



**Evangelism in 21<sup>st</sup> –  
Century America:  
Sharing your Faith  
without sounding like a  
used car salesman**

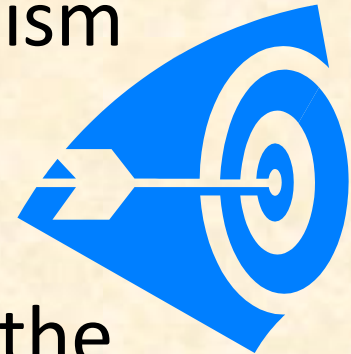
## **2014 Small Parish Forum**

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# What do we hope to accomplish today?

- Identify important elements of evangelism found in the Holy Scriptures.
- Experience ways to help the faithful of the Church be better prepared to share the Faith.
- Analyze the modern barriers to evangelizing and how to overcome these barriers.



*(Slides of this presentation will be available after the session)*

# What if one of the characters from the *Peanuts* comic strip series was Orthodox?

What would a conversation between Charlie Brown and Patricia "Peppermint Patty" Reichardt sound like?



*(You probably didn't know she had a last name.)*

# How might we suggest Peppermint Patty explains her Faith to “Chuck”?



- Do not focus on (nor completely ignore) ethnic traditions.
- Invite the person to church.
  - Offer to bring the person with you...pick them up.
- Provide a way for the person to learn more about the Faith (website, books, etc.)
- Be able and willing to use the Holy Scriptures...at least reference.
- Be able and willing to explain the key teachings of the Faith (Trinity, Incarnation of Christ, Resurrection of Christ)
- Do not only mention the importance of the Faith of parents and grandparents. Why is it important to you? (God has no “grandchildren”)

# “According to the Scriptures”

- In small groups, read through and discuss important aspects of evangelism found in the following passages:
  - Acts 8:26-40 (The Ethiopian Eunuch)
  - John 4:1-26 (The Samaritan Woman)
  - Acts 17:16-34 (St. Paul in Athens)



# Acts 8:26-40 (The Ethiopian Eunuch)



- Sacramental: Baptism was not “optional”
- Scriptural: Used the Old Testament (Tanak)
- Open to those not of his own ethnic group

# John 4:1-26 (The Samaritan Woman)

- Went to those others would have ignored
- Spoke to her at an inconvenient time and in an inconvenient place
- Did not compromise or capitulate the essentials of His belief



# Acts 17:16-24 (St. Paul in Athens)

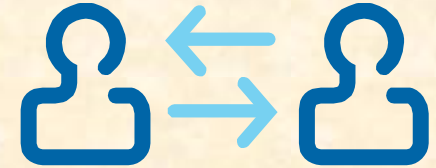


- Had a plan [Synagogue (Jewish and Gentile worshippers) and the marketplace]
- Used the context and beliefs of those around him.
- The Gospel is for **everyone** (*made from one blood every nation...*)



# How are we to share our Faith?

## What is your *Personal Narrative*?<sup>1</sup>



- The most powerful tool you have is an ***Authentic Faith***. How do you explain that “this” is ***real*** for you?
  - What does God mean to me?
  - Why do I have faith/why do I believe?
  - Why am I an Orthodox Christian?
  - Why do I attend \_\_\_\_\_ parish?

<sup>1</sup> From webinar by Joe Kormos and Fr. Johnathan Ivanoff

# How are we to share our Faith?

- Lets take about 10 minutes and start our personal narratives.
  - This is not enough time for most people to finish a narrative.
  - By starting it now, it may be easier to finish later.
  - Feel free to work on it tonight and ask me or someone else about it before the end of the conference.
  - Email for help and for answers to questions.



# How can we use this in our parishes?



- Small group, adult education, Bible study group.
- Use as part of Advent, Lenten, or other confession with the parish priest.
- Website testimonials
- How else?



**What is one of the most significant roadblocks to evangelism we face today?**

## **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**

**What is**



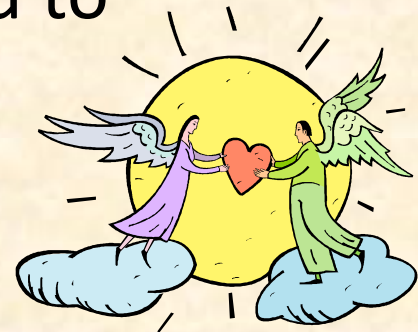
# *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism:*

- Concept can be found in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005) by sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton
- 3,000 American teenagers from variety of religious backgrounds interviewed
- The concept summarizes responses concerning faith and religion in the following fashion...



## *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism's 5 Tenets:*

- A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.



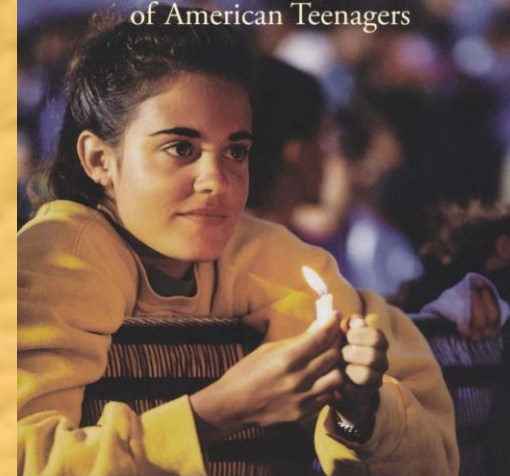
# In other words...

**God is something like a combination  
Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist:  
he is always on call, takes care of any  
problems that arise, professionally  
helps his people to feel better about  
themselves, and does not become too  
personally involved in the process**

Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton

## SOUL SEARCHING

The Religious and Spiritual Lives  
of American Teenagers



Christian Smith  
with Melinda Lundquist Denton

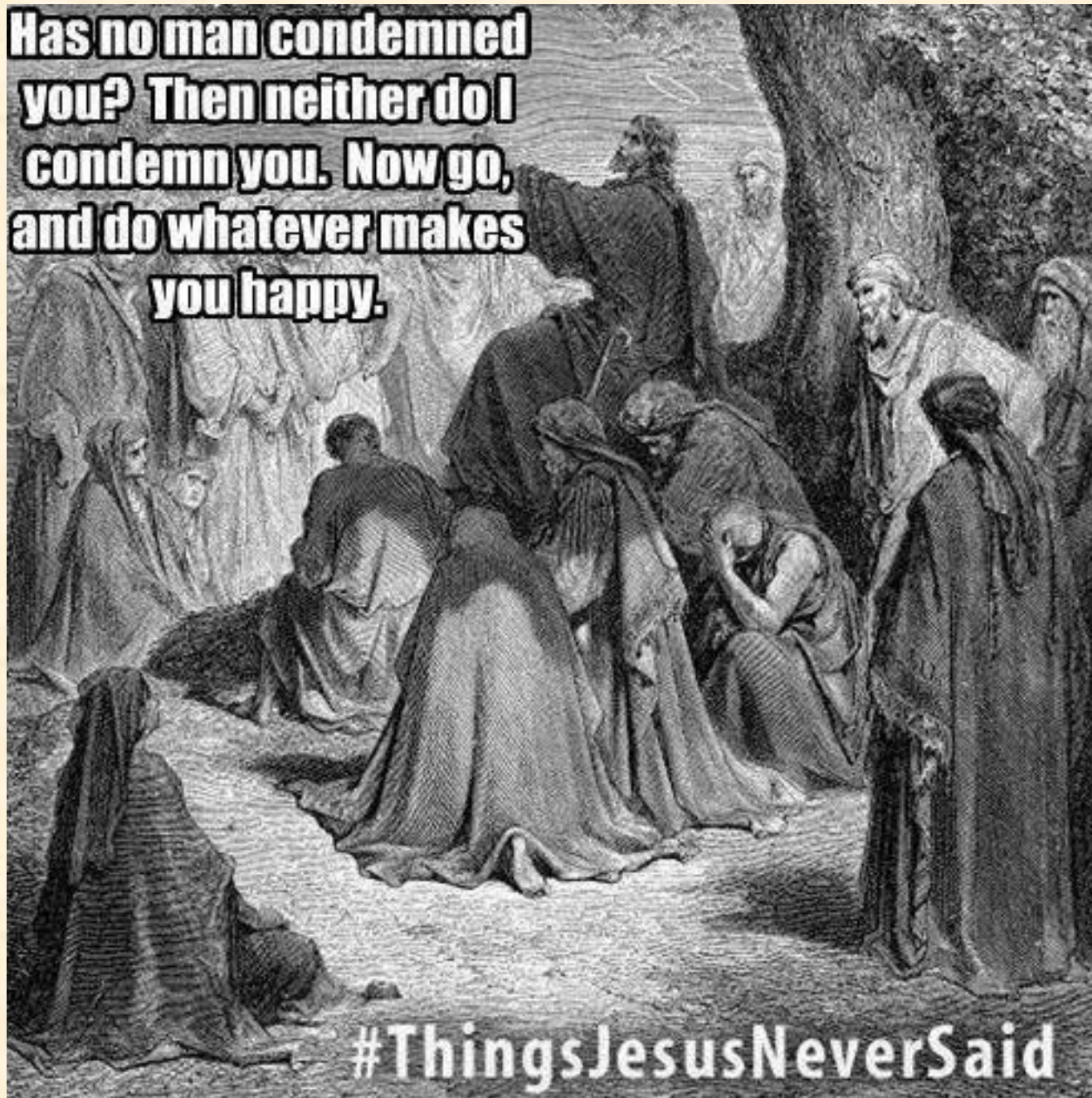
**It doesn't really matter what you do**

**so long as deep down inside you're a good person.**

**#thingsjesusneversaid**



**Has no man condemned  
you? Then neither do I  
condemn you. Now go,  
and do whatever makes  
you happy.**



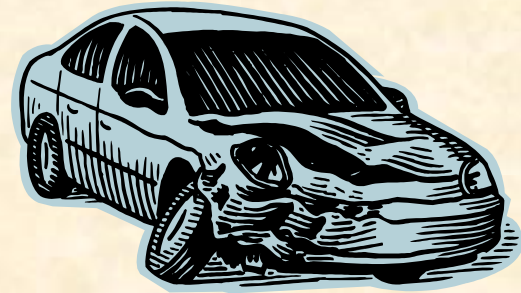
**#ThingsJesusNeverSaid**



**Does Our Personal  
Narrative Match up with  
this worldview at all???**



# If so, we risk being no different than a used car salesman.



- It eliminates the need for Christ.
- It negates any reason(s) to live, express, or share our Faith.
- It fails to acknowledge the existence of (and the solution to) sin.
- It does not provide meaning to suffering and death.
- It demeans the lives of the Saints (martyrs, confessors, etc.) and makes their struggles merely nice stories but unimportant .
- **To Summarize: *Its not the historic Christian Faith we proclaim!***

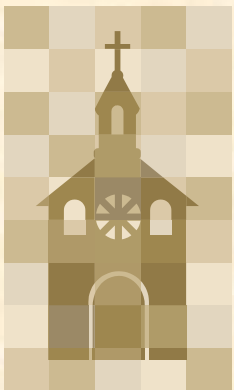
# How does the Church answer this Challenge???



- **Live our Faith, Theology, Tradition**
  - **Works of mercy** personally and as a parish
  - Support for **missions** (Domestic and International)
  - Participate in the **liturgical life** of the Church
  - Striving to honor and follow the **ascetical** aspects of the Faith
  - **Pray** for those not yet in the Church and Catechumens.
  - Be open to **education** outside of services and homilies. We have to humble ourselves and admit we need evangelized as well and not just those outside of the Church.
  - **Do not be fearful of the *uniqueness* of Jesus Christ and what it means to be a disciple of His in the Church!!!**

# What about small parishes?

- **Before visitors come to your parish:**
  - Personal invitation is the #1 way to evangelize. **Invite** and **bring** guests. Small parishes rarely have other ministries/outreach opportunities to peak people's interests and curiosity. This is where the personal narratives are important.
  - Have **greeters** prepared to welcome new people, hand them a bulletin, and assist in acclimating them to the service.
  - The greeters can also be those who follow-up with visitors and guests during “coffee hour” to make sure they are not isolated from others and make sure they meet the priest.



# What about small parishes?

- **Once visitor(s) come to your parish:**
  - Send **follow-up letter(s)** to guests...one from the priest and one from a parishioner. Include a small, laminated icon with the letter. Do this the week after the person(s) visit.
  - **Invite visitors to lunch/dinner** (dine at home preferably but a restaurant is acceptable...don't allow guest to pay).
  - **Involve** new people in ministries early during their search (wait at least six months for anything involving children). Consult with the parish priest regarding specific ministries/opportunities.





# What about small parishes?

- **Necessary throughout the entire process:**
  - Pray for those not yet in the Church, personally and corporately. Ideal corporate opportunities are during the Great Entrance and Litany of the Catechumens
    - **If we don't pray this litany during the Divine Liturgy, then we aren't preparing for new members.**
  - Select **one** area of community engagement and do it well (food pantry, after-school tutoring site, blood drives, etc.)

# What about small parishes?

- **Necessary throughout the entire process:**
  - Programs, community engagement must be social and relational. Involve people! Focus on people versus the “program”. Sending a check to a charity is great, but it is ideal for members to invest time and talent. It additionally provides interaction with the greater community.
  - Use parish picnics as “unadvertised” outreach events. Have a vespers service, brief homily, and invitation for questions.
  - Don’t focus on building a “family” ...build an interdependent community.



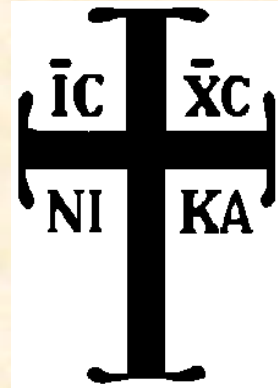




## What about small parishes?

❖ **A word of *caution*:** The “family feeling” of a small parish can be as much of a blessing as it is a curse. How new people are embraced and integrated into the community is something that needs to be “formally” discussed and regularly assessed. Small parishes are oftentimes “insular” by nature. We have to actively resist this tendency.

# In Conclusion



**To effectively *share* our Faith, we have to effectively *live* and *explain* our Faith as servants and slaves of the True, God; Who became Incarnate, was Crucified, and Who Rose from the Dead in order to show us and everyone else the Way to and in Christ's Holy Church.**



**Questions, Comments,  
Concerns...**



**Thank you and may God bless each of you, your parishes, your ministries, and all who hear and learn to live the Gospel from you!**

