**“Inside Out ~ Outside In”: 7 Keys to Understanding your neighborhood**

Objective: To think more critically about ***who*** my neighbor is and how I can be Christ to him.

**Key Scripture: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ –Jesus Christ the Son of God via. St. Luke.**

Who is your closest neighbor?

**KEY # 1—KNOW OURSELVES-** (Implies a relationship with a spiritual father- and is the place to begin) (A parish must also “know itself”…)

Who am I ? ---

Where am I? ---

 --spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally ….

What am I to do? ---

Am I communing and confessing regularly?

*What are my strengths? What are my weaknesses? What are my dreams and visions?*

*What are my Spiritual Gifts? What are my God given talents?* *Where does my heart speak?*

Our first “neighbor”, if you will, ***is our very being and how we are in relationship to God*.**

***KEY # 2—LOVE GOD.***

***What does the Lord command? Jesus Teaches…***

**To love is to be found in the martyrs and their desire, even to death, to love God.**

**With our heart?**

St. Silouan, *“My Soul yearns after the Lord and I seek him in tears.*

*How could I do other than to seek Thee, for Thou didst seek and find me, and gavest me to delight in the Holy Spirit and my soul fell to loving Thee. Thou seest, O Lord my grief and my tears….Hadst Thou not drawn me with Thy love, I could not seek Thee as I seek Thee now; but Thy spirit gave me to know Thee, and my soul rejoices that Thou art my God and my Lord, and I yearn after Thee even to tears.” –St Silouan The Athonite (p. 271)*

**With our soul?**

[***Joshua 22:5***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+22:5&version=NKJV) *“But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

[***Psalm 35:9***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+35:9&version=NKJV) *“And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord; It shall rejoice in His salvation.*

[***Psalm 42:2***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+42:2&version=NKJV) *“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”*

[***Psalm 119:167***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+119:167&version=NKJV) *“My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly.”*

[***Proverbs 19:8***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+19:8&version=NKJV) *“He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; He who keeps understanding will find good.”* ***Matthew 5:10-11*** *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.**Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

***1 Peter 1:22-23*** *“ Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever…”*

**A man in this world must solve a problem: to be with Christ, or to be against Him. And every man decides this, whether he wants to or not. He will either be a lover of Christ or a fighter of Christ. There is no third option.  (St. Justin Popovich, Explanation of I John, 4.3)**

**Are we giving all of our soul or just a part?**

**With our mind?**

 “*Our Christian hope for the future is rooted in the mystery of the divine economy, that is, Gods plan for our salvation in Christ. To understand this mystery, one needs above all to have faith in God, a living God, the Creator and sustainer of the world, a God who rules and guides history toward its final goal, toward the eternal life beyond death, beyond time as we know it, in the eternal and perfected kingdom of God.* ***And no rational person can readily deny that a mind governs the world purposefully, when he sees in himself, who is a microcosm, a universe in miniature, that our invisible mind directs our whole life.*** *Nor can we deny the continuity of life, since we believe that even in matter itself “nothing is lost” but only a change takes place.” –Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos –(from AT THE END OF TIME pg. 3)*

**Do we love God on our terms? Is our mind clear? Is our mind focused or fragmented?**

***You will keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You. (Isaiah 26:3)***

***For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (St. Paul’s letter to the Romans 8:5)***

*Are we keeping in step with the Spirit?* ***For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (v. 14)***

***Do we react when the Spirit of God moves us or do we doubt?***

***Who would have asked to walk on water but a crazy man?...***

***How many times do we not speak or act because we doubt the power of God?***

***Are we afraid of persecution? Embarrassment?***

**With our Strength?**

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!  You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.* *And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.**You shall* ***teach them*** *diligently to your children, and shall* ***talk of them******when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6-8)***

***It’s about “doing” the love…***

It’s about enacting our will to love…it takes effort to speak with a neighbor, co-worker, friend or family member about the Gospel and the WAY. It is a struggle for most all, and a few have the gift and it comes easy… The Gospel has been resisted by the forces of evil for centuries and all the more as we see the DAY approaching.

God is the example of this Doing by humbling himself and taking on our likeness…

**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. –(St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians 2:5-11)**

***How does my life express love for God?***

***How does my Parish express love to our neighborhood?***

Once we come to an understanding, with our spiritual father, as to *who we are and how we fit in to the Body of Christ* we can continue to follow the Command of Christ to love God and our neighbor…

**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. -- St. John The Theologian 13:34-35**

**KEY #3 LOVE YOURSELF**

 **“…love your neighbor *as yourself*.”**

Do I abuse myself out of lack of love?

 Do I treat myself with respect and love?

Do I take care of the temple of the Holy Spirit God has given me?

Is there a love for our parish?

Do we care for our parish grounds and temple?

Are we maintaining care and beauty in our worship?

 Physical, emotional, intellectually?

***Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians 6:15-20)***

**KEY #4 LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. Who’s my neighbor?**

*God gave people the word "love" so that they could call their relationship to Him by this name. When people misuse this word to refer to their relationship with earthly things, it loses its meaning. (St. Nicholas of Serbia, Thoughts on Good and Evil)*

**Who is our neighbor?**

*Do we love the needy in our own families?*

*Husbands are you loving your wives?*

*Your Children?*

*Your relatives?*

*Do we love those closest to us?*

*In our own parish?*

*Are we loving the needy in our parish?*

**Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.* (Phil 2:1-4)**

**…So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”**

**And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (St. Luke 10:36-37)**

**KEY # 5 GO AND DO. Good Samaritan:**

We have to be Christ….

1. Saw-------------------------------------------------the need
2. Compassion on--------------------------------the person
3. Bound wounds wine and oil----------------give Christ
4. Set him on beast--------------------personal follow-up
5. Brought him to Inn------------invite/bring to Church
6. Provided for------------------------------continued care

**HOW can we love those closest to us in our parish?**

**A. Start with our own faithful-“See”**

 **And Listen…**

**Who is hurting?**

**Who is poor (fixed income)?**

**Who is emotionally exhausted?**

**Who is shut in?**

**B. “Have Compassion”**

* **“Ministry Team”(Missions Team)- Physical needs are met first (“Bound wounds”)-- working with the priest the team--- calls, visits, meals, cards, emails, letters, posts, “likes”, etc. to those who miss church (We send a paper bulletin each week).**
* **2or 3 people (spiritual elders- men or women) who can give direct council to priest of those in special need (Meals to those in hospital recovery, baskets of encouragement, etc. (find your own way in your parish).**
* **“Greeting Team”- Greet at door of Church give bulletin or announcements… Welcome to faithful and to new visitors.**
* **Provide groups for the faithful to connect to outside of Liturgy – Sunday Church School for Adults, Young Mom’s Group, AA recovery, Bible Studies, Men’s Groups, Women’s groups, FOCA, pan-orthodox participation, Monastery visits, etc.**

**C. Look for others—“SAW him- BOUND HIS WOUNDS, ANOINTED HIM WITH WINE AND OIL”**

* **“Mission Team”- a group of like minded faithful who gather regularly to:**

 **- learn how to minster to others- under guidance of priest**

 **- have an outwardly driven focus- holding events- Festivals, seminars, lectures, special choirs or musicians or attending events- Fairs, local community events with booth set up..**

 **-meets physical needs through meals for sick and infirmed or recovering**

 **-Take a trip to another community or Country to see the needs else where.**

 **(Hogar in Guatemala, Alaskan Community, Local Churches and Communities, Habitat or Humanity….)**

* + **Make Festivals and events not about making money but exposing those who have not heard about the Orthodox Faith.**

**The Orthodox Church is *evangelical*, but not Protestant.**

**It is *orthodox*, but not Jewish. It is *catholic*, but not Roman.**

**It is not non-denominational, it is *pre-denominational*.**

**It has been *believed, taught, preserved, defended, and died for.***

**It is the Faith that has established the universe...**

**OTHER IDEAS:**

* **Internet ministry, facebook, email, websites (New Orthodoxy in America app!!)**
* **Local Hospital/nursing facility Ministry**
* **Local Prison Ministry (House of Hope)**
* **Local Shelter Ministry**
* **Local Food Bank Ministry**
* **Local University/College Ministry**
* **Local Unmercinaries Free Clinic**
* **Local Community Organic garden**
* **Children’s after School tutoring Ministry**
* **Sponsor Sports teams**
* **Fireman and/Police Support**
* **Hunter/Game fishing Breakfast**
* **Create Gardens and parks on property**
* **Door Hanger invites to…**

**KEY # 6 PRAY …pray without ceasing…**

* **Pray for the Faithful-Especially your Priest and Bishop**

 **(Have a list for all the faithful of the parish)**

* + **By Name- on the lips and on the heart**
	+ **Rotate the list, acknowledge answers to prayer and healing**
	+ **Offer a time for the faithful to request needs and names**
* **Pray for the Lost- (Have a list for all the faithful of the parish)**
	+ **Remember those who cross your path – (Saints pray for all)**
	+ **For those in your local sphere of influence- work, school, clubs, grocery stores, Banks, Gas stations, restaurants…**
	+ **All inquirers, catechumens and those who ask to pray**
* **Listen to the Spirit---**

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence,

And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,

And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.

*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,

And sinners shall be converted to You. (PS 50)

* ***Are we praying really? Do you set aside a time to pray each day for others?***

**KEY # 7 BE PRESENT.**

***“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”(St. Matthew 5:19)***

*What are my parish’s strengths?*

What is our NET?

*What are my parish’s weaknesses?*

*What are my parish’s dreams and visions?*

*What are my parish’s Spiritual Gifts?*

*What are my parish’s God given talents?*

*What is the desire or vision of our bishop for our parish?*

* **Where can we as a parish be present in our neighborhood?**
* **Do the neighbors of the parish know who you are?**
* **Have they had an invite to an event?**
* **Does the parish lend help when a neighborhood need arises?** H/A care for a local fire victim
* **Do you offer things free to your neighbors?** Vineyard give a cup of cold water for free
* **Are you parish signs clear and intentional?**
* **Are you visible in local paper and city, village, or county events?**
* **Do you have an internet presence?**
* **Do you have parish bumper stickers, cups, banners, t-shirts, hats, etc.?**
* **Signs in parishioners yard “I attend Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Crossingville”?**
* **Is there a college or university or other educational institution near by?**
* **What is your parish history?**
* **Do your friends and coworkers know you are an Orthodox Christian?**
* **Are you staying in the Present Moment?**
* **IS your parish being led by the Holy Spirit?**

 The KEY to reaching our neighborhoods For Christ is to Be Christ Inside First and Let the Holy Spirit lead them from outside to in the Holy Faith by our LOVE PRAYER and COMPASSION.

**LIST 3 KEY IDEAS YOU CAN TAKE HOME FOR YOUR PARISH…**