



Diocese of the Midwest “Mission School” An Introduction



Fr. Joel Weir


- RECTOR AT ST. STEPHEN THE FIRST MARTYR CHURCH (OCA) IN CRAWFORDSVILLE, INDIANA (5 YEARS)
- GRADUATE OF ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY (2010)
- ATTENDED 2015 OCA MISSION SCHOOL (INAUGURAL YEAR)
- CURRENTLY SERVES ON THE DIOCESE OF MIDWEST MISSION COMMITTEE

Goals and Purpose of DOM Mission School

- ▶ Goal of DOM “Mission School”: To connect Midwest Diocese mission parishes to resources and strategies for healthy parish life as presented at the annual OCA Mission School.
- ▶ Goal of Pilot Session: To provide an introductory, instructional, and interactive “first experience” of the Mission School.
- ▶ Pilot Session: 30-40 minute “class” experience on the topic of establishing and maintaining healthy missions by keeping the scriptural and apostolic foundation and mandate central to the core of each mission.
- ▶ Conclude with an overview and discussion of ‘what’s next’ with the DOM Mission School, what resources are and will soon become available for missions.

There is no “Silver Bullet”

- ▶ Each Mission is Unique
 - ▶ Rural Iowa is different than Urban Detroit
 - ▶ Demographics
 - ▶ No “one size fits all”
- ▶ Foundational Principles of Mission are Applicable Anywhere
 - ▶ “Rock and Sand”
 - ▶ Begin with right focus. Renew that focus regularly
 - ▶ Clear and frequent communication – the best insurance policy



“An Orthodox parish has only one God-given reason for being. It exists to be the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. Whatever the original reasons and conditions for its founding, whatever other services and activities it may provide, whatever other desires and needs it may fulfill for its members, a community of Orthodox Christians must be Christ’s one holy Church. If it is not, then it is neither Christian nor Orthodox, whatever else it may be and do.”

- Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Big Questions:

- ▶ What are the foundational blocks for establishing a mission parish on 'solid ground'?
- ▶ What should a parish prioritize in order to sustain missional ethos and practice long term? What should be avoided?
- ▶ What can the diocese offer to help mission parishes establish and sustain missional ethos and practice?

Apostolic/Koinonic Foundation

- ▶ Founded, rooted, educated in the Faith of the Apostles
- ▶ Active and Sent to share the Gospel outside of its walls
- ▶ Without both of these being present, a parish becomes either:
 - ▶ Inward looking/'preservation minded'
 - ▶ "Programs" with no Anchor
- ▶ The safeguard: Apostolic/Koinonic Foundation

Two Questions:

- ▶ What is the importance of being rooted in the Faith of the Apostles, especially as it translates to how we live and speak to those we encounter in the world?
- ▶ What are ways we can better be equipped to realize this “rooting”?

Examples of Apostolic Teaching/Life from Scriptures


- ▶ Mat. 16:18 “I will build my Church”
- ▶ Mat 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18 “Great Commission”
- ▶ Acts 2 Pentecost “They each heard in their own language”
- ▶ Acts 2:37-47 “What shall we do?”
- ▶ Acts 5:42 “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease, teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ”

What is Apostolic Foundation?

- ▶ Imitation of Christ
- ▶ Baptize, Heal, Preach
- ▶ Prayer, Worship, Sacrament
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Hospitality
- ▶ Variety of gifts, one calling (I Cor. 12:28)
- ▶ Spoke the language
- ▶ Judea, Samaria, Gentiles

“KOINONIC” Evangelism

- ▶ Cultivation of love and service
- ▶ Existential (felt) needs
- ▶ Anchored in Liturgy
- ▶ Goal: Integration into Eucharistic Community
- ▶ Acts 2:42-47



“If we don't do this we have
at best a cultural club, at
worst a cult” – Fr. Eric Tosi

What's Next?

- ▶ Depending on the needs of Missions/Parishes in the Diocese the Mission Committee hopes to offer the following in the future
 - ▶ More Webinars/Discussions
 - ▶ Gifts/Strengths/Weaknesses
 - ▶ What is the context of our parish?
 - ▶ What does the Good News look like in your local community?
 - ▶ What would it look like for us to be a vibrant community that attracts people to “come and see”?

What's Next?

- ▶ On-site Workshops
 - ▶ Survey
 - ▶ Assessment and Custom Workshop Plan
 - ▶ One Day workshop
- ▶ Peer Groups
 - ▶ Discussion forums
 - ▶ Resource sharing



Questions?