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# Saint Innocent

## Orthodox Christian Church

July 2019 Newsletter & Calendar

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### *50 Signs That You Are Falling Away From The Church*

By ARCHPRIEST GEOFFREY KORZ

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love...”  
(Revelation 2:4)

Those of you old enough to recall it might remember the Paul Simon song, 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover. In it, an adulterer contemplates a long list of ways in which one affair can be terminated – presumably with the goal of concentrating on a different one.

Like that song, living an Orthodox Christian life presents a plethora of ways to leave our first love: to leave Christ and His Church, whether we are planning to do so or not. Usually, most people do not set out to leave their faith – yet of those who join the Orthodox Church in adulthood, a full 50% fall away, sometimes through complete apostasy, but more usually through “Sundays-only Christianity”, or the accompanying dying in the heart of the love of God.

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Unlike the song, there are signs – lots and lots of them. Over the years, many priests have accumulated a list (either mental or written) of the habits which inevitably lead people to falling away from the Church. Usually, priests can see it coming, and can only pray for a person who is setting themselves up for departure. Such a person is rarely open to advice or admonition, since they do not see a problem, or if they do see it, they lack the will to do anything about it.

At the heart of the matter, we find that the “50 Ways to Leave Your First Love” are entirely a matter of the personal will. Just how much is a person willing to force him or herself, in the face of lack of motivation, a bad attitude, or many distractions? More importantly, in the early stages when only a few of the “50 Ways” begin to appear, will an individual take the steps to act before the first few Ways grow into a grocery list of many more Ways, which inevitably engulf the human soul, carrying it almost imperceptibly away from God?

Here then is the full list, in no particular order, of the 50 ways to Leave Your First Love – Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. If a few of them sound familiar, take note, and work on them. There is much profit in putting forward a consistent effort, every day, with which God will provide His grace and help, which will certainly bring success.

If more than a few sound familiar, however, do not underestimate the seriousness of the situation. These are the very habits that have accumulated for thousands of people, and which have stolen previously faithful, observant, active Orthodox Christians far away from Christ and His Church, leaving them with a hollow shell of a faith with which to face the impossible challenges of life, alone and without God.

If you do recognize these characteristics in yourself, do not despair: claim the ones that apply as your own crosses, and know that God can heal everything – and will in fact use everything for your salvation.

As an old wood shop teacher of mine used to say, we must learn from the mistakes of others: if we wait to make them ourselves, they might be permanent, and lethal.

### **The 50 Ways to Leave Your First Love PRAYER & ASCETICISM**

1. Daily prayer is fit in, when it can be done. Maybe. (At least, it used to be.)
2. Don't bless the food each time you eat.
3. Your icons are dusty (from disuse).
4. Your prayer books are dusty (from disuse).
5. Be aware of your declining observance of the fasts – but do nothing to stem the slide.
6. Give your kids an example of prayer and fasting which will not really prepare them to do anything as adults – or even now.
7. Don't pray about your actual problems, like family who are sick, conflicts in your marriage, or problems your kids are having. Keep your faith distant and abstract. Soon, you will crave “reality”, and the devil will be able to lead you to it – outside the Church.

### **HOLY MYSTERIES**

8. Do not confess monthly... or quarterly... or even annually.
9. Do not attend Liturgy every Sunday, for various reasons.
10. Arrive late and leave early from services as a regular rule.
11. Generally, believe that making the effort to simply attend Sunday Liturgy is enough.
12. Stay away from Holy Confession. Imagine the priest has never heard any real sins before, or he won't “like” you if you confess.
13. Stay away from Holy Communion. This can be done by making excuses about not being able to fast, or pray, or be “holy enough to receive”. Whatever you do, do not discuss the matter with the priest: asking questions might dispel the foolish ideas, and lead to a return to receiving the Holy Mysteries.
14. Convince yourself you can lead a successful spiritual life without dealing with your addictions, bad temper, and issues from childhood. Eventually, hypocrisy will make Orthodox Christian life unbearable for you, and you'll flee from the Church.
15. Jump from one confessor to another, either to avoid embarrassment, or to arrange for the lightest possible spiritual consequences from a priest who does not know the whole story about your life.

### **VIRTUES**

16. When making financial or education plans for the future of yourself or your family, faith does not enter into the equation (or if it does, it seems to give exactly the same answers as everyone else in my life).
17. In general, do not read or listen to any Orthodox spiritual material in a given day.
18. When planning trips, don't let it enter your mind whether you will be near an Orthodox parish on Sundays or feast days.
19. Do not let it be relevant to travel plans whether you travel on a Sunday or a feast

day, and thus have to miss holy services.

20. When you travel, don't worry about keeping the fast on an airplane or in a train station (despite the fact that the Muslims and Jews sitting beside you seem to do so just fine).

21. Don't connect real life problems – like addictions, marital problems, sexuality, or raising kids – to life in the Church. If the two areas of your life get too close, they might come into contact.

#### **OTHER PEOPLE**

22. Make little distinction or priority between socializing with faithful Christians, or surrounding yourself with anyone you find entertaining.

23. Stay isolated from your family.

24. Have little or no contact with godchildren or godparents, as far as it is up to you.

25. Have no social or personal relationship with people at your parish, or people in the Church in general.

26. Have relationships that interfere with church attendance and/or daily prayers.

27. Maintain relationships – or better still, plan holidays, business partnerships, or a marriage – with a person whose influence undermines the practice of your faith.

28. Remain angry with some people at your parish, and avoid them.

29. Don't go to Orthodox events or retreats, either because you don't think you learn anything new, or because you don't like the people.

30. Watch other people. Keep track of their whereabouts, their attendance, their clothing, how often they commune and confess. God might ask.

#### **YOUR PARISH**

31. Donate money to the Church, if you happen to think of it – but certainly, do not tithe.

32. Contribute no time to work at your parish (since everything is surely done by the priest and the caretaker).

33. Stay in a situation where you must drive an hour or more to church.

34. Enjoy the idea of regularly visiting other parishes, just for a “change”, since you know other people are there to take care of things at you “home” parish.

35. In general, be too tired to go to church.

36. Retain a feeling of guilt about something you have/haven't done, and stay away from your parish in order to avoid talking about it.

37. Avoid confrontations with your parish priest, but still remain upset with him about things you have never expressed out loud.

38. Make avoiding “offending the family” your excuse for not attending Vespers, or even Sunday Liturgy (it's the perfect excuse, since it makes you seem like a good

Christian, while allowing the devil to keep you away from the holy services).

39. Correct others in church. Yell, fix their posture, criticize their children, shush their insufferable singing. This will help their humility (if not yours).

40. Make church singing a concert – and if anyone ruins it with their lousy or untrained voice, get mad. The madder you are, the less likely the situation will happen again.

#### **LIFESTYLE**

41. Choose to take a job in a place where there is no Orthodox parish nearby.

42. Have sporting events on Sundays and feast days that keep you from attending church services.

43. As a rule, work on Sundays and/or feast days, and don't try repeatedly to arrange things differently because of worry about what people might say or do. (And don't ask the priest to write a letter asking your employer to accommodate you – that's for religious fanatics).

44. Have hobbies that interfere with church attendance.

45. Don't feel you need ongoing catechism or spiritual education – you've learned it already.

46. If your club or your ethnic tribe does something that comes into conflict with the doctrines of the Church, always defend your tribe. Better still, get angry at the Church, and seek some “brand” of “Christianity” that puts your tribe first.

47. Keep moving from one residence to another (ideally, a “better” one). Never putting down roots in a place or a parish will ensure you never have to spiritually mature.

48. Regularly ask why someone else doesn't solve the problems at your church, school, work, or home. This state of mind will keep you infantile, and ensure you will be unable to bear the challenges of the Christian life.

49. When something about the Church – practice, belief, moral life, etc. – offends or contradicts something you believe or do, become deeply offended, and demand that the Church (or the priest) apologize, and take away your hurt feelings.

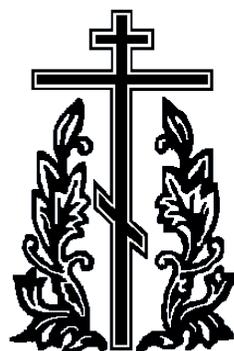
50. Whatever happens, remember: the Holy Tradition that is the experience of all the holy people of the Orthodox Church over two thousand years can't hold a candle to what you do, what you feel, and what you want. If the Church insists otherwise, it's just a matter of time before you will have to part ways.

And of course, that's just how the devil planned it all along.

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## News & Announcements

- Thank you to Christopher Mareska and all those who helped build our new playground! There are a few finishing touches that need to be done so please keep an eye on your children. Especially, since we have no ground cover yet for their protection if they fall.
- On Sunday July 7<sup>th</sup> please help us move furniture from the church into the parish hall. The church floors are going to be cleaned and polished from the 8<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup>.
- On Saturday, July 13<sup>th</sup> at 9am please help us clean the church and move the furniture back into the church from the parish hall.
- All services for the week of the 8-13<sup>th</sup> will be held in the parish hall.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.
- On Sunday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, in honor of St. Elijah, we will be blessing vehicles after the Divine Liturgy.
- Fr. Theophan will be out of town at the the Diocese of the South Assembly from Monday, July 22, through Friday, July 26.
- On Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> after the Divine Liturgy we will have a prayer for Students and Teachers as they journey into their new school year.
- Please see the calendar below for liturgical schedule.
- If you would like to partake of the Sacrament of Confession the best times are before or after any scheduled service. In July we have not scheduled Matins so confessions can be heard between 9 - 9:40 AM.
- You can make a difference while you shop Amazon Prime Day deals on July 15 & 16. Simply shop at [smile.amazon.com/ch/58-2418134](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/58-2418134) and AmazonSmile donates to St Innocent Orthodox Christian Church.



**Have you been looking for something you can do around here that would be a big help to our parish?**

If so, please consider becoming our kitchen “supply sergeant”! We need someone to go to Sam’s Club (roughly, once every six weeks) to pick up the supplies that we need for coffee hour. You would be collaborating with Chris Wilcox (the kitchen king) on which supplies are needed and when. This is an easy way to serve our parish community, so if you’d like to volunteer, please email Chris or find him (or Molly Croft) at coffee hour. You can find their contact information online in our Realm church directory.



Thank you for all those who donated to the Baby Bottle Boomerang fundraiser for Monroe County Pregnancy Center. We do not have the full total but we know that over \$1,600 was raised! Once they have counted all the bottles we will send out a updated number. Thank you again for your generosity.

## Many Years!

### Birthdays

5 Radu Malcoci  
6 Evan Lee  
7 Jacqueline Stephens  
8 Shawn Mercer  
11 Taisiya Collins  
12 John Hintermaier  
22 Jacob Hintermaier  
28 Raph Graves  
28 Maria Lopes  
28 Sandi Wilcox

### Anniversaries

10 David & Muryah Scouten

## July 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 9:40am Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape <i>Move Church furniture into hall</i>	8 <i>Church Floors Cleaned</i>	9 9am Morning Prayers - in parish hall <i>Church Floors Cleaned</i>	10 6pm Daily Vespers in parish hall <i>Church Floors Cleaned</i>	11 <i>Tentative Church Floors Cleaned</i>	12 <i>Tentative Church Floors Cleaned</i>	13 <i>9am Church Cleanup - furniture back in Church</i> 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
14 9:40am Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	15	16 9am Morning Prayers	17 6pm Daily Vespers	18 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	19	20 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
21 9:40am Hours 10am Divine Liturgy <i>Followed by Car Blessing</i> 12pm Agape Orthodoxy 101	22 <i>Fr. Theophan and family @ DOS Assembly in Jupiter, FL through Friday</i>	23	24 6pm Readers Vespers	25	26	27 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
28 9:40am Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape <i>Back to School Prayers following the Divine Liturgy</i>	29	30 9am Morning Prayers	31 6pm Daily Vespers			

## Tentative August 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	2	3 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
4 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy Back to School Prayers 11:45am Agape	5 6pm Vigil for the Great Feast of Transfiguration	6 9am Transfiguration Liturgy with blessing of grapes & fruit	7 6pm Paraklesis to the Mother of God	8 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	9	10 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
11 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	12	13 9am Morning Prayers	14 6pm Vigil for Dornition w/ Lamentations	15 9am Dornition Liturgy with blessing of herbs & flowers	16	17 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
18 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	19	20 9am Morning Prayers	21 6pm Daily Vespers	22 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	23	24 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
25 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	26 <i>Fr. Theophan @ Antiochian House of Studies through Friday</i>	27	28 6pm Readers Vespers	29	30	31 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers