

Case Studies in the Operating Rules of the Church

Goals

- Case studies aid as a review of information from the Orthodox Leadership Training Program
- Can be used for open discussion to set protocols for a Parish
- Use the case studies as a training tool for your Parish Leadership Team

What is a case study?

- An open-ended actual story
 - No Ending Given
 - Brings reality into classroom
- A difficult problem without an obvious solution
- Forces us into a real situation where we have to answer:
“What do we do now?”

How to use a case study

1. Read the entire case study narrative
2. Formulate a clear statement of the problem
3. Identify the issues at stake
4. Clarify facts as well as feelings
5. Consider the case study from different angles
6. Dig around for resources
7. Make some assertions

Background

All Saints Greek Orthodox Parish is a fictitious church. It is headed by the equally fictitious Fr. George.

The scenarios presented are in no way reflective of any Parish or Parish Priest or Parish Members in the Metropolis, but are used for discussion purposes only.

Case Scenario:

Who's Wagging the Dog?

The Parish Council President was, in the middle of a council meeting, and everybody was looking to him about what to do about Basil and Basil's beef. Basil, a member of All Saints Parish Council, had just bolted the meeting. He was mad. Few were surprised because Basil had been belligerent for a week, grumbling to others about the Festival committee's owning the church. As Basil left, he let fly from the doorway, "This council has got to take charge of this church. They can't get away with this anymore. It's the tail wagging the dog. And it's not right."

For years All Saints had a growing Festival attracting many from the neighboring suburbs and preparations were overcoming the ministries of the Church. More than a decade ago, the council had formed a Festival Committee to plan the event, choose the menu, and control the finances with little oversight.

Over time this committee, with almost no changeover in membership, began making its decisions without approval by the Council, increasing advertisement budgets and overall expenses. What once was a huge benefit to the budget was now becoming a drain on the finances. Now the issue of responsibility and authority heated the Council room. Right after the Treasurer's Report, Basil had burst out: "Listen, it's time to put that committee in its place. They can't be making financial decisions that hurt this church. We are the Council. Not them."

With previous advice from the priest, the President had said the issue would not be discussed now but when the Festival Committee gave the council its report. Basil jumped up and said he was fed up: “If we can’t deal with this issue, how can we deal with other issues that are hurting this Church?” He packed up his papers and said, “I am resigning right now. My wife and I will no longer be members of a Church like this.” Then he stomped to the door. After Basil slammed the door, the silence was palpable.

One member pulled the drape back to see Basil sitting in his car in the lot. Some wanted to go get Basil and invite him back; some wanted to send a delegation to his home in “a couple of days” and invite him back; and some wanted to settle the ministries issue without Basil or the committee “holding the council hostage.” Everyone seemed flustered. One Council Member said to the President, “Will you advise us here?” Everybody looked at the President and waited for a response.

Case Study 3 Discussion Questions

- What's at the heart of Basil's beef? Does he have a good point?
- Suppose you were on the Festival Committee. How might you defend the committee against "Basil's beef"?
- What are the leadership principles involved in this case?
- Have you experienced similar "authority and responsibility" issues in your congregation?
- What should the President do next?