A Report and Analysis, Based on an In-Depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada*. Ed. by D. Schuller and M. Strommen. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Hopko, Thomas. 2003. "The Orthodox Parish in America" In *The Orthodox Parish in America*. Ed. by Anton C.Vrame. Brookline, MA: Holy Orthodox Press.
- Taft, Robert F. 2006. *Through Their Own Eyes. Liturgy as the Byzantines Saw It*. Berkeley, CA: InterOrthodox Press.
- Vrame, Anton (forthcoming). "Four Typologies of Orthopraxy in America." In *Thinking Through Faith: Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars*. A.Papanikolau and E.Prodromou, editors. Crestwood, NY: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press.