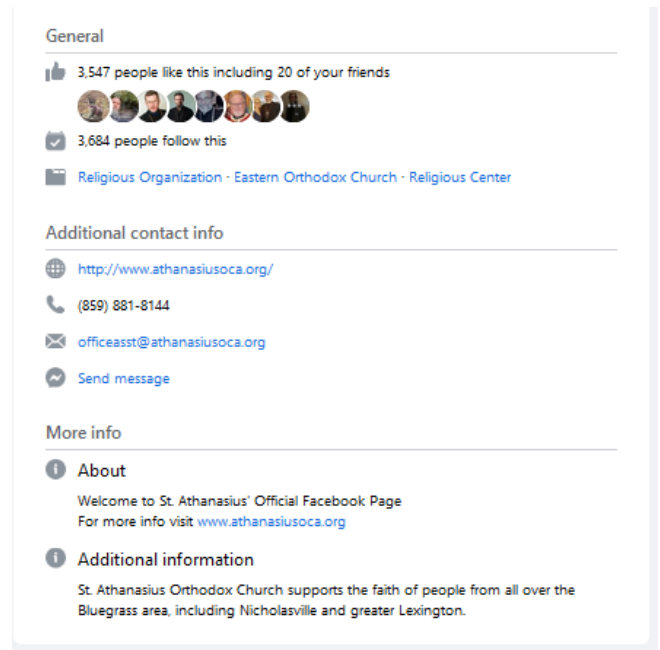




- Cross pollinate with your webpage; (ref. website on FB and vice versa); same identity; often different content. On FB your content, style and tone will be less formal, more oriented to current events; occasional humor.
- Try your best to show a range of parishioner ages and activities
- Emphasize aspects of your parish that should resonate with seekers (see box “The Inquirer Audience”) and that draw important contrasts with other religious traditions. However, always speak positively – or not at all about others. No put downs.
- Emphasize parish ministry, neighborhood connections and educational offerings.
- This is a public page. It is not the place to review key parish issues or concerns.
- Cross post with other Orthodox parishes in your area – help make Orthodoxy NOT look tiny.
- Keep content apolitical –neither conservative nor liberal.
- Fill out the "About" and other info portions of the page. When someone lands on your FB page it should be clear you’re an Orthodox Christian Church; address; general service schedule; contact info.
- Check stats of those visiting your page: who; where from? It’s fun to see visitors from Thailand. But, you are particularly interested *in communicating with people in your parish vicinity.*
- Build a team of FB page admins to do your posts; establish a few ground rules with the priest’s oversight. In general this ministry is an excellent opportunity for delegation.
- If a reader of your FB posts has practical insights/opinions about Orthodox churches, they may reflect common stereotypes. While some of these have grains (or more) of truth your communication can shape their impressions by addressing the stereotype head on. Among these labels: "Foreign", "insular", "not open to outsiders", "unfriendly", "food", "not English worship", "not scriptural", "out of touch"; "strange", "zealots", "same as Catholics" and more.



## What to Post?

So with multiple audiences and a recommended emphasis on non-parishioner/inquirers and a few good practices, what did our advisors suggest to actually *post* on a parish FB page?

First remember --beauty is our secret weapon -- so we've emphasized graphics and photos. They connect with inquirers AND active/dormant parishioners. When using photos follow OCA internet guidelines. Ask permission. Recruit one or two parishioners as parish photographers (cell phone is usually fine); never show a church that looks empty during a service.

Also, remember posts can be scheduled e.g well ahead of time; use both pre-planned and spontaneous posts.

Overwhelming list? Pick a few that seem easiest and most impactful:

- **“Thank you** for worshiping with us today.” Easy. Regular. Warm.

- **Actual Worship Photos** – Link to your worship live stream or archive. If no live stream use photos. Let people get a feel before they commit to come and see.
- **Class series** –Intro new series; post before each class; study questions – please “join us tonight for...”.
- **Books Reviews** -- Or links to solid books about the Orthodox faith.
- **Converts with Brief Story** (< 2 paragraphs) – Nothing communicates “welcome” to potential inquirers like hearing a brief story about people like them who were welcomed, have embraced the Orthodox faith and joined the parish. (“You won’t be alone –we have others like you.”)
- **Lives of Saints**-- Not every day but rather three or four select days per month.
- **“Our Nativity worship schedule.** Join us as we celebrate the Nativity of Jesus Christ”. Nothing invites like an invitation.
- **Photo of Priest** – Not posed; greeting worshipers; welcoming; not severe; perhaps shown with family.
- **Video invitations** – While more effort these have probably 4-5x greater impact.
- **Photo of outside of church/ picture of sign.** GPS gets them there –here is how to recognize building.
- **St. Nicholas Day** - Invite; article; photos of parish celebration. (*OK, too late for this year.*)
- **Charitable Connection** -If you’re posting about a fund raising project emphasize ‘money raised for xyz local charity’; make sure this (continual fundraising) isn’t the predominant message.
- **Active Parish Ministries** -- Bring these to life -- more than a list. Singing for shut ins? Get snapshots. Training altar boys? Photo op.
- **Baptisms** -- Newborns; smiling parents etc.
- **Sacraments; Rites of Passage** - Photos of Communion, a Chrismation, welcoming new families; goodbye to those leaving.
- **Neighborhood social events/interaction** -- I.e. we’re connected to the fabric of our place.
- **Festal Decorations** - “Thanks to those who helped...” Share your beautifully adorned church.
- **Patristic Memes**- Wise advice from Church Fathers, Saints. Special prayers or prayer insights.
- **Reference to Church School.** Schedule. Key class themes or projects. Small number of children? Work hard for well framed close ups; smiling teacher; a class workbook; 1-2 families walking into church with kids.

## The Inquirer Audience

One important audience for your parish social media effort is potential inquirers to Orthodoxy. Guests, inquirers and catechumens of course, come in all shapes, sizes, demographics and backgrounds.

While each is unique, parishes report a few commonalities. Some are obvious, others less so:

- **Some are dissatisfied** with their current church experience. Common comments: ‘watered down’, ‘make it up as we go along’, ‘reacting to prevailing winds’, and a ‘cult of personality’.
- **Limited religious background** – Many have had marginal religious influence in their lives yet sense “something missing-- but not clear what”.
- **“Seeking serious” Christianity.** Many inquirers often seem to express a desire for consistent doctrine, structured liturgy, sacraments, saints as exemplars, an annual worship calendar that acknowledges more than Christmas and Easter, a source of doctrine linked to the apostolic deposit; emphasis on spiritual disciplines –prayer, fasting. Etc.
- **Questionable Orthodox Experience** - Knowledge of Orthodox teaching and practice probably came from, often extensive, internet reading. Parishes often report a need to essentially *unteach* inaccuracies.
- **Podcasts and Blogs** are often early stops on their way to Orthodoxy. Also word of mouth and invitation from relatives –who themselves are converts to Orthodoxy.
- **Political Spectrum** - One priest said it best: “In my parish I’ve seen strong conservatives and ‘Bernie democrats’. They don’t seem to be in the middle.”
- **Demographics** - Recent inquirers seem to skew younger than your parish median. Often 60:40 male; Education varies.