

SURVEY RESEARCH: CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Project Title. The Servant Parish Project:
Strengthening Our Ministry to the Poor and Suffering

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You are invited to join a research study that will develop strategies for strengthening our commitment as Orthodox Christians to compassionate ministry to the poor and suffering. Please take whatever time you need to discuss the study with your family and friends, or anyone else you wish to. The decision to join, or not to join, is up to you.

Father Alexander Schmemmann provides the inspiration for this project. In 1965, Father Alexander wrote about the need to replace the false ideal of "serving the parish" with the concept of "the parish as servant."¹ The two key research questions of this project grow from Father Alexander's diagnosis:

- (1) How should Orthodox Christians think about the commandment found throughout Holy Scripture to honor "justice" (Isaiah 1:17, Amos 5:24, Micah 6:8, Luke 18:1-8)?
- (2) What strategies can Orthodox parishes pursue to create "servant parishes" actively engaged in ministry, in particular, to the poor and suffering?

In this study, we are hoping to learn from you. As an adult Orthodox Christian or Catechumen, what are your attitudes toward serving those in need? What are your experiences? What has influenced your views about compassionate ministry in the local community?

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to participate you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. The survey first collects basic information about you. Required information includes your role in the Church (clergy or lay), your age, your gender, your reception into the Orthodox Church, and the general frequency of your Church attendance.

You are not required to provide your name, the name of your parish, or your jurisdiction. However, you have the option of providing this additional information. It is your choice whether to complete the questionnaire anonymously.

¹ Alexander Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America: III. The Spiritual Problem," *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 9 (1965), p. 190.

The survey will then ask about your recent participation in forms of community service. The remainder of the survey will pose a series of “Likert scale” questions asking you to rank the strength of your response to various statements about ministry to the poor and suffering.

The final question is open-ended and asks you to share any ministry experiences that stand out in your memory, whether positive or negative. This is your chance to share something that excites you or worries you about the larger question of equipping our parishes to serve the poor more effectively.

We think the online questionnaire will take around fifteen to twenty minutes. If you stop, no information collected from the interview or any written responses will be used in the study.

RISKS

We anticipate that participation in this study will involve no risks, including risks of physical harm; social, psychological, or economic harm; risk of criminal or civil liability; or damage to financial standing, employability, or reputation.

BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

You will be given the opportunity to share experiences that can assist all parishes in the wider Church who desire to strengthen their ministries to those in need. Your responses will also provide important data related to the question of how Orthodox Christians, at present, view the relationship between ministry to the poor and the general mission of the parish to promote sacramental participation, stewardship, personal growth, and evangelism among its members. Such data, it is hoped, will lead to better educational efforts and theological explorations.

We can't guarantee that you will personally experience benefits from participating in this study. However, others may benefit in the future from the information we obtain.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Although your signature is required at the end of this consent form, you can go on to complete the questionnaire anonymously as described above, or you can choose to provide the optional information regarding name, parish, and jurisdiction. In either case, we will take the following steps to keep collected information confidential, and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage:

- (1) We will keep all information collected from the questionnaire and any follow-up communications in secure, encrypted files (either on a hard drive or a secure server) to which no one will have access except the researcher himself. When storage on networks is used, access will be password protected and, where possible, require two-

step authentication. Printed or written copies of any questionnaire data will be kept in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher has access.

- (2) These files will never be given to a third party.
- (3) The collected data will be used to complete a written manuscript (“thesis”) that is required by the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) Program at Saint Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, NY.
- (4) The data will be aggregated and summarized on tables, as needed. And particular stories and experiences that are shared by you may be described and summarized in the thesis as well. Direct and indirect quotations from you may also be used. But in all cases, the information you provide will never be used in a way that could lead someone to identify you or your parish

INCENTIVES

You will not be paid or otherwise materially compensated for your participation.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all, or to leave the study at any time. To withdraw from the study, contact the researcher using the information provided below.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

Contact Father Theophan Whitfield at 978-744-5869 or *fr.theophan.whitfield@gmail.com* if you have questions about the study, any problems, any unexpected physical or psychological discomforts, any injuries, or think that something unusual or unexpected is happening.

Contact Very Rev. Dr. Sergius Halvorsen, Director of the D.Min. Program at Saint Vladimir’s Seminary, at 914.961.8313 (x367) or *shalvorsen@svots.edu* if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant.

Supervising Father Theophan Whitfield is his D.Min. advisor, Rev. Dr. Gregory Edwards. He may be reached by email at *gedwards@svots.edu*.

CONSENT OF SUBJECT (OR LEGALLY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE)

Signature of Subject or Representative

Date

Upon signing, the subject or the legally authorized representative will receive a copy of this form, and the original will be held in the subject's research record.