

## Basic principles and practice of Parish mission

Let us identify the basic principles and practice of parish mission as refined by Father Daniel Sysoev. These are as follows:

1. **Prayer.** Nothing is achieved without prayer. There is no substitute for regular daily services and keeping the church doors open for all those who are drawn by God to his temple.
2. **Trained ministries.** The work of mission is not accomplished by the priest alone. The church needs to train greeters, catechists, missionaries, preachers and prayer leaders. Schools for such ministries need to be established.
3. **Active evangelism.** Missionary preachers, contact persons and befrienders need to go out and personally invite people to church on the basis of a simple presentation of the gospel. Opportunities must be taken to reach out to those who come to church but only at major feasts.
4. **Comprehensive teaching.** Sermons at most services, Bible study groups, small discussion groups and publications need to cover all aspects of Christian faith and life. These will be tailored to the differing needs of enquirers, catechumens and the faithful.
5. **Repentance and personal growth.** The Church's ministry of confession and her ascetical disciplines need to be presented to the faithful in a practical and thoroughgoing manner such that they will learn how to acquire holiness.
6. **Social and personal life.** The church must care for all her members and this includes providing opportunities for them to get to know each other and develop close relationships in a social context.

It seems to me that although situations in different cultures and nations vary, these principles of mission which lay at the heart of Father Daniel's life and ministry are universal. Only no. 3, "active evangelism" becomes difficult if not impossible in those societies that for religious or political reasons have become hostile to Christianity. In Russia and the West, at least for the moment, the Church has the freedom and the necessity of implementing this principle as well. Nonetheless, we must face the fact many of the faithful think, wrongly of course, that this is only what the sects and cults do. Anyone, however, who has the slightest historical knowledge of Orthodox missions, will know that evangelisation lies at the very heart of the Church's life. Any local church that has lost its heart and soul for mission is dysfunctional, disobedient to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) and an occasion for great sorrow. We must not let the heterodox, who copy our own historic methods, undermine our missionary zeal from within.

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