

Eight years ago on Holy Thursday morning, two little boys in my family were piously playing with a hand censer in the woods and then carelessly tossed out the live charcoal. A fire was secretly smoldering in our backyard while we prepared for liturgy that afternoon...

I will finish the story in a moment after I explain a metaphorical wildfire raging throughout the western world. It scorches tradition, destroys families, and leaves morality in ashes. The fire is the anti-Christian worldview which takes our church's young people away from the heavenly life of the apostles and leads them to the eternal fires of *hell*.

Is it possible for us young Orthodox Christians not to be scorched by sin? **YES!!! WE CAN DO IT BUT WE NEED YOU!** Let me briefly explain the situation, some examples of success, and how you can help.

Our world has long been unruly, but now we have lost control. Social media tricks you into putting yourself before

others, and your “needs” before God's commandments. It makes us ignore the good things people do for us. It makes us think about the negative. It makes us think “what can I do for ME?” and it makes us ignore the gentle voice of Jesus Christ. Because of this the majority of the Christian **youth leave** the church.

Yet, it is still possible for a young person to continue steadfastly in the apostles' life. For example, if we read the Scriptures daily, we are inspired to treat others as God has treated us. **1st John chapter 3 verse 17 says, But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?**

If we get to know the saints, we are inspired to become saints. Saint Mary of Egypt was once very enslaved by pleasure, wealth, and luxury, but repented to become one of the most beloved saints. Saint Moses the Black was the leader of a

terrible gang. While raiding a monastery he was moved by the monks' serenity in the face of death. Saint Raphael of Brooklyn, whose grave up the hill I had the blessing of living near during camp, started 37 churches. There are many other saints that we should look to for example and intercession.

However, not everyone we look up to has to have a halos around their heads. I'm thinking of the camp counselors I've had over the years. They are inspiring: inspiring in sacrifice; inspiring in service, and inspiring us to sacrifice and service. They pause their careers to help us taste the sweetness of our faith. Most of them have been campers and want to give us the same blessing they received.

It is still possible to live in Christ. But How???

We need you to be examples of the apostles steadfast life. **We need you** to defend doctrine when our culture confuses right and wrong. **We need you** to prioritize fellowship, true community of love and humility. **We need you**

to pray without ceasing, without hurry, and without distraction.

We need you to continue the breaking of bread, showing that the Altar is the most important table.

Let me be specific.

We need you to invest your time, talent, and treasure eternally: not merely in our education and careers, but especially in our spiritual development; not in luxury, convenience and technology, but in evangelism, alms-giving and virtue; not in vacations and entertainment, but in pilgrimages and retreats; not in staring into your screens, but in sharing God's love with us.

Concluding my call for help, let me bring you back to the Holy Thursday Fire... The situation was bad, a little taste of hell. The wind whipped up the flames. Our home, our neighborhood, and even our lives were in danger. My father called 911. As the flames spread, five fire engines roared into our driveway. Volunteer Heroes rushed up and turned the

potential tragedy into a funny family story.

But what about this fire consuming our culture, our church, and our children? I'm calling 911 now... **Will you respond?**