

*In response to Fr. Joseph's answer on why pews were being removed from the church, a reader of "The Orthodox Vision" wrote a letter to the editor disagreeing with Fr. Joe's statement that no "instrument inadvertently devised for the torture of children is more heinous in its effects than the traditional Church pew." Fr. Joseph's answer follows:*

Dear Editor,

Your correspondent, M. L. at Billings, has rightly discerned the number one weakness of my answer to the pew question. At its writing I realized that my pragmatic comments about children and pews left me open to the criticism that "That's not my experience," or "I disagree."

I would only offer that, having trained religion teachers and Directors of Religious Education as a profession for 13 years, mostly on the College level, I hear complaints from Roman Catholics all the time. Protestants don't complain about kids and pews because their kids are in a nursery or Sunday school, often to the age when they are old enough to escape from Church altogether.

Anyway, the issue is not whether or not we can make pews work with "Little bags of religious items, Jesus books and non-messy snacks." The question is whether or not rows of pews are "Orthodox." Nor is it an issue of modernity vs. antiquarians as M. L. implies. Pews have been around for more than 450 years. If we had suggested computer generated virtual worship as M. L. suggests, then we would be subject to the accusation of revisionism. In fact, his or her comments about computers and writing by candlelight, demonstrate that he or she, like many antiquarians, misses the difference between custom and Holy Tradition.

Proto J.