



HOLY APOSTLES ORTHODOX CHURCH

345 Ridge Rd, Lansing, NY 14882

Fr Joel Brady, Rector

HolyApostlesLansing.org

September 25th, 2019

Venerable Sergius of Radonezh

Dear Vladyka, and beloved Fathers and brothers in Christ,

Holy Apostles Mission in Lansing continues to be blessed. This year the community has a new sense of vitality and direction, with many receptions of new members, two weddings, and a more focused search underway for a new and permanent location.

Liturgical and Sacramental Life

Holy Apostles continues to maintain an active liturgical life. Morning prayers are held Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday; Matins on Wednesday; Vespers on Saturday; and Hours and Liturgy on Sunday. Morning prayers are often only the priest, but they offer opportunities for people to come and pray when they need to, or to meet with the priest, and people do avail themselves of these opportunities; Wednesday Matins are usually attended by one or two laypeople in addition to the priest. Saturday Vespers typically draw 5–10 people; Sunday Liturgy attendance this year has averaged 43 people, including about 9 children. (As in most parishes, attendance declines somewhat during the summer: during the summer, attendance is lower than this average; out-of-summer attendance is higher.) We usually hold one weekday Liturgy per week, depending on the calendar of commemorations, which typically draw about 3–8 people (more for major feast days).

Our choir rehearses every week before Sunday Liturgy, and has been gradually learning new material and skills; a typical choir on a Sunday is about 5–7 singers, with 2–5 singers at Saturday Vespers. The “regular choir” members typically do not attend weekday Liturgies, but the regular attenders at those services have been learning simple melodies for the ordinary of the Liturgy, allowing these services to be offered with their own simple beauty. Coffee hour/fellowship is held after Sunday Liturgy; a less-formal “coffee hour” fellowship is usually held after weekday liturgies, with some of the regular attenders bringing food to share. Liturgical worship and Christian fellowship remain closely linked in the life of Holy Apostles.

A rotation of prosphora bakers offers many people in the community an opportunity to take part in a tangible way in the offering of the Liturgy. This year we’ve added a “children’s baking group,” where several young children (with a lot of help from their mothers) bake the prosphora as well.

In 2019 to date, we have had 5 receptions of adult catechumens by Chrismation, and 4 Baptisms (one adult and his two elementary-school–age sons, and one infant). We also have one newborn and one expecting mother, and so expect two more baptisms in the remainder of 2019. We have had two weddings in our parish this year; this is especially significant since Holy Apostles has never held a wedding prior to this year. One of the

adults who were received was a graduate student at Cornell, who has since graduated and moved on, but the others are “long-term” residents of the area. Along with the wedding, this feels like a move to a slightly more “settled” population, after our long struggle with putting down roots in an area with a very transient population.

Parish Education

Sunday School is held weekly, with two classes: a junior (under-7) class taught by a rotation of teachers, and an older class taught by Greg Fedorchak. Sunday school remains an ongoing area of development for the parish.

A parish study group headed by Deacon Ivan Bazarov meets regularly to discuss the condensed version of Fr. Alexander Men’s *History of Religion*, which Dn. Ivan is in the process of translating from Russian.

A book discussion group for young mothers meets weekly, currently finishing Archimandrite Sergius’ *Acquiring the Mind of Christ* and about to move on to Sister Magdalen’s *Children in the Church Today*.

Fr. Joel led catechism classes and a series of book discussions for the last group of catechumens, and is preparing to offer similar studies for some inquirers who have recently begun attending.

College Ministry

Campus ministry continues to be an important part of the work of Holy Apostles, as we are the English-language parish closest to both Cornell University and Ithaca College. This year, a student from Ithaca College has begun attending, although at this point we still lack the base to establish a functional ocf there. Cornell’s ocf, however, continues to thrive. Many of the ocf students attend the Greek Orthodox parish in Ithaca, but with Fr. Joel serving as chaplain for the ocf, this has served as a helpful bridge between the parishes. The Greek parish has just been assigned a full-time priest, after almost 2 years without one, and this will hopefully help to strengthen collaboration even further.

The relationship between the parish and the ocf is symbiotic: the parish provides a spiritual home and supportive community for students in what is often an aggressively anti-Christian university. The students, in addition to offering their talents as singers and in other areas of service to the church, are also able to host guest speakers at Cornell; this is an opportunity for Orthodox evangelism and for the upbuilding of Orthodox Christians, both students and members of the local parish communities. Holy Apostles has also been able to invite some of the ocf speakers to give additional talks at the parish. This year to date we have hosted Archimandrite Sergius from St. Tikhon’s, who spoke at Cornell and Holy Apostles and brought the miraculous St. Anna icon for veneration, and Monk Theodore from Holy Trinity Monastery. We have an upcoming series of talks planned by Drs. David and Mary Ford: Dr. Mary will speak at Cornell about the Book of Revelation, and Dr. David will speak at Holy Apostles about Orthodox Christian marriage.

Finances and Physical Plant

2019 is the first full year that Holy Apostles has been without financial support from the Diocese. (This financial support ended after June 2018.) By the grace of God and the loving stewardship of our parishioners, we have been able to maintain financial stability. As of our last parish council meeting, account balances were as follows:

- Checking: \$22,330.11

- Savings: \$53,252.42
- Building Fund: \$38,258.51

We continue to offer 5% of our monthly income to a charitable cause, selected each month by the parish council. These can be needs in the local or parish community, national/international disaster relief, or Diocesan needs such as St. Andrew's Camp.

We continue to meet in our building rented from All Saints Roman Catholic Church. This year we faced a challenge in negotiating a new lease with All Saints, who initially asked us for a higher rate of rent than was feasible for our current budget. Thanks to the help of our Dean, Fr. Alexey Karlgut, we have negotiated a lease in which our rent is raised to \$750/month (with a small annual increase) and we take responsibility for several building repairs. This lease is for 4 years, with 3 1-year options to renew, giving us a timeline for when we hope to be able to move into our own space. We have identified an area in which we want to look for land, and just recently begun working with a realtor to find a suitable location.

We recently received icons for our two deacons' doors; the only remaining icon for the iconostasis is the Mystical Supper above the Royal Doors. The iconostasis is designed to be movable, so it is not only a beautification of our current space, but a preparation for establishing the new one.

Conclusion

While there remains much work to be done, Holy Apostles Mission is moving with renewed purpose toward becoming a fully established parish, and constantly seeking more perfectly to be a beacon of Orthodoxy in the Ithaca area, which so desperately needs the light of Christ. We thank our beloved Archpastor, our Dean, and the whole Diocese for their support so far, and ask all for continued prayers as we face the new challenges that lie ahead.

In Christ,

Fr. Joel Brady
On behalf of Holy Apostles Mission