



This morning we are raising awareness and taking up a collection for our church's media ministry, The Orthodox Christian Network. The Orthodox Christian Network serves our Orthodox faithful by using modern forms of mass communication to spread the Good News of Orthodox Christianity and by helping parishes like ours share their faith within their local communities. OCN is also aiding in the development of a stronger, healthier and unified Orthodox Christian witness throughout North America.

Because of modern communications, we are on the threshold of a new generation. A culture of mass media has taken root. Borders, geographical distance and isolation can no longer protect our way of life. Messages can be transmitted and spread throughout the entire world in an instant and these messages are reaching our own people within the Orthodox Church.

It is ironic that, in being more connected than ever, we are also more alone than ever because we do not develop deep, authentic relationships. A phone call has replaced a walk in the park. An email has replaced a phone call. Sitting down to share a photo album with a neighbor is replaced by putting a digital photo album on facebook. Our relationships are growing in quantity but dwindling in quality.

This is precisely why our church is making the effort to have a presence in media: to bring quality into the quantity, to cast our net into the network and bring people back into face to face communion with others who are struggling in humility to serve and live a Christ-centered life.

Statistics tell us that roughly 120 million adults are open to changing their church home and that 141 million Americans listen to religious radio at least once a month. Other Christian confessions know this and that is why they are spending hundreds of millions of dollars annually on their media witness. They realize that media works; that it is effective. In fact, studies have shown that Christian media reaches more people today than churches do.

With the true faith on our side, imagine the number of lives our church can

touch with a strong and well-supported media witness.

The good news is that our church is well on its way. Through stable and consistent effort, the Orthodox Christian Network has grown into an official agency of the Orthodox Church's Assembly of Bishops in the Americas. The Orthodox Christian Network streams 3 24/7 internet radio stations. There are 18 different podcast channels, a video travel blog, and Orthodox News. Come Receive the Light, the flagship program of the Network, still broadcasts new episodes every week on land based stations and online. OCN is now listened to literally all over the world.

The Orthodox Christian Network would also like for us to know that it will also honor someone this coming year as its *first ever* hero. This person will be someone who has distinguished him or herself in Christian love and service to others. This person must be a layperson and be nominated by someone other than a family member. OCN listeners around the world will be able to nominate candidates online during the year of 2012. In December of 2012, the ten finalists chosen by our Board of Directors and Staff will be published online. The listeners and supporters of OCN will then have the privilege of voting for one of these individuals who will be selected as the hero. The winner will be a guest on Come Receive the Light, will receive an excursion paid for by OCN and a \$500 donation from OCN in their name to the charity of their choice. The winner will be announced in January of 2013 on the annual OCN Share the Light Sunday.

The Orthodox Christian Network asks those nominating candidates for the award to use the scriptural reference found in the Gospel of Matthew 25:31-46 as a guideline.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me' "

The staff of the Orthodox Christian Network is also here to help our parish in developing its own media outreach ministry. They can create a 24/7 online radio station, customized especially for our parish, or they can find us

a land based radio station to broadcast Come Receive the Light in our area.

While our church has developed this media ministry for reaching people, spreading the Gospel, and strengthening our parishes, it takes many workers to reap a bountiful harvest. Whether it is through our prayer, time, talent or finances, our parish's investment in OCN is actually an investment in our parish. By taking advantage of OCN's expertise in using media properly and effectively, our parish will become more well-known here in the community and thus become more productive in our outreach and evangelism ministries.

When we're not present here in church, let's tune in to OCN at www.myocn.net and let's be a part of growing our church's witness in media by supporting the Orthodox Christian Network. The Orthodox Christian Network would like for us to see ourselves as a part of this media outreach and kindly asks that we please give as generously and cheerfully as we feel we are able to today and to remember to nominate our heroes.