
Office of Communications

Orthodox Church in America Diocese of New York and New Jersey

Report to the Diocesan Assembly

19 July 2011

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church ~ Endicott NY

6 June 2011

Your Grace, Reverend Fathers, esteemed Parish Delegates,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is among us!

It has been an honor and privilege for me to serve as the Director of Communications in our diocese as we witness manifold blessings and an abundance of grace springing forth in a spirit of renewal, revitalization, and re-birth. I am humbled to be the designated messenger, a bearer of good tidings (usually), regarding a diocesan family that is whole and healthy in leadership, direction, and witness. Obviously, all praise and glory go to the Author of all that we are and ever will be: Our Lord, Jesus Christ. So too, as His Body here and now, it comes as no surprise that our wholeness and health as a “family of faith” flow from our spiritual Archpastor and father: His Grace, our Bishop Michael. It is a pure joy to receive his blessing in the work I have been assigned, and working with clergy and laity alike in whom he has entrusted authority and accountability -- the Chancellor, Deans, Diocesan Council, Council of Presbyters, Spiritual Court, Commissions, Committees, Rectors, and others -- is an example to me of “hierarchy and conciliarity” in action. I will not attempt to recount all of the news and “releases” (*47 to date and counting*) I have shared with you since the consecration of His Grace and his installation as our bishop. However, I must reflect on the scope and character of those communications: we have seen and done so much, and we have ample cause to be thankful and hopeful of the good things yet to come. We are facing realities -- good and bad, happy and sad -- openly and honestly with a firm commitment to forthright communication, truthful conversation, constructive deliberation, and optimistic confidence through faith and love to overcome obstacles ... anything and everything ... to the glory of God and the good-estate of His Holy Church. I thank you in advance, my brothers and sisters, for allowing me to continually “reach out and touch you” with important news and information as we move forward -- a truly most blessed diocese!

I always appreciate your inputs, comments, and feedback regarding our diocesan webpage (nynjoca.org). In January 2011 a newly redesigned and revised version of the website was launched with the kind and professional assistance of Orthodox Web Solutions and Father John Parsells. Recently, we have added helpful features (“Upcoming Events” in our diocese) and links to the Commission on Mission and Evangelism, the “Vision for Our Future” [V-FOF], the “Distinguished

Diocesan Benefactors” [DDB], the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, and more. Soon, we plan to provide a link to a dedicated webpage for the Commission on Liturgical Music. I welcome and encourage you to take a tour of the website and visit it often as new items and features are regularly added along with current news and events. Your help in getting-the-word-out about the website to all of our faithful and friends is invaluable! Having the website listed in parish bulletins, newsletters and occasionally mentioned during parish announcements can help us in enhancing diocesan communication at all levels and fostering a spirit of unity and shared community. If any parish is interested in developing or improving their outreach by means of a parish website, I am available and willing to offer assistance.

At our last Assembly, we received and approved Bishop Michael’s “**Vision for Our Future**” which, in turn, led to the **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors** initiative. The good news is that we have communicated the vision and initiative through printed brochures, news releases, website news headlines, and dedicated webpages (nynjoca.org/vfof.html). The sad news is that a notional statistical analysis of the response to date implies that over 80% of our faithful do not know about the DDB program. At worst, an invitation for their participation has not been extended to them; at best, the invitation was poorly communicated or weakly supported. It is my hope that you, parish delegates and leaders of our Church, do know about the vision and DDB. I ask that you become very familiar with all of the resources dedicated to communicating the vision and DDB program. And, ensure as best you are able that all of our faithful are informed and encouraged to participate according to the blessings given them by God. This needs to happen in each local parish, or it will be unfulfilled -- a lost opportunity to support our parishes, seminarians, and missions.

It is vitally important that I maintain current and accurate e-mail contact information for all clergy and laity in leadership positions to ensure that official communications are received. Your contact information (including e-mail, snail-mail address and phone numbers) is essential for the Deans and the Office of the Chancellor, as well (so please, keep them informed). If you have a change in any contact information, or if you should be receiving official communications from my office but currently are not, contact me as soon as possible to rectify the situation.

The next page in the life of our diocese begins following this Assembly. Going forth from our gathering, the “grace of the Holy Spirit” which assembles us will surely guide us to the fulfillment of all good things in their proper timing ... as long as we remain faithfully committed to the love of God and love for one another. Within a few days of our gathering, I hope to have the address of His Grace available as a video on the diocesan webpage. I hope as many of our faithful as possible will find it possible to see and hear the message we receive from our hierarch, and know that they are uniquely precious members of Christ’s Body working and living out their salvation in our diocese and their parishes. I pray that they, and all of us, will be inspired and enthused to do the work set before us by the Holy Spirit and confirmed through our Assembly.

Please join me in prayers and supplications for the continued grace, strength, discernment, and well-being of our beloved Bishop Michael. I cannot express, for I do not fully know, the magnitude of his labors and concerns on our behalf. This I do know -- that his love and care for us has yet to be shown to have a limit; that while I only report and communicate a portion of what occurs in the life of our diocese, he is almost always at the very heart and foundation of all that happens. And, honestly, I am at times exhausted (albeit, in a good way) just reporting it! I praise God with a thankful heart for the steadfast faith, humility, service, witness, endurance, courage, vision, and guidance of His Grace. May our Lord grant peace, health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things to His Grace, Michael; a blessed shepherd of the holy Orthodox sheep-fold abiding in New York and New Jersey; a good and faithful servant of the one Good Shepherd. ***"Eis polla eti Despota!"***

Your brother in our Lord, Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Ken James Stavrevsky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Father Ken James Stavrevsky