Chapter One:  
Defining the Issues of the Project

The primary question I am seeking to answer with this project is: Can a seminar teaching Orthodox Christian ecclesiology to leaders in Greek Orthodox parishes foster leadership approaches that are more consistent with the true nature and mission of the Orthodox Church? This question is important to me because in the course of nineteen years of service as a Greek Orthodox parish priest, it is my perception that a significant number of leaders at the parish level are deficient in their knowledge of Orthodox ecclesiology. If this is true, I believe this knowledge gap is a key factor contributing to counterproductive leadership approaches. In particular, I believe two telltale characteristics of such counterproductive leadership approaches are that they are neither Christ-centered nor collaborative. To be sure, I believe the vast majority of people who assume leadership roles in Greek Orthodox parishes do so with good intentions. At the same time, it is my assumption that the lack of a better understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology makes parish leaders more susceptible to employing leadership methodologies that impede overall effectiveness. Although there are likely other factors that contribute to this, it seems clear that the knowledge gap regarding Orthodox ecclesiology is a central one that deserves attention.

In addition to a general knowledge gap regarding Orthodox ecclesiology, it seems there is also a lack of understanding regarding the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ.
Knowledge deficiencies in these areas lead to problems in leadership that adversely affect many areas of parish life. Among these areas are the clarity of the parish’s mission, the degree of participation in the Church’s liturgical and sacramental life, the collaboration of parish leaders, the unity of the parish, the parish’s commitment to spiritual growth, the parish’s commitment to mission and evangelism, and the stewardship—in the fullest understanding of the word—of the parish as a whole. In addition, I believe the lack of understanding of both Orthodox ecclesiology and the concept of the Church as the body of Christ contributes to leadership approaches that are not Christ-centered in theory and practice.

A. Erroneous or Defective Approaches to Leadership

It seems clear that when parish leaders lack knowledge about Orthodox ecclesiology, problems do occur. Regarding this, Fr. Thomas FitzGerald says the following: “[L]imited education in Orthodoxy and the limited appreciation of Orthodox ecclesiological principles frequently led to an unhealthy spirit of ‘congregationalism’ which continues to afflict many parishes.”¹ He adds, “In some parishes, the priest is seen as an ‘employee’ who serves at the whim of the parish council. Such a view of the relationship profoundly hinders the ministry of the priest and the identity of the parish.”² Other learned Orthodox Christians agree with this assessment. It is noteworthy, for example, that an entire book—American Orthodoxy and Parish Congregationalism—addresses this subject in detail.³ The unnecessary confusion and conflict that result from the ecclesiological knowledge gap also appear to be the underlying problem in a


² Ibid., 28.

few high profile disputes between lay leaders and clergy. Some have even led to lawsuits and political wrangling.4

Whether or not an ecclesiological knowledge gap is the cause of these disputes, I have identified five problematic categories of what may be referred to as “other-centered” leadership approaches in Orthodox parishes. One category of other-centered leadership may be called “self-, clique-, or clan-centered” leadership. This kind of leadership advances one’s personal agenda or that of one’s friends and relatives, irrespective of the true needs and goals of the Church and the parish as expressed in sound Orthodox ecclesiology. Although some might accurately observe that this phenomenon may just be a result of the fallen nature of humanity, it seems likely that the lack of intentional and explicit emphasis on the Christ-centered nature of ministry may also contribute to it.

A second category of other-centered leadership in parishes could be called “business- or political-centered” leadership. This type seems to have a set of operating principles that are more consistent with business or political concepts than with tenets of Orthodox ecclesiology. Parish leaders with this mindset tend to view the financial or political consequences of their actions as the chief determinants of their success. In other words, they believe their chief purpose is to satisfy the “customers” who give money to the parish and/or the “constituents” who elected them. This form of leadership seems to be precisely what Jesus confronts in a remarkable manner when He casts out the “money-changers” from the Temple (Jn 2:15–16).

A third form of other-centered leadership could be called “ethnocentric leadership.” Like the other misguided forms of leadership, this approach has also been problematic since the beginning of the Church. Orthodox parishes in America have struggled with this problem.

4 See, for example: Tim Funk, “Church Clash Halts Services,” Charlotte Observer, October 26, 2002; and Carol Mikita, “Local Members of Greek Orthodox Church Cast Vote for Independence,” KSL.com, November 20, 2011.
regardless of the particular ethnicity prevalent in a given jurisdiction or parish. To be sure, “ethnocentrism” does not refer to leaders’ words or actions that are indicative of a healthy respect and appreciation for language or ethnicity. Rather, ethnocentric leadership traits are those that reveal a mindset contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This leadership approach may become evident, for example, if a parish leader opposes the reception of new members into the parish on the grounds that they are not of a particular ethnic heritage.

The fourth other-centered leadership category is characterized by clericalism and thus could be called “cleric-centered leadership.” More accurately, this form of leadership is characterized by its polarized understanding of the nature of ministry. Leaders with this mindset seem to fail to see the work of the laity as an integral part of the ministry of the parish and the Church. This approach in turn seems to devalue the spiritual gifts of lay people and to discourage them from offering their gifts in the service of God and others. This seems to reinforce the underfunctioning of lay people in terms of parish ministry and the overfunctioning of the clergy. The result in this case is that ministry becomes the exclusive role of the priest, who is seen as a hired “professional.”

Finally, the fifth form of other-centered leadership is what might be called “parish- or group-centered” leadership. The chief characteristic of this approach is that it places mores importance on the objectives of the parish, or a particular group within the parish, at the expense of the catholic and/or apostolic nature of the parish. This approach leads to what many have described as parochialism or a “club mentality.” The most visible indicators of parish- or group-centered leadership are noted in terms of how leaders in the parish decide to allocate resources (financial or otherwise). Four examples of parish- or group-centered leadership are (1) parishes that do not give their financial fair share to support the ministries of the metropolis and/or
archdiocese, (2) parishes that are not welcoming toward newcomers, (3) parishes in which certain internal groups usurp the time and attention of the pastoral leadership at the expense of other groups within the parish, and (4) parishes in which the internal groups compete for financial resources and/or use of the parish facilities.

**B. The Situation in the Orthodox Parishes in America**

Problems such as those referred to above may be one of the reasons for an apparent increase in both the quality and quantity of parish council leadership seminars offered throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. In addition, anecdotally, it also seems that these sort of problems may be one of the reasons for a greater emphasis on the regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, including the requirement that prospective parish council members participate in a training session prior to running for election to the parish council.\(^5\) Furthermore, one of the more extensive booklets specifically designed for parish council members was recently published by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and made available to all of its parishes.\(^6\)

Taking into consideration all of the problems that appear to stem, to one degree or another, from a knowledge gap regarding Orthodox Christian ecclesiology among parish leaders, I believe that this study’s primary question is fitting, and that answering it will be of some benefit to the Church. The question, again, is whether a seminar teaching Orthodox Christian ecclesiology to leaders in Greek Orthodox parishes can foster a leadership approach that is more consistent with the true nature and mission of the Church.

\(^5\) Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, *Regulations* (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2007), 32.

\(^6\) Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, *Welcome to the Parish Council: A Guidebook for Parish Council Members Serving Communities of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America* (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2010).
Addressing this question is especially meaningful to me because in my extensive service as a parish priest in different Greek Orthodox parishes, I rarely had the sense that the majority of parish leaders were “on the same page” when it came to their understanding of the true nature and mission of the Church and parish. This was a significant source of frustration because I believe the lack of understanding and/or commitment to this true nature and purpose inhibited the ministry in each of these parishes from reaching its full potential. What seemed to exacerbate the frustration was the sense that many of the parish leaders had experienced success in other organizations or even on sports teams. Success in these other contexts was attributed to, among other things, an appropriate understanding of—and commensurate level of commitment to—the nature and purpose of the particular organization or team. Yet, the same degree of understanding and collaboration appeared to be lacking among the same leaders in the context of the Greek Orthodox parish. Why is it these individuals’ experiences on sports teams, in the military, and in business are more often than not characterized by (1) a clear understanding of the organization’s purpose and (2) a high degree of both personal and collective dedication toward achieving it, yet in the parish this does not seem to be the case?

The impact of this question was especially disappointing in light of the understanding that the Church’s mission is divine and thus far more important than the merely human missions of various organizations. Moreover, I found myself wondering why the Pauline teaching of the Church as the body of Christ, a central concept of the Church for some two thousand years, seemed to be either irrelevant or ignored by many parish leaders. In my experience, even if some leaders did seem to embrace and strive to embody this concept, it seemed that the ministry of the parish as a whole rarely seemed to work in a principled, intentional, and integrated manner as the body of Christ.
C. The Scope of This Study

My hope is that answering this study’s primary question will benefit my own pastoral διακονία (“service” or “ministry”), the διακονία of other Greek Orthodox priests, and the διακονία of lay leaders in several ways. First, I think it will confirm that there is indeed a need among parish leaders for a deeper understanding of Orthodox Christian ecclesiology. If this proves to be the case, it will provide further encouragement for me—and perhaps other clergy and lay leaders—to continue to teach this material.

Second, I imagine one result of teaching a seminar on Orthodox Christian ecclesiology will be the introduction among parish leaders of a critical dialogue designed to expand their existing cognitive paradigms of leadership so that in the future they will more accurately reflect the nature and mission of leadership in an Orthodox Christian context. If this proves to be the case, I think a critical foundation will have been established, a foundation whereby the future actions of more parish leaders will also be more consistent with the true nature and mission of the Orthodox Church.

Finally, if more parish leaders adopt ecclesiologically sound leadership approaches, I believe this in turn will lead to other constructive results. For example, I believe more parish leaders will (1) have a better understanding of and commitment to the Church’s and parish’s true mission; (2) become more likely to participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church; (3) become more likely to encourage other parishioners to participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church; (4) become more committed to their own spiritual growth; (5) encourage other parishioners regarding the pursuit of their own spiritual growth; (6) begin to work more collaboratively, cohesively, and constructively with one another; (7) take an active
role in enhancing parish unity; (8) become more supportive of mission and evangelism; and (9) become better overall stewards of the Church and parish.

Before embarking on this study, I was rather pessimistic about its chances for success. I think my pessimism stemmed mainly from the fact that throughout the course of my ministry, I had tried to teach parish leaders concepts similar to those in this seminar but had experienced little identifiable success in terms of results. Consequently, on the one hand I at times doubted my own effectiveness as a pastor and a teacher, and on the other hand I began to think that parish leaders were either incapable of being taught this material or were unwilling to abide by it.

I did not, however, question the soundness of the concept of the Church as the body of Christ or the Church’s nature and mission as they are articulated in Orthodox ecclesiology. It was clear to me that both St. Paul’s teachings regarding the body of Christ and the Orthodox theology related to it were unassailable. It was equally clear that the understanding of and/or commitment to these teachings were missing among a number of parish leaders. Nonetheless, I firmly believed that both a greater degree of collective understanding of these teachings and the mutual encouragement to embody these teachings in parish ministry were necessary. What remained to be seen was how effective a seminar on Orthodox ecclesiology could be toward bridging the gap between theory and practice in this area.

The strategy I will employ in this study is to develop and present a seminar on (1) the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ and (1) basic Orthodox ecclesiology in general. The seminar is designed in accordance with a “training the trainers” methodology. This approach calls for inviting Greek Orthodox parish priests to participate in a seminar entitled “Working as the Body of Christ in Greek Orthodox Parish Ministry.” All interested priests will then participate in this seminar, which will be structured in a continuing education format. This
format calls for the participants to read pertinent passages from scripture, chosen biblical commentary on those passages, and a small book on the same subject matter. It will also entail writing a brief (two-page, double-spaced) paper. The priests will complete this assignment prior to their participation in the seminar.

The seminar itself will utilize a PowerPoint presentation to teach the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ and the basic principles of Orthodox ecclesiology. The presentation is designed so that the trainers will then be able to convey the same material to leaders in the parish setting, beginning with members of their parish councils. The seminar is divided into three parts: (1) “The Church as the Body of Christ,” (2) “Orthodox Ecclesiology,” and (3) “Working as the Body of Christ in Parish Ministry.” The seminar also calls for the participation of two experts in various aspects of Orthodox religious education. At the end of the seminar, the input of both the priests and the experts will be taken into account, the seminar will be evaluated, and any necessary improvements will be made for the future seminars to be offered to parish council members.

After the initial seminar takes place and is adjusted as needed, the priests (trainers) will offer similar seminars to members of their respective parish councils. These seminars will then be evaluated for their effectiveness vis-à-vis pre- and post-seminar questionnaires administered to the parish council participants.

All of the trainers will be selected from among ordained Greek Orthodox priests in the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston. Their theological grasp of the material will range from very good to expert. Also, all of the trainers will be selected from among priests who are known as effective presenters. In terms of their level of education, all of the trainers will have at least a Master of Divinity degree. Their ages will likely range from the mid-thirties to the mid-fifties.
Their level of experience in parish ministry will range from five years on the low end to almost thirty years on the high end. The initial seminar will take place in a conference room at the metropolis center of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston. The Chancellor of the Metropolis of Boston will also participate in the seminar, along with three professors—educators in Orthodox theology at the graduate level—who will participate in the seminar in order to evaluate it.

D. Conclusion

Answering this study’s central question is important to me because I believe that imparting a better understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology to parish leaders will indeed be foundational in fostering more effective leadership in Greek Orthodox parishes in America. In particular, I believe that nurturing a better and deeper understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology—beginning with parish priests and parish councils—will in turn lead to more unity, collaboration, and effectiveness in parish leadership, and this will foster a milieu within the parish that will encourage people to better offer their gifts and talents in the service of God and others.

In chapter two of what follows, I will explain the key biblical, theological, and pastoral issues that inform my project. In particular, I will articulate how they form the basis for the seminar on the Church as the body of Christ and Orthodox ecclesiology. In chapter three, I will provide details regarding the project’s implementation and results. Finally, in chapter four I will offer an evaluation of the project. In particular, I will address whether or not it accomplished—or if it promises to accomplish—its intended results. In addition, I will discuss some of the unexpected insights the project may yield. Furthermore, I will describe any ways in which the project’s limitations have become apparent. Finally, I will articulate how my project may reveal new opportunities for creative work in pastoral ministry in the future.
Chapter Two

Biblical and Orthodox Ecclesiology

A. Introduction

The foundation for my project is twofold. It stems from the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ and basic Orthodox Christian ecclesiology. In what follows, I will first examine the context of St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians and the purpose and meaning of this letter, especially as it relates to the development of St. Paul’s concept of the Church as the body of Christ. Next, I will discuss some of the similarities between the problems in the first-century church at Corinth and those in contemporary Greek Orthodox parishes in America. Regarding this topic, I will also discuss ways in which I believe leadership can be improved in Greek Orthodox parish ministry through developing a better understanding of the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ. Finally, I will highlight some ways in which
Orthodox theology and ecclesiology offer excellent guidance regarding the nature and mission of leadership in an Orthodox Christian context. In particular, I will describe leadership in an Orthodox context as leadership that is Trinitarian, Christ-centered, and ecclesiastical.

B. The Pauline Concept of the Church as the Body of Christ

1. Ancient Corinth and Its Culture

In the first century AD, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christian church in Corinth that he had established. Among other things, Paul formulates the concept of the Church as the body of Christ in this letter. To better understand what shaped this central Christian concept, it is helpful to first become acquainted with some of the characteristics of the city of Corinth in the first century AD in order to understand the cultural and social setting of this particular Christian community.

First-century Corinth was a prominent city. In his book *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Joseph Fitzmyer notes that first-century Corinth “would have been more important than Athens. Along with Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch … it would have been one of the four most important cities of the Mediterranean world.”

Corinth’s prominence was due in large part to its key location just south of a narrow isthmus joining the Peloponnesus to central Greece. Fitzmyer says Corinth was a strategic location, both for travelers in Greece and for ships sailing from Asia and the Aegean Sea, because of the *diolkos* (which means “hauling across”). The *diolkos* in effect served the purposes of a canal but actually was “a stone-paved road with channels constructed in it, which guided the wheels of a movable platform used to transfer small boats and their cargo across the isthmus from one gulf to the other.”

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8 Ibid.
As a prominent city that was also a major travel hub in the Mediterranean world, it is notable that first-century Corinth was rather wealthy and was also culturally, religiously, and socioeconomically diverse. Fitzmyer comments that its inhabitants would have consisted of Greeks; Romans; Jews from Judea; Egyptians; and people from Asia Minor, Syria, and the whole Mediterranean world. Some of the residents would have been culturally elite; some would not have been. Some became successful according to worldly standards: “[I]ts population became rich, prosperous, and independent.” In addition, some people living there were slaves, and some—known as “freedmen”—had been emancipated from slavery. Although the official language of Corinth was Latin (because it was a Roman colony at the time), Greek was certainly more widely understood and used among its population.

As previously stated, first-century Corinth was religiously diverse. With the exception of the Jews, many of the inhabitants of Corinth would have recognized one or more pagan gods. Greek philosophy, secular education, and Roman culture predominated in Corinth; Fitzmyer adds, “Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians seems at times to be coping with secular thinking among the members of the Christian community there, thinking that is at times akin to Epicurean teaching, Stoic tenets, and the rhetoric of the Sophists.” The diversity of Corinth is particularly significant both in terms of its impact on the Christian church there and in terms of Paul’s concept of the Church as the body of Christ.

First-century Corinth was also notorious for sexual immorality. Although scholars disagree about whether Corinth was truly worse than similar port cities of the age, all seem to

9 Ibid., 31.
10 Ibid., 32.
11 Ibid., 30.
agree that prostitution in particular was a problem there. Fitzmyer notes that as early as the fifth century BC, the playwright Aristophanes “coined the verb korinthiazomai, ‘act like a Corinthian,’ i.e., be a fornicator, harlot.”

Patristic commentaries on first-century Corinth also note the various societal problems that would have affected the Christians there. In his introduction to the commentary on First Corinthians in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Gerald Bray states that Corinth was a place where “all of the evils of the pagan world were on display.” Theodoret of Cyrus notes, “Among the problems and questions in Corinth were perfectionism, pride in spiritual gifts, marriage [problems], fornication …, divisiveness, pseudo-philosophy and the pretense of eloquence.” St. John Chrysostom’s commentary on First Corinthians demonstrates both his understanding of the challenging aspects of Corinthian society and the ways in which he believes these aspects adversely affect the Christians there. Chrysostom says,

> In ancient times it [Corinth] prided itself on many temporal advantages, above all on its great wealth. The city was full of orators and philosophers…. The devil, seeing that a great city had accepted the truth and received the word of God with great eagerness, set about dividing it.

Understanding the particular problems facing the first-century Corinthian church—which the Apostle Paul had founded—also provides a key to understanding the context in which Paul formulated the central ecclesiological concept of the Church as the body of Christ. Gerald Bray summarizes the sentiments of various ancient Christian commentators and cites the following

12 Ibid., 35.
14 Ibid., 1.
15 Ibid., 2.
problems: (1) partisanship, (2) people imbued with philosophical notions that were contrary to the faith, (3) people puffed up with anger toward Paul for not visiting them, (4) someone who was guilty of fornication being allowed to remain in a leadership position in the church, (5) Christians suing each other in pagan courts, (6) false apostles acting divisively in the church, and (7) heretical teachings regarding marriage being taught.\textsuperscript{16}

The introduction to First Corinthians in \textit{The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms (OSB)} groups the problems of the first-century church of Corinth into the following categories: doctrinal speculations, moral failure, pagan religious influence, and self-centeredness regarding spiritual gifts. Regarding doctrinal speculations, the \textit{OSB} states that erroneous teaching thrived in Corinth and that there may have been an organized theological clique in the church, which taught that the “true gospel” is known only by certain Christians through “spiritual means.”\textsuperscript{17} Concerning moral failure, the \textit{OSB} notes that sexual lust, drunkenness, polytheism, Hellenistic free thought, and divisiveness were among the problems. As regards self-centeredness and spiritual gifts, Corinth was considered to be brilliantly endowed with spiritual gifts, but the self-centeredness of the gifted ones brought dishonor to God.\textsuperscript{18}

2. The Problems of the Corinthian Church

Of the problems mentioned above, it is evident that St. Paul is particularly concerned about the trouble coming from other leaders in the Corinthian church who were not sufficiently Christ-centered and who appear to have been acting in self-centered and divisive ways. Theodoret of Cyrus says, “The church became divided into many factions, each with powerful

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Introduction to 1 Cor, in \textit{The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms} [henceforth \textit{OSB}], ed. Peter E. Gillquist et al. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 374.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 375.
speakers as its leader. Each of them promoted its own beliefs, and they argued over them.”

Regarding this, Bray notes, “Uncertainties about leadership at Corinth had produced a situation in which the church was in danger of dissolving into competing factions based on personalities, some of whom were teaching false doctrine as well.” The OSB concurs with the notion that one significant problem in the Corinthian church was disunity resulting from misguided leadership: “Many Corinthian Christians had broken into several factions based on improper loyalty to particular Christian leaders.”

Most biblical scholars agree that the Apostle Paul became aware of the various problems in the church of Corinth while he was in Ephesus, a few years after he founded the church in Corinth. Fitzmyer notes that reports came to Paul about the dissentions and scandals—even resentment of Paul himself—while he was at Ephesus and that Paul wrote at least five different letters to the Corinthian Christians in response. Two of those letters survive, First Corinthians and Second Corinthians. One letter, about which we know only from First Corinthians 5:9, preceded First Corinthians: “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.” It apparently counseled the Corinthian people against other problems too and also urged them to take up a collection in Corinth for the poor in Jerusalem. In order to comment on the reports and answer questions sent to him, Paul composed a second letter, what we call First Corinthians. Fitzmyer believes the letter was written when Paul was in Ephesus, sometime early in the year AD 57—at least before Pentecost (1 Cor 16:8). Other critical scholarship places the date of authorship between 53 and 55. Regardless of the precise date it was written, there is

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19 Bray, “First Epistle to the Corinthians,” 3.

20 Ibid.

21 OSB, 374.

22 Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 43.
general agreement among scholars that this letter was not well received by the Corinthians, and in its immediate aftermath, Paul’s relationship with the Corinthian community only worsened.23

Fitzmyer asserts that letters in the era when First Corinthians was written were usually written in a specific form. For example, Luhrmann believes First Corinthians “belongs to the ancient category of a friendship-letter because of its rhetorical buildup and…. Because of 1:4 and the use of parakalo, ‘I appeal’ (1:10; 4:16), the whole letter can be seen as Paraklese, ‘exhortation.’”24 Fitzmyer points out that some scholars consider First Corinthians to be a “deliberative letter” and that “the argument of the entire letter … calls on the Corinthians to end their factions and be reconciled with one another.”25

Although the cases for each of these preceding forms of letters appear to have merit, Fitzmyer concludes that First Corinthians is closest to the form of the “ancient letter-type known as typos nouthetikos, an admonition intended to instill proper action in the person(s) so counseled.”26 He also says, “In trying to determine the kind of letter that Paul is writing, one should recall 4:14, where Paul says, ‘I am writing this not to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children’ (all’ hos tekna mou agapeta noutheto [n]).”27

I agree with the conclusion that the principal purpose of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians is one of admonishment. Paul’s admonishment to the Corinthian Christians, according to Fitzmyer, is designed to (1) bring order, unity, and love to the church at Corinth despite ethnic, social, and economic diversity (the church is one in Christ); (2) to admonish

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 55.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 56.
27 Ibid., 55.
against “their arrogant attitude of freedom and tolerance of sexual immorality and petty litigation”; (3) to teach about marriage, Christian love, spiritual gifts, the Lord’s Supper and the resurrection of the dead; and (4) to counteract the Corinthians “who had been reacting against him (4:18–19) … [who] have, in effect, not only been undermining his authority, but have been watering down the gospel…. Their secular Roman and Hellenistic background may be making them consider themselves to be ‘wise,’ but Paul seeks to counter that ‘wisdom of the world’ with his ‘message of the cross’ (1:18–20).”

This last point is also central to both Paul’s theology and Orthodox Christian theology in general and should not be overlooked.

The introduction to First Corinthians in the OSB summarizes Paul’s purpose for writing First Corinthians in the following manner: “Seeing that Corinth’s problems derived from incomplete and distorted understandings of the Church and the Kingdom, Paul shows that everything—both life within the Church and life in general—is sacramental, an offering to God…. The Christian community, therefore, must be a Church that is one (chs. 1–4), holy (chs. 5–6), catholic (chs. 1–14) and apostolic (ch. 15).”

3. Paul’s Teaching concerning the Body of Christ

Having established the basic context of first-century Corinthian society and the problems within the church there, it is easier to understand some of the purposes of Paul’s intervention in that community by way of his letter—now known as First Corinthians. In addition, through a closer examination of First Corinthians 12:12–31, one may arrive at a deeper and broader

28 Ibid., 52–53.
29 OSB, 375.
understanding of Paul’s concept of the Church as the body of Christ, a central teaching of Christian theology and ecclesiology. The verses under consideration appear below.

1 Cor 12:12–31 (RSV)

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single organ, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you;” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior parts, 25 that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

A relatively small group of scholars seem to think that the imagery Paul employs above regarding the Church as the body of Christ is not really unique in the context of his day. They hold that the concept of the body of Christ is “a development of the OT idea of the corporate personality” and a “borrowing of the idea of the state or civil society conceived of as the ‘body politic’ from ancient Greek philosophy.”30 The majority of scholars, however, recognize the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ, first explicated in First Corinthians 12, as unique and unprecedented because it is the body of a person. Perhaps the most significant

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30 Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 475.
characteristic of this concept is that this body is simultaneously Christ-centered and sacramental. In Pauline and Orthodox Christian theology, the Church is united first and foremost in baptism and in the Eucharist, and First Corinthians 12 echoes these points. For example, Fitzmyer notes, “Because there is one bread, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:17).” The commentary adds, “The effect of koinōnia in the one eucharistic body of Christ is that ‘we share’ (metechomen) with one another in that one loaf, which brings about a unity of all Christians with the risen Lord, in ‘one body,’ which now takes on the further nuance of the ecclesiastical body.”

Jerome Murphy-O’Connor agrees that Paul’s portrayal of the Church as the body of Christ takes on a new and distinctive meaning. In his commentary on First Corinthians, in The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, he states, “Though widespread in the ancient world, the idea of society as a body is unlikely to have been the source of the Pauline concept. He saw society as, above all, characterized by divisions (Gal 3:28), and he predicated ‘body’ of the Christian community to emphasize its organic unity.” Rudolf Schnackenburg adds that through this teaching, St. Paul also imparts what soon becomes the foundational understanding of the Church’s ecclesiology. Schnackenburg refers to several intertextual echoes with First Corinthians 12 that reveal the depth and breadth of this ecclesiology:

The question has occasionally been propounded whether for the ecclesiology of the New Testament the concept of people of God or that of the Body of Christ should take precedence. Anyone who attentively studies the New Testament documents and their theology will be inclined to use an “and” rather than an “or”, for however true it may be that the idea of the people of God is everywhere retained (for Paul cf. “the Church of God” 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 15:9-12; the “Israel of God” Gal 6:16; and also Rom 9:25 f.;

31 Ibid., 392.
32 Ibid., 391–92.
15:9-12; 2 Cor 6:16), the Pauline concept of the Body of Christ nevertheless forcefully suggests itself as the most mature result of the New Testament thinking about the Church. It remains of course distinctively Pauline in the particular form it takes but has unmistakable kinship with other images and statements in the rest of the New Testament, as for example with the Johannine allegory of the vine and branches (Jn 15:1-8); with the spiritual house built on Christ as the corner-stone [Eph 2:20]....

It is also worthwhile to note, as Fitzmyer points out, that although “the body of Christ” (to soma tou Christou) is used in three different ways, Paul’s use of it in verse 27, together with his use of word ekklesia in verse 28, is especially foundational with regard to the teachings on the Church’s ecclesiology. Of further value in this regard is the observation that “[t]o soma tou Christou” is used in three different senses in Pauline writings: (1) literally, of the historical body of Christ crucified (Rom 7:4); (2) analogously, of the ecclesiastical body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27 … [and] 12:28; cf. Eph 4:12); and (3) liturgically of the eucharistic body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16; 11:27).

Another key theme linked to the Church as the body of Christ is the diversity of gifts that the members of the body of Christ are given and are called to put to use for the benefit of and the unity of the whole body. Regarding verses 14–18, the commentary on First Corinthians 12:14–18 in the OSB notes that this is a “remarkable passage which leaves no room for a spiritual inferiority complex. Every member of Christ’s body is important to the overall life and work of the Church.”

Fitzmyer observes that Paul emphasizes this point beginning with verse 15, when he resorts to a reductio ad absurdum by personifying various inferior body parts and making them

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35 Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 482.
36 Ibid., 391.
37 OSB, 395.
“grumble against” more important parts of the body. In so doing, “Paul emphasizes the interdependence of the members of the body.”

Theodoret of Cyrus believes Paul is instructing every member of the church in Corinth to be content with his or her respective spiritual gifts: “Once again with these words he instructs those who had received the lesser gifts not to be troubled but to be content with what is given.” Theodoret, who is writing with the perspective of a bishop and pastor in the early fifth century who oversaw hundreds of parishes, also seems to think that Paul points out (v. 18) that God is the source of spiritual gifts in order to convince those who grumbled about their gifts that their argument, in essence, was not with Paul but with God. Theodoret says, “This was sufficient to convince even the resentful to be content with what was given: if God assigned activities to the body’s parts, the person who does not abide by the limits set is clearly at odds with the one setting the limits.”

St. John Chrysostom, who is also writing from the perspective of a bishop and pastor, had a similar understanding of verse 18. Chrysostom says, “God has placed each part of the body where he has chosen, so we must not inquire any further as to why he has done it the way he has. For even if we could come up with ten thousand explanations, we would never find one better than this—that it pleased the creator to make the way he chose.”

As for verse 27, the OSB commentary on First Corinthians 12 indicates that Paul moves from highlighting the value of the particular gift of each individual to the need for the Church’s

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38 Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 480.
40 Ibid.
41 Bray, “First Epistle to the Corinthians,” 128.
many members to work as one.\textsuperscript{42} St. John Chrysostom believes Paul is calling for unity not only within the Corinthian church but also in the Church throughout the whole world. Chrysostom says, “The Corinthian church was not the whole body by itself but was part of a worldwide community of faith. Therefore the Corinthians ought to be at peace with the church in every other place, if it is a true member of the body.”\textsuperscript{43}

Amidst the above discussion of Paul’s message to the Corinthian Christians that they be unified in the use of their God-given gifts, one key point that Paul makes in the last verse of First Corinthians 12 should not be lost. After making it clear that Christians must be Christ-centered, cohesive, and collaborative in worship and in ministry, he turns to something even more essential in verse 31, which sets up the powerful message of First Corinthians 13. Paul points to the manifestation of Christian love toward one another as the most important characteristic of living as the body of Christ. St. John Chrysostom says, “All along he wants to point them higher still and whets their appetite for the greatest gift of all.”\textsuperscript{44} Theodoret concurs with St. John Chrysostom’s point, saying that St. Paul “teaches that love for neighbor surpasses all these.”\textsuperscript{45}

Ephesians 4 is also a very important passage regarding the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ.\textsuperscript{46} There are several similarities between Ephesians 4 and First Corinthians 12, but it will be more beneficial for the purposes of this paper to highlight what Ephesians 4 adds to the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ. The three most significant additions to the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ coming from Ephesians 4

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} \textit{OSB}, 395.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Bray, “First Epistle to the Corinthians,” 129.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 130.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Theodoret, \textit{Commentary on the Letters}, 215.
\item \textsuperscript{46} I have chosen not to address the scholarly debate over the authenticity of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians due to the space limitations of this paper and the fact that most Orthodox scholars believe that Paul is indeed the author of Ephesians.
\end{itemize}
are (1) the teaching that Jesus Christ is the “head” of the body; (2) the notion of “equipping” the saints for the work of ministry; and (3) the concept that when members of the body grow spiritually, this “builds up” the whole body.

The metaphor of Christ being the head of the body— which is the Church—in Ephesians 4 is a significant development in the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ and is also a foundational concept in Orthodox Christian ecclesiology. Rudolf Schnackenburg brilliantly captures the importance of this nuance to the original Pauline concept in what follows:

The understanding in Eph of Christ as the head of the church, which is his body (1:22-23; 5:23), is a significant development beyond the image of the varied members making up the body of Christ in 1 Cor 12:31; Rom 12:4-8…. In particular in these epistles [Eph and Col] Christ is described as the head of his body the Church (Col 1:18; Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23); consequently it is possible to determine more precisely the relations between him and the Church…. [T]he heavenly Christ builds himself up in the Church and through the Church itself, in love (Eph 4:16). As head, he possesses a sovereign position in relation to the Church his body (Eph 5:23f); but he only uses this to distribute his gifts to it and these are viewed concretely in Ephesians 4:11 as the charismatic offices. So Christ rules (from heaven) his Church through the organs established and directed by him, which serve the good of the whole (4:12f). But the influence of the head is even more extensive. Christ as head causes the whole nature and life, the wealth of divine blessing to pour into the Church. The Church is the “plentitude” [pleroma] of him who “fills all in all” (or, who is filled by all) (Eph 1:23)…. This, however, can also be expressed as a prayerful petition that they may be filled in order to attain to the whole “plentitude of God” (Eph 3:19).47

This understanding is especially important considering the essential role of Jesus Christ with respect to the ministry of the Church. Paul J. Kobelski, in his commentary on Ephesians 4:14–16 in The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, clearly illustrates the inextricable connection between Jesus Christ and the Church when he says, “The author returns to images first used in 1:23 and 2:20-22, depicting the body as a living organism that has Christ as the source and the goal of its growth.”48 In “Ephesians 4-6: A New Translation and Commentary,” Markus Barth

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adds the following useful description regarding the centrality of Jesus Christ in the ministry of the Church: “All that the body is, has, and does is determined by its (passive and active) relationship to the head—but this (“vertical”) relationship establishes an essential and indispensable (“horizontal”) interrelation among the church members.”

Barth adds,

The head’s energy does not remain external, it conveys vitality to the body: the body is to “make its own growth.” Certainly the church lives exclusively by receiving Christ’s gifts (4:7). She is no more than an instrument by which Christ himself makes God’s wisdom known to the powers (3:10). But this recipient of Christ’s gifts and this instrument of Christ is given “life” (2:5-6). The saints are to be active servants (4:12). The church is a personal partner (5:25ff.) rather than an impersonal outgrowth or extension of Christ. So that it builds itself up in love.

This is a nurturing and loving relationship as opposed to a domineering one, and Barth points out that Paul sees it in the same light as a nurturing relationship between husband and wife: “Without employing the technical term, in Eph 5:29 Paul ascribes to Christ the head and to each husband the same responsibility: the ‘body’ of Christ (the church) and the ‘flesh’ of a husband (his wife) are ‘provided and cared for’ by their head.”

Another key addition to the original Pauline teaching regarding the Church as the body of Christ is the notion of equipping other members of the body of Christ for the work of ministry (“eis ergon diakonias”: literally, “for the works of service”) that is found in Ephesians 4:12. This is significant for at least two reasons. One reason has to do with the meaning of the word katartismos, which may be translated as “equipping.” As Barth notes, “The Greek noun katartismos occurs only here in the NT. It is derived from a verb that means, ‘to reconcile’ (e.g. political parties), ‘to set bones’ (in surgery), or more generally ‘to restore,’ ‘to prepare,’ ‘to

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50 Ibid., 450.

51 Ibid., 448.
create.’ The noun describes the dynamic *act* by which persons or things are properly conditioned; it does not mean an ‘instrument’ or ‘armament.’”\(^{52}\)

This particular meaning of the term “equipping” is especially helpful in understanding both how one is best prepared for the work of ministry and how one goes about preparing others for this work. Properly understood, then, it may be said that one is made ready for the work of ministry by being reconciled or restored in a spiritual sense. Understood this way, one can see that “equipping” people for the work of ministry has more to do with forgiveness, reconciliation, and spiritual healing than it does with things like budgets, meetings, or even the successful completion of certain courses of study. This insight should create even more appreciation and reliance upon the sacraments of confession and unction with respect to leadership and ministry in an Orthodox Christian context. One may hope that this understanding and potential for renewed emphasis alone has the potential to improve the effectiveness of ministry in Greek Orthodox parishes.

In addition, the idea of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” contains the principle that it is Christ who appoints those (i.e., the apostles, etc.) who are supposed to do the “equipping of the saints” (i.e., the people). In this way there is a difference in roles (though a similarity of goals) between those who are appointed by Christ for specific forms of service and those who may serve in a variety of practical capacities in ministry. Barth says:

> But Eph 4:12 itself provides a clarification in other terms: by the men appointed by Christ (vs. 11) the saints are being prepared for another specific task. *For the work of service.* In contemporary non-biblical and LXX Greek, the noun *diakonia* denoted service of every kind.\(^{53}\)

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 439.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.
This reinforces the notion that every person who is a member of the body of Christ is called to offer all that he or she is able to offer in service to God, in a manner that simultaneously fosters both the person’s own spiritual edification and the building up of the body of Christ (cf. Eph 4:12 RSV).

Finally, Ephesians 4 adds to the Pauline concept of the body of Christ the important teaching that the whole body of Christ—the Church—is “built up” when individual members of the body engage in spiritual growth. Regarding this, the commentary on Ephesians 4:17–24 in the OSB points out that all members of the body “doing their part” means they must take personal responsibility for their spiritual growth:

The process of Christian growth requires our free-will commitment to walk in righteousness and holiness (v24). A change of life-style is possible because of Christ, the original new man (v24). So Christ must be learned (v20), and relationship with Him must be renewed (v23), a process implying intimate relationship. Further, Christ must be put on (v24), a clothing metaphor, an allusion to baptism and the baptismal robe. While spiritual grace makes man heavenly, righteousness is both a gift and a goal, a present reality and a promise to be striven for.54

What is also true in light of this teaching is that the personal commitment of each member of the body of Christ to repentance and spiritual renewal is indispensible for the growth of the whole body. St. John Chrysostom puts forward this very notion when he says,

One might say that the whole body receives increase as each member partakes of the distribution of gifts proportionally. In this way … the members, receiving the distribution in accordance with their own capacities, are thus increased. The Spirit, flowing abundantly from above, comes into contact with all the limbs and distributes according to the ability of each one to receive, thus “enabling bodily growth.”55

54 OSB, 447.

In his commentary on Ephesians 4:16, Paul Kobelski states, “The growth and development of the body depend on each member performing the tasks proper to him or her.”

4. The Relevance of Paul’s Teaching for the Contemporary Orthodox Parish

The need for Orthodox Christians—especially those in leadership roles—to commit their lives to Christ again and again should neither be surprising nor seem foreign to Orthodox practice. Every Sunday, in every Divine Liturgy, we pray the following prayer four times: “[L]et us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.” In this way, we are once again reminded that Jesus Christ and His ministry are truly “the source and the goal” of our growth and of the need for our personal and collective focus on and commitment to Him.

The similarities between the tensions and accompanying problems in the first-century Corinthian church and those found in contemporary Greek Orthodox parishes in America are evident. As was the case in first-century Corinth, Greek Orthodox Christians (and Greek Orthodox parishes) in contemporary America are (1) socially diverse, (2) increasingly ethnically diverse, (3) economically diverse, (4) diverse in education levels, (5) likely to subscribe to various secular philosophies that may be at odds with Orthodox Christian teachings, (6) likely to subscribe to various religious beliefs that may be at odds with Orthodox Christian teachings, (7) not sufficiently Christ-centered in leadership, and (8) rather undeveloped in terms of their understanding of Orthodox Christian theology. In addition, although sin affects all Christians in all eras, the sins of greed, sexual immorality, and pride may very well be as prevalent and problematic in contemporary Greek Orthodox parishes in America as they were in first-century Corinth. It seems that these factors, as they did in the first-century church at Corinth, are also

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57 Faculty of Hellenic College/Holy Cross, The Divine Liturgy: A New Translation by Members of the Faculty of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1985), 3–18.
contributing to leadership challenges and problems in contemporary Greek Orthodox parishes in America.

It appears that there is a connection between the factors described above and various problems affecting leadership in contemporary Greek Orthodox parishes in America. Among them are (1) either a lack of understanding of or a lack of devotion to the understanding that the Church is the body of Christ with Christ as its head; (2) a certain level of disregard toward the God-ordained leaders of the Church and/or parish; (3) a certain level of devaluation of the diversity of the God-given spiritual gifts of all members of the Church and/or parish; (4) some parishioners in leadership positions engaging in leadership that appears to be more prideful and self-centered than it is humble and Christ-centered; (5) a noticeable lack of understanding of the Church’s ultimate purpose, salvation; (6) a perceptible lack of unity; (7) an insufficient level of “equipping” of lay leaders for “the work of ministry”; and (8) an inadequate commitment to “building up” the “body” in a manner that fosters Christian growth and maturity.

As was noted at the beginning of this paper, this author believes that the vast majority of those serving in leadership positions in contemporary Greek Orthodox parishes do so with honorable intentions. At the same time, the author assumes that the lack of a better understanding of the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ—and of a better understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology—coupled with the intrinsic tensions within parishes described above, makes parish leaders more susceptible to employing leadership methodologies that impede the effectiveness of parish ministry.

Although many leaders in Greek Orthodox parishes have leadership experience in other contexts, they may not be aware that the nature and mission of leadership tends to vary according to its context. For example, leadership in business, despite having some things in common with
leadership in government, will also differ in some important ways. Leadership in a classroom is distinct from leadership in an operating room. Likewise, leadership in the twenty-first century might diverge from leadership in the first century.

Therefore, the question becomes: What is the nature and mission of leadership in an Orthodox Christian context? The answer to this question comes to a large extent from the study of the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ, as it is articulated in First Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. In addition, the Pauline concept of the Church as the body of Christ is both a central concept of and further developed within the broader framework of Orthodox Christian ecclesiology. We shall now consider some additional theological concepts that are central to Orthodox Christian ecclesiology. These biblical and theological principles are foundational to my project because its primary purpose is to determine if a seminar teaching Orthodox Christian ecclesiology to leaders in Greek Orthodox parishes will foster a leadership approach that is more consistent with the true nature and mission of the Orthodox Church.

C. Basic Tenets of Orthodox Ecclesiology

The subject of ecclesiology is generally thought of as the study of the nature, structure, and mission of the Christian Church. Within this broad subject area, we will concentrate on the relatively smaller focus of Orthodox Christian ecclesiology, particularly as it sheds light upon the still smaller consideration of leadership in an Orthodox Christian context.

It may be said that Orthodox ecclesiology teaches that leadership in an Orthodox Christian context (like other aspects of Christian life) is Trinitarian; Christ-centered; and ecclesiastical, that is, “called out” of this world to new life in Christ.

1. Trinitarian Approach to Ecclesiology
The theology of the Holy Trinity far transcends the scope of this paper and is far too vast to be contained in the minuscule amount of space available. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this paper, let us briefly reflect on the teachings that the Holy Trinity is simultaneously transcendent, immanent, and perichoretic.

On the one hand, an important characteristic of the Holy Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the transcendent nature of God. That is to say that there are aspects of God that are considered impossible for human beings to understand. Although human reason is a useful gift from God, it has limitations. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware says, “The meaning of God’s tri-unity is not to be attained through human problems of critical analysis.”58 Quoting St. Basil the Great, Ware also says, “Let things ineffable be honored in silence.”59

On the other hand, Orthodox theology teaches that God is also immanent. That is to say that God makes Himself known to and interacts with human beings in ways that are tangible and understandable. And God reveals Himself as Trinity—a community of persons. It is difficult to overestimate the importance in Orthodox theology of the understanding of God as simultaneously one and a Trinity of persons. This is also foundational to Orthodox ecclesiology and the subject of leadership. The basis of this understanding comes from both holy scripture and holy tradition. One prominent example supporting this understanding is found in the Gospel of John when Jesus, before His crucifixion, prays, “[T]hat they may be one, even as we are one” (Jn 17:11 RSV). In His prayer, Jesus is praying that His followers, who will eventually become the Church, may be united even as God—the Holy Trinity—is united.


59 Ibid.
The Trinitarian theology evident in Jesus’s prayer has immense implications for leadership in an Orthodox Christian context. Jesus’s prayer is a prayer for all of His followers to be united in one body, and it is clear from His prayer that this unity is higher than any other form of unity because it emanates from God Himself, the Holy Trinity, who is both three persons and one united essence. This is a point that is reinforced in the Orthodox liturgical services. In the Divine Liturgy, for example, right before the “kiss of peace,” the priest, turning to face the people, exclaims, “Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess.” The Greek word for “one mind”—omoioia—implies concord, harmony, and unanimity. And immediately after the priest’s exclamation, the choir responds, singing the hymn “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Trinity one in essence and undivided.” This liturgical action accentuates the teaching that the Christian community is called to be united even as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is united. Regarding this, Archimandrite Vasileios offers the following profound statement:

This harmony and balance of our close relations with the Creator, shaken by the act of individual rebellion that was original sin, is what the Son and Word of God comes to restore by His Incarnation. By His whole attitude of obedience to the Father, He comes to reveal to us how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit lives, wills and acts as one. And “even as” the three persons of the Holy Trinity are united and will and act, so the faithful must also be united and will and act. This “even as” is a robe of incorruption and a baptism into eternity, a pledge of the life to come and of the kingdom.

In many of his writings, Metropolitan John Zizioulas emphasizes that God always existed and will always exist in eternal communion, and therefore God calls the faithful to live in eternal communion with both Him and one another. Zizioulas says, “God is a relational being—without the concept of communion, it would be impossible to speak of God.”

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60 Faculty of Hellenic College/Holy Cross, The Divine Liturgy, 19.
61 Archimandrite Vasileios, Hymn of Entry: Liturgy and Life in the Orthodox Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 53.
62 Ware, “The Trinity,” 134.
Fathers also describe the relational nature of God with the term *perichoresis*. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware describes *perichoresis* as “cyclical movement” and “reciprocity” and says that even creation “is to be seen as a Trinitarian act.” Ware points to the famous fifteenth-century icon known as “Rublev’s Trinity” as something that artistically conveys the theology of the Trinity. Ware says,

> God is social or dialogic; there is within him a timeless dialog. From all eternity the First Person addresses the Second: “Thou art my beloved Son” (Mk 1:11). From all eternity the Second replies to the First, “Abba, Father; Abba, Father” (Rm 8:15; Gal 4:6). From all eternity the Holy Spirit, “who proceeds from the Father and rests upon the Son,” sets the seal upon this interchange of love. It is this timeless dialog that is movingly depicted in St. Andrew Rublev’s icon, which shows the Trinity in the form of the three angels who visited Abraham (see Gen 18:1-16). The three angels in the icon are not just gazing out into space or looking at us, but they are looking at one another. Joining the three together—marked out through the inclination of their heads and the lines of their shoulders, legs and feet—there is in the icon an enfolding circle: the great O of love.

In his book *The Eye Cannot Say to the Hand, “I Have No Need of You”* (1 Cor. 12:21), Fr. Anthony Coniaris describes one important aspect of the practical implications of Trinitarian theology. Coniaris says, “The beautiful *koinonia* that exists in the Body of Christ on earth (so well described by St. Paul) is but a reflection of the *koinonia* that exists in the Holy Trinity where the Three Persons work together in utmost harmony and love.” Coniaris goes on to describe the meaning of the term *sobornost* coined by the Russian Orthodox writer Alexei Khomiakov. He explains how this term also conveys the teachings of both Trinitarian theology and Orthodox theology. Coniaris says,

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63 Ibid.
64 Ware, “The Trinity,” 139.
Khomiakov’s view of the Church as an organic community of love had a profound influence on the subsequent development of Russian Orthodox ecclesiology and shaped the meaning of the term sobornost which became a central concept of Orthodox ecclesiology. Sobornost is a term that may be translated as “togetherness” or “collegiality.” It is a term that expresses the Eastern Orthodox emphasis on conciliarity over against the Roman Catholic teaching of Papal infallibility and the Protestant tendency toward individualism.66

In addition to being Trinitarian, Orthodox ecclesiology is also Christ-centered (as we will see in the next section), and therefore leadership in an Orthodox context is Christ-centered as well. The purpose of Christ’s incarnation is nothing less than the salvation of all of humanity. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16 RSV).

2. The Centrality of Christ

In Orthodox theology salvation is a broad concept. It involves the forgiveness of sins. It refers to the reconciliation between God and humanity that emanates from God and requires a human response. It entails theosis—the process of becoming Godly. It includes a “foretaste” of the kingdom of God in this life and the gift of eternal life in the life to come. Salvation is the ultimate purpose of Jesus Christ’s incarnation, and because all leadership in the Church is supposed to branch out from and help advance the purpose of God, it must necessarily turn to Jesus Christ, whom God the Father sends into the world for the salvation of the world. In addition to the community, salvation requires a close personal relationship with God. As Jesus states in what is referred to as His High Priestly Prayer, “And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17:3 RSV).

Understanding that all ministry in the Church—and therefore all leadership in the Church—ultimately comes from Jesus Christ and belongs to Jesus Christ is perhaps the most

66 Ibid., 25.
foundational understanding of leadership in an Orthodox Christian context. A leader must be constantly focused on Christ as the principal “shepherd”—the “offerer and the offered,” as He is called in a prayer of the Divine Liturgy. As Fr. Joseph Allen notes, it is Christ who is the *causa efficiens principalis*—the efficient cause of ministry in the Church and therefore of leadership as well. Allen says, “Jesus Christ is the efficient cause from whom and in whom our ministry is possible; as a response, the priest’s [or leader’s] ministry is *causa instrumentalis*, the instrument in the hands of Christ. Christ is the cause, we are the response.”

It is essential for all leaders in an Orthodox context to understand the Christ-centered nature of Orthodox ecclesiology and the fact that all Church leaders are called before anything else to help foster salvation in Christ, because the ultimate aim of both Christ and the Church is the salvation of all human beings. Regarding this critical point, the *OSB* article on the Church and commentary on Ephesians 4:11–16 state,

> The Church, then, is that place established by Christ where we each may become what we are created to be, maturing and being perfected, while the Church receives what it needs from each of us, so that it, too, is being perfected. The Church as the body of Christ carries us beyond our petty and worldly personal concerns, stretching our vision to the eternal and the heavenly…. The Church, in which Christian life develops, is not primarily an organization, but an organism whose parts or members receive their edifying power from Christ to grow up into Christ. Paul does not look at the Christian as an isolated individual walking towards perfection, but as a member of the body, striving to reach the perfect faith and full knowledge of the Son of God. Thus unity of faith cannot be separated from knowledge of the Son of God.

The sixth-century saint Dorotheos of Gaza offers an excellent illustration of the Christ-centered nature and mission of Orthodox ecclesiology and leadership in an Orthodox Christian context. He describes a diagram of the Christ-centered community that has significant implications for leadership in an Orthodox context:

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68 *OSB*, 445–46.
And now I give you an example from the Fathers. Suppose we were to take a compass and insert the point and draw the outline of a circle. The center point is the same distance from any point on the circumference…. Let us suppose that this circle is the world and that God himself is the center; the straight lines drawn from the circumference to the center are the lives of men. To the degree that the saints enter into the things of the spirit, they desire to come near to God; and in proportion to their progress in the things of the spirit, they do in fact come close to God and to their neighbor. The closer they are to God, the closer they become to one another; and the closer they are to one another, the closer they become to God. 69

Because authentic leadership in the Church is Christ-centered, we must point out some of the key characteristics of Jesus’s leadership. Jesus’s leadership is radically different than the leadership of the “great men” (cf. Mk 10:42) of His day in that Jesus’s leadership is service-oriented. Jesus unmistakably states that He does not lead by “lording it over” others but rather by being the “servant of all” (cf. Mk 10:43). Metropolitan Kallistos Ware points out that this is an essential understanding regarding the exercise of authority in Christ-centered leadership. Ware says,

If Christ is our paradigm, this signifies one thing in particular. When Jesus said, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27), he fundamentally altered the master-disciple relationship. Exousia, when understood in a Christ-like way, means diakonia. The only valid model of church authority is our Lord’s action in washing the disciples’ feet (John 13:14-16)…. Within the Church there is to be no autocracy, no polarization between an absolute ruler and passive subjects; on the contrary, there is to be brotherhood, communion, co-responsibility, synergeia. 70

This teaching is especially evident in the beautiful scripture readings, hymns, iconography, and liturgical practices of Holy Week services in the Orthodox Church. Consider, for example, the words of the following hymn from the service on Holy Thursday:

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70 Kallistos Ware, “The Exercise of Authority in the Orthodox Church,” *Ekklesia kai Theologia* 3 (1982): 944.
Instructing thy disciples in the mystery, O Lord, Thou didst say to them: My beloved, see that no fear separates you from me. Though I suffer, it is for the sake of the world. Let me not be a cause of scandal to you. I came not to be served but to serve, to give myself for the redemption of the world. If you are my friends, then imitate me. Let the first among you be the last. Let the master be like the servant. Abide in me and bear fruit, for I am the vine of life.  

Although Jesus’s leadership is servant oriented, this should not be mistaken for leadership that is aimless or feeble. On the contrary, Jesus’s leadership is laser-focused on living and proclaiming the gospel of salvation and the coming kingdom of heaven. The Gospel according to Matthew says, “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.… And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people” (Mt 4:23 RSV). Jesus’s preaching, teaching, and healing embody both servant leadership and a call to repentance (metanoia), holiness, and eternal life. Jesus says, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10 RSV) and “For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life” (Jn 6:40 RSV).

In working toward the ultimate goal of leadership in an Orthodox Christian context, that is, to serve people in a manner that helps foster their salvation, leaders must above all remain in Jesus Christ and be obedient to Him and to His gospel. This is what makes leadership in an Orthodox Christian context different from leadership in other contexts. Coniaris says,

When we use the word “member” today, we usually mean a person who belongs to a debating club or political party. Members in such groups are a collection of individuals who happen to have joined an organization. But St. Paul uses the word member (melos) in an organic sense. We are members of Christ as the eye, ear, hand, and feet are.

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members of the body. It is a living, organic communion of love and truth with Christ and with each other.\footnote{Coniaris, \textit{The Eye Cannot Say}, 8.}

The Incarnation of Jesus was not a thirty-three-year experiment by God in history, a one-shot physical incursion into our lives. The incarnation began with Jesus, and it has never ended. God’s body is still in our midst. We are the Body of Christ. This is not just a metaphor… This has tremendous implications. It means that the Incarnation of God in Christ did not end after thirty-three years, when Jesus ascended to the Father. He is still here. He continues to dwell among us in the body of believers. Through the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist, we have become Christ’s mystical and physical presence in the world today, i.e., His hands, feet, ears, eyes, mind and heart.\footnote{Ibid., 16.}

3. Understanding the Nature of the Church

To describe leadership in an Orthodox context as “ecclesiastical” requires consideration of the etymology of this word. Although the Greek word for “church,” \textit{ekklesia}, is often translated as “assembly” or “gathering,” its meaning is more profound. The word’s prefix, \textit{ek}, means “out,” and its suffix, \textit{klesia}, comes from the word \textit{kaleo}, which means “to call.” It may be said then, that \textit{ekklesia} connotes a group of people who have been “called out” for the purpose of an assembly. This begs the following questions, however: Called out of what? For what kind of assembly? The answer is that the people of God are called out of an existence that is confined by and conformed to “this world.” That is to say they are called out of an existence governed by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life (cf. Lk 8:14 RSV) and into an assembly of people dedicated to a new way of life as members of the “body of Christ”—the Church. Accordingly, when we say that leadership in an Orthodox context is \textit{ecclesiastical}, we mean, among other things, that it is designed to call people out of a mere worldly existence and into a new life in and through Jesus Christ and His Church. Of course, the ultimate mission of Jesus Christ and His Church—His body—is the salvation of all people through (1) embodying, serving, and
cultivating the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church; and (2) fostering the love of God in the hearts, souls, strength, and minds of people, as well as the love of “neighbor” as self.\(^\text{74}\)

Returning to the Pauline text First Corinthians 12:20–23, and the consensus opinion of biblical scholarship interpreting it, it is clear that although the various members of the Church are blessed with a diversity of gifts, they are called to utilize their gifts in a unified manner:

20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty. (RSV)

The *OSB* commentary on First Corinthians 12:26 states that these verses express the following: “There is no such thing as an ‘individual’ Christian. Being ‘knit together in love’ (Col. 2:2), we are called in Christ to suffer together, to be honored together and rejoice together.”\(^\text{75}\) Similarly, Ambrosiaster adds the following: “The diversity in the members of the body unites for the purpose of ensuring that the body fulfills its potential.”\(^\text{76}\) In addition, commenting on Paul’s personification of body parts speaking to each other (v. 21), Murphy-O’Connor concludes, “The point is the members need each other.”\(^\text{77}\) Furthermore, integrating the key points, Fitzmyer states the following:

He passes, in effect, from the many to the one, and from a discussion of *pneuma*, “Spirit” (vv. 7–9, 11) to that of *sôma*, “body” (vv. 12–20, 22–25, 27), and likens the multiplicity of those who have “manifestations” (12:7) of the Spirit to that of “members” in the one human body. He identifies the members of the community, first, as “Christ” (12:12), then

\(^{74}\) Although some of the thoughts expressed here are rather obvious and have been expressed by countless theologians over the ages, my statements have primarily been shaped by the following article: Thomas Hopko, “The Orthodox Parish in America,” in The Orthodox Parish in America: Faithfulness to the Past and Responsibility for the Future, ed. Anton C. Vrame (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), 1–10.

\(^{75}\) *OSB*, 396.

\(^{76}\) Bray, “First Epistle to the Corinthians,” 128.

\(^{77}\) Murphy-O’Connor, “First Letter to the Corinthians,” 810.
as the “body of Christ” (12:27), and eventually as “the church” (12:28). As such, the many members of the Christian community must use all their diverse manifestations of the Spirit “to the good” (12:7) of the whole, because Christ is the unifying principle of the church. Just as the human body unifies the plurality of its members, so Christ unifies the diversity of endowed Christians. As Soards rightly notes, ‘in Christ unity dominates diversity and makes diversity genuinely meaningful and constructive’ (1 Cor, 263), so that no one can vaunt his or her individual endowment over that of others at the expense of such unity. Because such vaunting was at work in the Corinthian church, Paul seeks to correct it.78

It is difficult to overestimate the degree to which the body of Christ, the Church, is called to be united, and promoting unity among the faithful is a central aim of ecclesiastical leadership. This may be even more necessary in the context of contemporary American society, which is highly individualistic. Fr. Anthony Coniaris says,

Radical individualism is an American phenomenon. It is an individualism that says, “I don’t need the church. It’s just Jesus and me. I decided what the Bible teaches, etc.” This is not what Jesus taught and not what the early Church believed. This type of Jesus-and-me individualism is the opposite of koinonia. The early Christians said, “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us….” (Acts 15:28). They did not say, “It seemed good to the Holy Sprit and to me…. “79

An excellent example of the body of Christ working together as one unit with agape (love) and koinonia (concord) is expressed by a Greek word that appears eleven times in the New Testament. It is the homothumadon, which means “of one mind and purpose” or “of one accord.” It is a word that describes the harmony and unanimity of the early Church.80

In fact, leading the Church such that the body of Christ is “of one accord” is so important that the Fathers of the Church advise the leaders of the Church not to tolerate members of the body who seem intent on acting divisively. Although there is room for dialogue and differences of opinion in the Church, there is no place for divisiveness. Despite the fact that the Apostle Paul places great value on the diversity of spiritual gifts, he is equally clear that one’s unique gifts are

78 Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 474.
79 Coniaris, The Eye Cannot Say, 47.
80 Ibid., 111.
not to be valued at the expense of the whole body. In view of this, St. Basil the Great says that any person(s) intentionally contributing to dissension in the body should be firmly admonished. He even goes so far as to say that those who persist in divisiveness should not even be considered members of the body because of such actions. St. Basil says, “With those among whom harmony is not secured, however, the bond of peace is not preserved, mildness of spirit is not maintained, but there is dissension, strife, and rivalry. It would be a great piece of audacity to call such persons ‘members of Christ’ or to say that they are ruled by him. It would be the expression of an honest mind to say openly that the wisdom of the flesh is master there.”

Another important point regarding unity in the Church is that Orthodox theology does not support clericalism. Fr. Anthony Coniaris says,

The Church is conciliar…. The laypeople are accountable to the clergy, and, in turn, the clergy are accountable to the laypeople. Because of the very nature of Christian life, there is no division between religious and secular, spiritual and material, clerical and lay. Everything is done in and for God, and by God’s grace and power; by all of the members of the Body working together; each doing his or her part, according to his or her place, calling, and ministry within the one Body…. The Church is not the bishop alone, or the priest alone or the laity alone. The Church is bishop, priest and laypeople working together in synergy.

Fr. Coniaris continues,

In Orthodoxy there is no division between a “Teaching Church” and a “Taught Church,” i.e., the hierarch teaches (actively) while the laity sit back and are taught (passively)…. The whole Church is teaching and taught at the same time…. It is not by accident that the last verses of St. Matthew’s Gospel are read at the baptismal service: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” It is by this reading that the great commission is addressed to every baptized and chrismated person who now becomes an apostolic being at baptism.

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81 Bray, “First Epistle to the Corinthians,” 127.
82 Coniaris, The Eye Cannot Say, 88.
83 Ibid., 98.
Fr. Coniaris goes on to make several other important points related to this. He says, “If, in the Church Militant, it is only the hierarchy and the clergy who fulfill the function of ministry, then it is like fighting a battle with only commissioned officers and generals. That is why we so desperately need syndiaconia!” He adds, “Let me state here that clericalism, which totally contradicts Orthodox theology, did not exist in the early Church. It crept into the Church in the fourth century.” Furthermore, he states,

There is not just one priesthood. There is the “royal priesthood” of all the baptized and the special priesthood of the ordained clergy. It is unfortunate that a lay person has come to mean nonprofessional in whatever field. It is assumed that the important work in any field is done not by the layman but by the professional. This is a far cry from the meaning of the word layman in the early Church. Coming from the word løas which means people, it refers to the people of God, the Israelites, chosen and sanctified by God Himself as His people to serve Him in a special way. In Christ, the Church, i.e., those who believe in Him and are baptized, become the new Israel, the new people of God—again, called and consecrated by God to serve Him in a special way.

Concerning unity in the Church, it is imperative to remember that in Orthodox theology the Church is considered to be intrinsically and organically united from its inception. The Orthodox Church does not believe it is a denomination. The Orthodox Church does not subscribe to the “branch theory” of Christianity, which holds that the various Christian “denominations” are different branches on the same tree. The Orthodox Church rejects this notion—not in a judgmental manner but rather because it believes it is objectively the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. As Fr. Georges Florovsky makes clear, there is no pride or arrogance in this claim; instead, there is a “heavy responsibility.” The Church does not claim to be perfect; it

84 Ibid., 114.
85 Ibid., 122.
86 Ibid., 127.
admits to having failures and “unfinished tasks and problems.” Nevertheless, being the Church is “not just a claim,” but rather

… it is an expression of deepest conviction, of deepest spiritual self-knowledge, humble and grateful. The Orthodox Church is conscious and aware of her identity through the ages, in spite of all historic perplexities and changes. She has kept intact and immaculate the sacred heritage of the Early Church, of the Apostles and the Fathers, “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” She is aware of the identity of her teaching with the apostolic message and the tradition of the Ancient Church, even though she might have failed occasionally to convey this message to particular generations in its full splendor and in a way that carries conviction…. By no means is the Church an archaic relic, an obsolete remnant of ages gone…. The Church is constituted by divine action, which is still continuing in her by sacramental means and which is dutifully acknowledged by faith and obedience. The Orthodox Church finds herself in an unbroken succession of sacramental life and faith.88

4. Leadership in the Orthodox Parish

Finally, leaders in an Orthodox context must remember that the unity for which we strive is the unity of the body. Although much more could be said about this, we must first understand by this that the Church is a unique entity. The word “body,” for example, connotes that the Church is “more of an organism than an organization.”89 This has vital implications from a leadership perspective, and it is overlooked to the peril of both those who strive to serve the Church in a leadership capacity and those who are supposed to be served by those leaders. We are speaking of sharing in the unity of God Himself sacramentally and spiritually.

The icon of the “Vine and Branches” can serve as a helpful illustration of the nature of leadership in the Church as a Christ-centered organism. In that icon, Christ is depicted in the center, and the twelve disciples are portrayed all around Him. A grape vine that emanates from Christ connects them all. This image is reminiscent of Christ’s words: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you

88 Ibid., 140.
89 OSB, 375.
can do nothing” (Jn 15:5 RSV). In thinking of leadership in an Orthodox context, then, we should think of it as leadership in and of the one Church that is called to unity as the one body of Christ.

God is holy and calls all people to holiness. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that ecclesiastical leadership seeks to advance holiness in the lives of the Church’s members. It is irrelevant whether or not leaders consider themselves to be capable of this higher calling; all leaders in an Orthodox Christian context are called to both strive for holiness in their own lives and to help nurture holiness in the lives of others. Of course, leaders are not capable of fostering holiness apart from God. This can only be done in and through Jesus Christ and the Church He established. Nevertheless, above all others, this is a task that Church leaders are called upon to help facilitate. Commenting on this, Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis observes that God is the ultimate pastor, who above all seeks what is good for the salvation of His people. Timiadis says, “He mandates this ‘pastoral’ task to save his chosen and beloved people of Israel. Later, he mandates his disciples with this high task, the Apostles and their successors, to look after his believers.”

Accordingly, however, individuals must also take personal responsibility for their own walk with Christ and their own spiritual growth. Orthodox theology teaches that all baptized Orthodox Christians—regardless of their positions in the Church—are called to engage in askesis (spiritual struggle/exercise) in order to further their spiritual growth on the path to becoming holy. Again, although striving to become holy may sound like a lofty and unachievable goal for many Orthodox Christians in contemporary society, it is nonetheless what God calls them to do and what ecclesiastical leaders are commanded by God to advance. After all, ecclesiastical

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leaders only serve as an extension of Jesus Christ’s leadership and ministry. In Jesus’s earthly life, He set the primary example for all of humanity, among other things, in His fight against temptation and sin. Timiadis says, “Christ was throughout his earthly life a fighter against temptation and against the dark forces and destructive spirits of this world.” Ecclesiastical leaders are called upon to imitate His *askesis* in their own lives.

Ecclesiastical leaders also bear the added responsibility of ensuring that engaging in *askesis* for the sake of nurturing holiness remains the top priority of the Church and/or parish. Inevitably, the Church and/or parishes become engaged in a variety of activities, and it is all too common to lose sight of the ultimate purpose. Commenting on this point, Fr. Thomas Hopko states, “The parish must be holy because Christ’s Church is holy…. Everything in and about a parish—its organization, structure, administration, finances and properties, as well as its theological and moral teachings and practices, and its liturgical and sacramental rites and services—must be of God.”

Leaders in an Orthodox Christian context must both understand and strive to embody the *catholicity* of the Church. An excellent analysis of the meaning of this word comes from Fr. John Meyendorff, who writes the following:

In the West, it [catholic] was generally understood as “universal”…. If *katholikos* is ever to be translated “universal” it still does not have a geographical, but a philosophical, connotation. As applied to the Church, “catholic” first of all implies the idea of *fullness*: etymologically, it derives from the adverb *katholon*, “on the whole,” opposed to *kata meros*, “partially.” What St. Ignatius meant when he spoke of the “catholic” Church, is that wherever Christ is, there is the fullness of his indivisible Body. This is the reason why later “catholic” was used to describe the *true* Church as opposed to the schismatical or heretical groups, who refuse the fullness of the apostolic doctrine and the integrity of

91 Ibid., 163.

92 Hopko, “The Orthodox Parish,” 3.
the life in Christ. The “catholicity” of the Church is a doctrinal, cosmic, and moral universality, and not merely a geographical one.\textsuperscript{93}

Elaborating on this same point, Hopko states, “The word Catholic literally means full or whole or complete. It does not, in the first instance, mean universal or worldwide…. It is ‘the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth’ (1Tim 3:15).”\textsuperscript{94} The Church, which is the body of Christ, is the \textit{pleroma} or “fullness” of God (Eph 3:19). The Church, like God, cannot be contained, and it reaches out continually to transform all of humanity in all places. It even transcends time and space. Meyendorff says:

The catholicity of the Church undoubtedly includes the idea of geographic universality, but the two notions are not co-extensive; if we identify the Body of Christ with the universal Church of 1961, we in fact exclude from it all the saints, all the departed, we restrict it to the size of a visible social organization.\textsuperscript{95}

Meyendorff adds,

A local church is not a \textit{part} of the Body, it is the Body itself, which is symbolized most realistically in the Byzantine rite of the preparation of the elements, when the priest places on the paten parcels of bread commemorating Christ Himself, His Mother, all the saints, all the departed and all the living: in this Bread the whole Church is really present together with the Head.\textsuperscript{96}

Ecclesiastical leaders, particularly those at the parish level, would do well to be mindful of the above points regarding the catholicity of the Church. Although it is necessary for parish leaders to attend to the local parish’s needs, it is also critical that they do so with a mindset that recognizes the catholicity of the Church. It may be true that, functionally speaking, some Greek

\textsuperscript{93} Rev. John Meyendorff, “The Orthodox Concept of the Church,” \textit{St Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly} 6, no. 1 (1961): 61.

\textsuperscript{94} Hopko, “The Orthodox Parish,” 3.

\textsuperscript{95} Meyendorff, “The Orthodox Concept,” 61.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
Orthodox parishes in America have led a largely independent existence for many years, but this does not mean that this has been in the best interest of those parishes or of the parishioners they have served. Parochialism is a form of heresy.

Ecclesiastical leadership is apostolic. In First Corinthians 12, beginning with verse 28, St. Paul places the role of the apostles first when it comes to the leadership of the Church: “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor 12:28 RSV). The saints—and most scholars—agree with this interpretation. Theodoret points out that apostleship extends beyond the original twelve apostles to the “apostles” in subsequent ages. Theodoret says, “He then explains the ranking in the Church. Some God has placed first in the Church, namely apostles (v28). He means not only the Twelve but also the seventy and those accorded this grace afterwards.”

Fitzmyer asserts, “The first place is assigned to apostoloi, ‘commissioned emissaries,’ witnesses of the risen Christ,” and he adds, “The ‘apostles’ are not, however, to be restricted in the Lucan sense to the twelve…. In this passage the apostolic role is to be understood as a form of diakonia.”

Regarding this, the OSB commentary on First Corinthians 12:28–31 states, “[T]here is a hierarchy of honor in the Church of the NT as there is in the Church today. The apostolic work, that of the bishop, sets the pace for all the rest.” Luke the Evangelist says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:42–43 RSV).

97 Theodoret, Commentary on the Letters, 214.

98 Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 474.

99 OSB, 396.
When we say, then, that leadership in an Orthodox context is *apostolic*, there are at least three characteristics of apostolic leadership that deserve mention: (1) leadership in the Church follows the teachings of the apostles, (2) the structure of leadership in the Church remains apostolic and hierarchical, and (3) apostolic leadership is always “missionary” in its approach. Dr. Lewis Patsavos says,

Our Lord Himself instituted some elements of such an order. He preached the gospel of salvation to His contemporaries but did not leave to their arbitrary will the task of spreading His message for the benefit of future generations. He assigned that task to a group of men chosen with divine care and wisdom, the apostles, who were clearly aware of the sacred mission with which they were entrusted by the Master. Following His ascension, He endowed them with the authority to make decisions necessary to assume the continuation of the work He had already begun.¹⁰⁰

Leaders in a contemporary Orthodox Christian context should also be mindful of both the history and the significance of the hierarchical structure of the Church in which they serve. As we alluded to a moment ago, Jesus Christ appointed the twelve disciples or apostles. He also appointed “the seventy” (Lk 10:1) to be the Church’s “shepherds” after His ascension. The apostles, who were itinerant preachers and missionaries, then appointed (that is, ordained) *episkopoi* (“overseers”) to preside over the Eucharist and to pastor the flock in their absence. For example, the Apostle Peter ordained Evodius as the first bishop of Antioch, and the Apostle Paul ordained Timothy as the first bishop of Ephesus. They in turn ordained presbyters and deacons, and so on. Soon bishops, presbyters, and deacons became the three main “ranks” of ordained clergy. This is clear from the comments of St. Ignatius of Antioch, one of the earliest (first century) and most prominent bishops of the Church. Among other things, St. Ignatius’s writings offer critical insights into the hierarchical structure of the early Church and the importance of

unity in the Church. St. Ignatius says, “Flee from divisions as the beginnings of evils. You must all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and follow the council of presbyters as you would the apostles; respect the deacons as the commandment of God. Let no one do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop.”101

With this in mind, it is important to point out that in Orthodox theology, apostolic and hierarchical leadership is always centered in and around the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Metropolitan John Zizioulas says,

We have already seen that the “whole church” … would “come together in the same place, mainly on the Lord’s day to “break bread” in one single synaxis “under the leadership of the bishop.” At the center of this synaxis of the whole “church” and behind the “one altar” stood the throne of the “one bishop” who was regarded as the “icon of Christ” in which was expressed the unity of the “Katholiki Ecclesia.” In a circle around the throne were seated the Presbyters while the Deacons stood by the Bishop…. In front of all these and opposite them stood the people of God.102

Although leadership in an Orthodox Christian context has always been apostolic and hierarchical, it has also always involved all of the people as well. All people in the Church, whether they are ordained clergy or not, are nonetheless called to participate in the ministry of Christ and His Church by offering their gifts and talents—and indeed their “whole life”—to Him. In the early Church, all baptized believers were called agioi. This term is translated as “saints,” and it implies dedicating one’s life to God. Again, although it is accurate to think of leadership in an Orthodox context as apostolic and hierarchical, it is equally necessary to remember that every person who is baptized and chrismated in the Church is ordained in the sense that he or she is also part of the “royal priesthood” (cf. 1 Pet 2:9) of all believers. This

102 John Zizioulas, Eucharist, Bishop, Church (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 199.
means, among other things, that every person is called to ministry in the Church even if he or she is not ordained as a deacon, presbyter, or bishop. Fr. Nicolas Afanassieff says,

Life in the Church, to which every Christian is called, is a permanent ministry, in which the Christian serves God through the Church, and serves the Church itself…. In the Church, life and ministry are one and the same, because in the Church, the Holy Spirit, by which and in which the Church lives, forms the principle activity. Where the Spirit is, there is life also, and hence action and ministry. The whole of St. Paul’s doctrine about “the work of ministry” is based on the words of Christ quoted above. The work of ministry is incumbent upon all the members of the Church, but they do not all minister in the same way; they render service in accordance with the gifts they have received (1 Cor. 12:4-6).\textsuperscript{103}

Finally, apostolic leadership is leadership that is missionary. The Greek word for apostle comes form the word apostolos, which literally means “one sent forth [with orders].” Although some leaders in an Orthodox Christian context tend to view mission—sharing and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ—as something that is optional, this is not an accurate understanding of the Orthodox Church’s teaching on this subject. The foremost contemporary scholar of Orthodox missiology, Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos, makes this clear in saying, “Mission is an inner necessity (a) for the faithful and (b) for the Church. If they refuse it, they not only omit a duty, they deny themselves.”\textsuperscript{104} He goes on to say, “A Church without mission is a contradiction in terms…. A ‘static Church’ which lacks a vision and a constant endeavor to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world could hardly be recognized as the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’ to whom the Lord entrusted the continuation of His work.”\textsuperscript{105}

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\item \textsuperscript{103} Nicolas Afanassieff, “The Ministry of the Laity in the Church,” The Ecumenical Review 10, no. 3 (Apr. 1958): 256–57.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Anastasios Yannoulatos, Mission in Christ’s Way: An Orthodox Understanding of Mission (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press; Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2010), 58.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 61–62.
\end{itemize}
In addition to its charge of reflecting, serving, and cultivating the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, ecclesiastical leadership must also nurture the love of God in the hearts, souls, strength, and minds of people, as well as the love of “neighbor.”

From an Orthodox perspective it is impossible for one to love God with all of one’s heart without participating in the liturgical services and sacraments of the Church. And because it is the responsibility of ecclesiastical leaders to foster the love of God in the hearts of the faithful, participation in the services and the sacraments of the Church on a regular basis is essential. At the very least, parish leaders should regularly participate in the Sunday Divine Liturgy and the reception of the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the pinnacle of the Church and its sacraments. Fr. Alexander Schmemann says,

The eucharist, we repeat, is not “one of the sacraments” or one of the services, but the very manifestation and fulfilment of the Church in all her power, sanctity and fulness. Only by taking part in it can we increase in holiness and fulfil all that we have been commanded to be and do.  

Thus loving God with all of one’s heart is made possible by God’s real presence in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is far more than just a remembrance. It is a divine invitation for the faithful to dwell in God and for God to dwell in the faithful. Says Schmemann:

“The ultimate and most joyful mystery of all is that Christ gave this sacrifice to us, to the new humanity regenerated in him and united with him: the Church. In this new life, his life in us and our life in him, his sacrifice became our sacrifice, his offering our offering. ‘Abide in me, and I in you’ (Jn 15:4).”  

Participation in the liturgical worship of the Church and its sacraments is indeed a critical aspect of ecclesiastical leadership, and it is a terrible mistake for parish leaders

107 Ibid., 104.
to think or behave otherwise. Fr. Thomas Hopko says, “[T]he heart of an Orthodox Christian parish will be its liturgical and sacramental worship. Worship will constitute the parish’s core. It will be the parish’s essential mode of self-realization. It will be its basic reason for being, the foundational purpose for its existence and life.”  

Parish leaders who recognize this and act accordingly are not only doing what is right for their parish but are helping to position their parish in a manner that will make it more attuned to the will of God. On the other hand, parish leaders who place a higher priority on activities other than the worship and sacramental life of the Church are essentially “kicking against the goads” (cf. Acts 26:14 RSV).

Although so much more could be said about the sacraments and the liturgical life of the Church and how they foster the love of God, at this point we will briefly touch upon the sacraments of baptism and confession. It seems that baptism, as the sacrament through which people die to sin and are raised to a new life in the body of Christ, must be better understood and applied by all believers—and especially by leaders—in an Orthodox context. Timiadis says,

In brief, baptism remains a common calling, and far from being a symbolic rite, it seeks to restore mankind’s lost dignity, to make him as he ought to be, i.e. truly human, an authentic being, living according to the high plan and not chained to the sensual, earthly traps which degenerate him. We have to view baptism in a wider perspective, looking beyond the water to the transforming power of God and the transfer of the baptized from this world to the other.

Perhaps by being more mindful of the deep meaning of baptism, which has implications throughout the life of each Christian even if he or she were baptized as an infant, both leaders and the faithful will be better equipped to love God with all of their hearts.

The same mindfulness toward baptism’s true significance could also apply to the sacrament of confession when it comes to nurturing the love of God with all of one’s soul. If one

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109 Timiadis, Priest, Parish & Renewal, 191.
is to love God with all of one’s soul, and if one agrees that this is at least an essential goal of leaders in an Orthodox context, then participating in the sacrament of confession and engaging in the process of *metanoia* are necessary. Living morally and according to God’s commandments is an indispensible aspect of loving God with all of one’s soul. At the same time, every person sins and falls short of the glory of God (cf. Rom 3:23). Consequently, confession and *metanoia* are crucial aspects of the therapeutic restoration of the soul. Although leadership in an Orthodox context has emphasized this in the past, this does not seem to be either well underscored or practiced enough in our day. As Metropolitan Timiadis states,

> Since the Reformation, confession has been ostracized as contradictory to the doctrine of free grace and Christ’s direct redeeming action. The Church’s minister has no right to intervene…. While nobody can deny the free action of the Holy Spirit and His bestowal of a new gift on those who ask, or the efficacy of fervent or persistent praying for healing, the Church focuses on the priority of inner restoration and its therapy. Our souls are sick, and as a consequence most of our people are suffering terribly from inner conflict, loneliness, frustration, deception, anguish, fear, insecurity, depression, ruthless obsessions, worry, sexual problems, etc. It is in such a vital domain that confession can render inestimable service. But the problem remains: a scarcity of able confessors and spiritual fathers.\(^{110}\)

This last point is critical because leadership in an Orthodox context is leadership that fosters the healing of the soul (and body). Calling to mind again the meaning of the Greek noun *katartismos* (Eph 4:12)—“reconciliation” or “equipping”—it seems clear that this is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote that God’s gift to the Church is that “some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11–12 RSV, emphasis added). In other words, God’s gift is that the leaders of the Church—especially those occupying the ordained positions noted above—are enabled to foster reconciliation and healing in and through the ministry of the Church, actions that in turn lead to the building up of the Church.

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\(^{110}\) Ibid., 163.
Although it is true that lay people can also provide spiritual leadership in an Orthodox context, the above discussion of spiritual healing sheds light on the notion that effective pastoral leadership is especially vital to the well-being of the Church and parish. In this sense, pastoral leadership might aptly occupy a key role in what is referred to as “the parallel process” in psychological counseling. In the realm of counseling, the therapist’s growth and well-being is seen as essential to the growth and well-being of the patient. This seems to be what St. Gregory the Theologian had in mind when he taught (some sixteen centuries before psychology as we know it) the following: “A man must himself be cleansed, before cleansing others: himself become wise, that he may make others wise; become light, and then give light: draw near to God, and so bring others near; be hallowed, then hallow them; be possessed of hands to lead others by the hand, of wisdom to give advice.”\textsuperscript{111} Effective pastoral leadership, among other things, offers liturgical services, sacraments, instruction, and spiritual direction in a Christ-centered, prayerful, faithful, and humble manner. This is integral to helping other leaders—and the whole flock—to love God with their whole soul.

Leaders in an Orthodox context must also strive to encourage others to love God with all of their strength. As noted earlier, one of the prayers repeated four times in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy is “Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.”\textsuperscript{112} In this sense, every aspect of the lives of the faithful is meant to be offered to God. This is what it means to love God with all of one’s strength. This understanding is also made clear in the Divine Liturgy when the priest extends the bread and wine upward for the prayer of consecration and


\textsuperscript{112} Faculty of Hellenic College/Holy Cross, \textit{The Divine Liturgy}, 3–18.
exclaims, “We offer to you these gifts from your own gifts, in all and for all.” Among other things, this prayerful exclamation reminds all present that everything we have in this world is from God, and we are called to offer both ourselves and our possessions back to Him in order to glorify Him and to accomplish His purposes in our lives and in the life of His Church. The pinnacle of the offering of the faithful is the bread and wine, which become the mystical body and blood of Christ at the consecration. And in offering our “whole life” to Christ, we are enabled to love Him with all of our strength.

As we alluded to earlier, we also love God with all of our strength by engaging in askesis, or asceticism. Although this term is often associated with monastic practices, it is actually a broad term that encompasses everything from cultivating a life of prayer, to being under the direction of a spiritual father, to abstaining from certain types of food and drink during the prescribed fasting periods, to participating in the liturgical services, and so forth.

Another important aspect of loving God with all of one’s strength has to do with the giving of our time, talents, and financial resources to the Church. In fact, Fr. Thomas Hopko points out that giving one’s material resources to God is a key aspect of loving God with all of one’s strength. Hopko says, “Loving God with all one’s strength, particularly according to the Hebrew text of Holy Scripture, means that we are to love God with all that we possess, primarily our money and property. Strength, in this context, does not merely mean mental, emotional, or physical might, though these, of course, are not to be excluded from our love for the Lord.”

Loving God with all of one’s mind is also an essential aspect of leadership in an Orthodox context. In contemporary America, we accept the fact that professional occupations

\[^{113}\text{Ibid., 24.}\]

\[^{114}\text{Hopko, “The Orthodox Parish,” 7.}\]
require some form of continuing education. It is taken for granted that ongoing learning in one’s profession will help one perform better in one’s occupation. Practically speaking, this is also the case when it comes to ongoing growth as a Christian, and even more so as a Christian leader.

This is particularly important for those who are pastors and teachers. Many of the saints emphasize the need for pastors and teachers to commit to studying the Bible in a serious and ongoing manner. St. John Chrysostom, commenting on St. Paul’s Letter to Titus, says the following:

“For the Bishop,” he says, “must hold to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to convict even the gainsayers” [Ti 1:7–9]. How, then, if he is inexpert at speaking, as they say, will he be able to convict the gainsayers and to stop their mouths? And why need anyone give heed to reading the scriptures, if it is right to welcome such inexpertness? This is all just a pretence and excuse and a pretext for carelessness and indolence.\footnote{St. John Chrysostom, \textit{Six Books on the Priesthood}, trans. Graham Neville (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1964), 124.}

In addition, St. Gregory the Theologian emphasizes the central role of holy scripture in fostering contemplation/illumination in people when he says,

Who is the man, whose heart has never been made to burn, as the Scriptures have been opened to him, with the pure words of God which have been tried in a furnace; who has not, by a triple inscription of them upon the breadth of his heart, attained the mind of Christ; nor been admitted to the treasures which to most men remain hidden, secret, and dark, to gaze upon the riches therein, and become able to enrich others…\footnote{Gregory Nanzianzen, “Oration II,” 224.}

With this in mind, it is clear that regular meditation upon holy scripture is an essential component of both loving God with all of one’s mind and leadership in an Orthodox context.

Finally, loving one’s neighbor as one’s self is a hallmark of authentic ecclesiastical leadership. We read in the Bible, “If any one says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not
seen” (1 Jn 4:20 RSV). And as Tertullian famously stated, “One Christian is no Christian.” One cannot truly live as a Christian on his or her own. Christianity requires relating to others in love; our Lord Jesus Christ makes this abundantly clear throughout the course of His life and ministry. Leadership and ministry that ascribe to Christ’s teachings, then, must also embody the love of neighbor. This is what it means to truly live as part of the body of Christ. Coniaris says, “If I really believe this, then I should ask myself some questions, such as: As the foot of Christ’s body, do I use my feet to visit the sick, the bereaved, the unfortunate? As the hand of Christ, do I use my hands to give assistance when and where it is needed? As the ear of Christ, do I use my ears to listen compassionately to those who are hurting?”

D. Conclusion

In response to the problems of disunity, pride, and false apostleship, St. Paul writes a strong *typos nouthetikos*—“admonition letter”—to the Christians in the church at Corinth, which he founded. In this letter, he admonishes the faithful to work closely together and to value each other’s gifts, whether they are great or small. He also admonishes the faithful to not be arrogant about their spiritual gifts but rather to be humble and to work for the good of the whole body. Far more than this, however, St. Paul describes the nature and mission of the Church and powerfully characterizes the Church as the body of Christ. This concept has had profound implications in the life of the Church in his age and for all of eternity.

The problems of factionalism, sin, a lack of Christ-centeredness in worship and ministry, and others are problems that still confront Greek Orthodox parishes in contemporary America. As was the case in Paul’s time, these problems threaten the spiritual growth and well-being of the Church and its members. St. Paul’s concept of the Church as the body of Christ can be as

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powerful and helpful for Church leaders in this day as it was for the Corinthian Christians. The task is for Church leaders to become well acquainted with the depth and breadth of this important teaching and to do their very best to put it into practice.

Understanding and applying Orthodox theology and ecclesiology is also essential for leaders in an Orthodox context to be effective in their work. Leadership in an Orthodox context is different from leadership in other settings because leadership in the Church means fostering growth in an entity that is more of an organism than an organization. Leadership in an Orthodox context is Trinitarian in the sense that it emanates from and seeks nothing less than to imitate that relational nature of God. It is Christ-centered in that the ministry of the Church is first and foremost the ministry of Jesus Christ—the great high priest. Thus other leaders in the Church share in Christ’s ministry, and as such they must strive to follow His example, teachings, and guidance in all that they do. Finally, leadership in the Church is ecclesiastical in the sense that it seeks both to experience and to promote both a foretaste of the kingdom of God on earth and eternal life in the kingdom that is to come. It seeks above all to foster salvation in the lives of people by being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and by nurturing the love of God and neighbor.