

Come and See
Fr. Thaddeus Wojcik
Upbeat
V.3, n. 5-6, 1970

The words “Come and See” were spoken by the Apostle Philip as he approached Nathaniel, “Come and see Christ, come and see what I have found.” Nathaniel came and saw, and he believed, and he used his belief to bring the knowledge of Christ to other people.

About fifty-five American teenagers came and saw Christ, came and saw the Church, came and saw that there is something relevant, contemporary, and understandable in Orthodoxy. They came and saw that they had much to learn, and that someday they were going to be the “spark plug” of the American Orthodox Church. It is a sad fact, but many Orthodox people in America today know very little about their religion, about their Church and faith.

We must believe in our faith in such a way that we can prove it to others, because if we can prove our faith beyond any doubt, then that faith won't be shaken away with the first strong breeze of temptation. It is not enough to believe in Orthodoxy because someone told us to believe, even if that someone is our mother or father. If we are going to be good Orthodox Christians, we must believe because we know that Orthodoxy is the same today as it was at the time of the Apostles.

The Conference started certain thought processes – how do we find out that Orthodoxy is true, what are the sources, what are the proofs? An emphasis was put upon the reading of Scripture in order to find these proofs. Far too many Orthodox people have never read the Bible even once. To read the Bible is not a difficult undertaking; it can be enjoyable. All of the proofs, all of the basic teachings of the Church are found in the Bible.

Other proofs are found in the liturgical services, prayers, dogma, and the Orthodox approach of life. One point that was stressed was that we must love our fellow man. That we must do unto others as we would have them do unto us. We have a long way to go in our own personal lives before we can begin to reach any stage of perfection in life.

The conference lasted only two days, but our lives go on 365 days a year. It is very easy to learn one thing at a retreat, but when we return to our homes and parishes it is another thing to live according to the teachings of Christ. The conference is a start to Christian living that is interesting, relevant, and understandable.

I would like to share with you some of the comments which were written by the participants of the retreat.

“I liked the speakers and the discussions, and I got to meet different kids. I hope the retreat will be held in the years to come.”

“I think the religious conference was good and inspirational.”

“I think the conference was very interesting and educational, I learned a lot at the discussion, and am looking forward to the next religious conference.”

“The talks were every beneficial, but I think they were too short.”

“The talks were good so that the point got across to the participants.”

“This retreat was very wide ranged and that is good because there are many things that people do not know about their Church and the past.”

“I learned a lot, and I think I’ll want to learn even more.”

“This conference should be held annually.”

“I regret that the time was so short. The entire retreat was very beneficial and I do feel that I gained something from it.”

“Hope I’m able to come again.”

“The discussions helped me understand a lot of things more clearly.”

“To get more kids to come, publish information about how nice this camp is and how it has fine facilities.”

Relevant, contemporary, modern, up-to-date, and understandable are words that today’s youth are very concerned about. Youth is concerned about the reality which these words express, and this reality is carried over into the area of the Church. Young Orthodox Christians are interested in the Church in a very serious way, and they seek the truth because they want to know; they question because they do not understand at the present time, and they question because within them there is a certain quest for knowledge that God Himself has placed in their hearts and minds. Youth wants to know if the Church is as relevant today as it was in the tenth century, or as it was during the time of the Apostles. Fortunately, our Church in America is beginning to answer questions such as these and is answering them in a very understandable way.