

The demands of the job

I knew her when I was stationed at St. Thomas in Hattiesburg many years ago. She was a student then and a native of Alabama. I helped guide her on some of her spiritual path. Since then, we have kept up a sporadic kind of communication through infrequent emails. Now married and of the Orthodox religion, she has been teaching music at a school as well as playing organ and piano for church services.

Her most recent email informed me that her school was closing down as of the end of May and all teachers would be without jobs and summer pay immediately.

She mentioned that she found a music opening at a certain Christian Academy near where she lives. When she read the requirements and demands for the job, she was shocked. She said, "I was unable to apply for it because I was required, on the application, to sign a statement of faith with the following items: (1) total belief in the Sola Scriptura principle; (2) belief that Christ died in the form of substitutionary atonement, which is contrary to the teaching in Orthodoxy that Christ died in order to defeat death and enable us to be resurrected and sanctified through His grace; (3) belief that any Church tradition contrary to what is in their Bible (which does not even contain all the books!) is against the correct Christian life; (4) belief that the Holy Spirit dwells within every believer from the moment the believer accepts Christ mentally and emotionally through an emotionally dramatic conversion experience, which runs contrary to the Orthodox teaching on the acquisition of the Holy Spirit only after one has received holy baptism and confirmation by the anointing of chrism; (5) belief in the Rapture. I also was required on the application to promise that I would attend and support an evangelical church, that I would give my personal testimony of my conversion, and that I would never drink any alcoholic beverages ever. Give up my Church? God forbid! Give total strangers an account of my personal spiritual journey in Christ? Well, sometimes I have shared with people my journey to Orthodoxy, but I don't think that's what they meant by 'personal testimony.'"

She continued by saying, "I certainly could not sign or fill out such an application. Nor would I fit into an environment that espoused such teachings. It would be a nightmare working in a place like that. So I'm going to see what else comes along, and if I must, I'll try applying once more for substitute teaching in the public schools."

I emailed her back and told her that I admired her for her conviction of faith. I also told her that if she was patient, opportunities would arise for her.

Some days later, she emailed me back with some encouraging news. She indicated that she had received a gift of a trip to San Antonio. Before parting, she prayed consistently to Mary for direction and guidance.

On her return home, she received some encouraging and promising phone calls which opened up the possibility of employment.

Her Easter message reflected the dead-ends she was still experiencing but still she had courage and hope when she wrote, "There is great joy of the Resurrection here, but at the same time there is grave difficulty and we must not give into despair or despondency, and we must not let the devil take away our joy, our love, our faith. We must fight! "

Her recent email shared more good news. She wrote: "So, I will be a very busy lady next year, with my school job and my continued music ministry on the weekends. I'm very liable to have the best teaching experience ever! It is very clear that my employers value me very much as a professional in my field. Since I've worked at so many schools where I was thought of as little more than a babysitter to give teachers their breaks, and where music teachers weren't viewed as real teachers, this is going to be a very wonderful change."