

THE UNEXPECTED HARVEST

“The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Mt. 9:37-38)



Seminary prepares you for a lot of things, but not everything. I graduated from St. Tikhon’s Seminary in 2012, and I could not have imagined the situation that many of us find ourselves in today. I am currently the rector of Holy Theophany Orthodox Church in Colorado Springs, CO. This was the parish where I myself was baptized and received into the Church many years ago.

Upon the repose of my own spiritual father and confessor, Archpriest Anthony Karbo, in 2024, I was called upon to take over as both pastor of the parish and dean of the Rocky Mountain Deanery.

In the last two years, we have seen unprecedented growth, to a degree that I could not have envisioned a decade ago. We were overflowing, having dozens of people standing outside the temple every Sunday since we simply could not fit all the faithful. We built another church in town, named for St. John the Baptist, and divided our community. After only a year, we are back to being full, with people standing outside listening to the Liturgy through speakers. Our new church (St. John’s) is growing just as quickly and is already full, with more than sixty catechumens.

At the time of writing, I am the sole priest of a community of three hundred and fifty faithful, over a hundred catechumens, and innumerable inquirers. On top of that, I have my duties as district dean. I have a family, who thankfully

is understanding and supportive of the great demands now presented to so many of our clergy.

What has brought us here? What is causing this sudden burst of growth? I have been asked this question many times, and my answer is often the same. You could look at this from a purely sociological and psychological perspective, observing the changes in society, the economic instability, political division, and so on. You can surmise that people are looking for stability and an “unshakable foundation” to stand on in a time when it feels like everything is shaking. There may be some truth to that. You may say that it is the internet that exposes people to the Orthodox Faith, and that it has become the gateway for many to find their way to church. That is certainly true for many.

But ultimately, we have to recognize the fact that it is *Christ* who is drawing men’s hearts to Himself! Every soul that

enters the Church has its own story to tell, its own voyage that has brought it to the shores of Orthodoxy. There are very few common denominators. The diversity in the demographics speaks its own language—no more is this influx limited to lonely, marginalized young men, nor disgruntled evangelicals. More and more, our parish is looking like Colorado Springs—with the same diversity of backgrounds, ages, and ethnicities. There are people from the political right as well as the political left—but most are tired of politics in general. There are families, singles, old, and young. God is bringing whomever He wills, and we cannot refuse their entry. We must be ready and willing to receive them.

A big challenge in the parish now is that 75% of our members have been Orthodox for less than five years! This is affecting the overall piety and “rootedness” of the parish culture. This is not due to impiety or insincerity on behalf of the newcomers—they want to learn, it just takes time! But with so few mature Orthodox examples, these things are not organically modeled and absorbed. The critical mass is not there. It takes an enormous amount of intentional catechesis.

For you, dear seminarians, I have a few suggestions to help you survive the situation many of you will be facing:

- Take care of your family.
- Learn time management and self-discipline.
- Pray often, and do not let business rob you of your spiritual life (you cannot give what you do not have).
- Learn to delegate.
- Focus on the things that only you as a priest can do, and let others help with the rest.

