

**New York State Deanery**  
Diocese of New York and New Jersey  
Orthodox Church in America

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**Diocesan Assembly ~ November 9, 2010**  
**Report of the Dean**

23 September 2010

As we have begun a new “Church Year” and assemble for our first Diocesan Assembly under the archpastoral leadership and guidance of His Grace, Bishop +Michael, much has transpired and still more lies ahead for our sharing, discussion, cooperation, and action. My intention in this report is to bring you somewhat up-to-date on some important matters and to share information and thoughts of common interest to all of us.

In August, His Grace, Bishop +Michael established a new mission parish in our deanery ... the first in over a decade! A recent Diocesan Communications Release provided some preliminary information and details. Holy Apostles Orthodox Church in Lansing/Ithaca NY has had 30-45 regular attendees at Sunday Divine Liturgy over the past months. Father Timothy Holowatch was appointed priest-in-charge and logistical support is generously provided by the parish and parishioners of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Endicott NY. The “R” Club Chapter printed and donated Divine Liturgy books for the mission, and the Sisterhood of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Herkimer NY donated \$500.00 toward the beautification of the new parish. In a very short period of time, we have reached out to many in the area offering a place to worship, participate in the liturgical life of the Church, and a place for fellowship and support. The congregation is truly a Pan-Orthodox group with roots in the Greek, Russian, Carpatho-Russian, Arab, and Ukrainian traditions. This mix works very well as all of them have been searching for an English speaking church in the Ithaca/Lansing area. Outreach into the community has been very positive. We have re-established the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) at Cornell University and have met with the co-director of the Cornell United Religious Works, Reverend Janet Shortall. As you well know, “getting the word out” to the local community is always a challenge. The mission has run ads in *The Cornell Daily Bulletin* (The Welcome Back Issue) and in *The Ithaca Journal* which ran for four consecutive Saturdays (August 21- September 11). One couple, Methodist by background, saw the

ad in *The Ithaca Journal* and has been attending regularly. They are interested in becoming Orthodox, and we will begin an Introduction to Orthodoxy class very soon.

Bishop +Michael is re-evaluating Saint Innocent Mission, Oneonta NY. If there is a realistic possibility to reactivate it, he is planning to do so. To this end, His Grace has assigned Reverend Hieromonk Matthias (Moriak) as priest-in-charge, effective September 1<sup>st</sup>. We welcome Father Matthias into our deanery and ask for God's blessing upon his new ministry.

Effective September 19<sup>th</sup>, Father James Worthington was released by Bishop +Michael from his assignment as acting rector of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Herkimer NY, and transferred to the New Jersey Deanery. We wish Father James and his family all the best in their new assignment of serving God and His Holy Church.

Looking beyond the specific concerns of our deanery, there is a lot of activity and work being accomplished in our diocese. These are exciting and hopeful times for us, but there are serious challenges as well. I think it is appropriate to report and share this information with you in context of the recent past -- where we have been -- and some of the issues currently facing us as we move forward.

On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 -- in its "Final Report" -- the Diocesan Search Committee stated:

"It is sad, but true, that our diocese - for various reasons and over a long period of time - has created an environment in which parochialism became the status quo in parishes. In the absence of active and engaged involvement from a hierarchical authority and the resulting lethargy in diocesan functions, is it any wonder that individual parishes would act primarily in their own best interests and see these interests as being the most important work of the Church? . . . The Icon of a diocese of parishes gathering around their archpastoral shepherd in mutual faith, hope, and love - laboring together in Christ's vineyard - must not only be our desire, it must become our reality."

I believe that in large measure we are experiencing a revival in our diocese, deaneries, and parishes. We are beginning to live the reality of being a diocese united to our hierarch in a real, perceptible, and observable manifestation of what it is to be the "larger Church": One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic ... and conciliar. This is happening thanks to the vision and tireless efforts of Bishop +Michael. The barriers of parochialism, apathy, alienation, and disenfranchisement are crumbling! Trust, accountability, responsibility, and conciliarity on every level of diocesan life are being strengthened, affirmed, and rebuilt. We are witnessing the restoration of a real priestly brotherhood, mutual love, and communion that is (and must be) the foundation of our relationships as the Body of Christ.

In order for the diocese and deaneries to function well and in "good order," His Grace has established and appointed a Council of Presbyters to advise and assist him in building up the life of the diocese in a conciliar manner. The Diocesan Spiritual Court was re-established and appointed with proper canonical and statutory guidelines created and implemented for resolving any canonical issues, disciplinary actions, property disputes, and to address all applicable complaints. Information regarding the Council of Presbyters and Spiritual Court has been posted on our diocesan website and is included in the "Administration" portion of the homepage.

The Diocesan Council [DC] has been meeting almost every month, under the presidency of Bishop +Michael. Central to the work of the DC is addressing administrative and personnel issues, strategically planning for future opportunities, while being fiscally responsible as stewards of God's resources entrusted to our care. At the direction of His Grace, the Chancellor and Deans of the diocese meet with him monthly to assist with pastoral transfers, vacancies, disciplinary actions not requiring the convocation of the Spiritual Court, legal matters, and other issues within the competency of their responsibilities.

The first Annual (two-day) Clergy Conference for priests took place in Clifton NJ. By all accounts this was an outstanding time of reflection and sharing that brought all of us closer to our spiritual father, Bishop +Michael, and to each other. In a very informal and open manner, priests shared their thoughts on pastoral ministry, successes, challenges, family life, and the struggles of parish life. Challenges that were common to many parishes included: decline in membership and financial contributions; rising costs of maintaining parishes and their ministries; increasing needs of parishioners in economic uncertainty, under-employment, and demographically declining geographical areas. At the same time, many gave testimony to their expanding involvement in local communities and reaching out to the less fortunate. The faithful commitment of priests to their ministry and vocation was clearly evident, shared, and inspiring.

Through the enthusiastic efforts of Bishop +Michael, our Diocesan Diaconate Formation Program was inaugurated on September 11<sup>th</sup>. There are currently twelve students and three auditing participants attending the Endicott Campus, some traveling 3+ hours each way to attend. The program is accredited through Saint Tikhon's Theological Seminary and meets every Saturday of the academic year, beginning with the Divine Liturgy and concluding with Great Vespers. It is enthusiastically embraced by the students who have been endorsed by parish rectors throughout the diocese.

A New York State Deanery meeting with Bishop +Michael is scheduled for Thursday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, with discussion of the DRAFT Strategic Plan for the Orthodox Church in America being the focus and theme of the "Open Forums" following the deanery meeting.

The Council of Presbyters will meet on Monday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at the Diocesan Center in Bronxville NY. They will further review diocesan-wide programs, retreats, and events, and assist Bishop +Michael in solidifying conciliarity in our vision and mission as we move forward.

Special thanks to Father Ken James Stavrevsky for his continual efforts to improve our communications on a deanery level, as well as for the outstanding job he is doing as the Director of Communications for the diocese. Our Diocesan Website is quickly becoming the best in the OCA and provides a great resource for you and our parishes.

I am also grateful to Father Timm Holowatch and Father Deacon John Bohush. Through their selfless ministries, we were able to assist our parishes (Buffalo, Syracuse, Herkimer, Rochester, Whitestone, and now in Ithaca) when rectors became sick, went on vacations, retreats, or when vacancy in a parish resulted in 3-6 months of pastoral absence.

In the last year we've had six deanery meetings! I want to thank all the clergy of our deanery who made an effort and were able to come together as brothers in Christ. Their commitment to our parishes, our deanery, and our diocese -- sometimes in difficult circumstances -- is greatly appreciated and highly valued. May God continue to bless them in their pastoral ministries.

In our Lord, Jesus Christ,

//signed//

Father Alexey Karlgut, Dean

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken James Stavrevsky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Father Ken James Stavrevsky, Secretary