

Chancellor's Report: October, 2021
Archpriest Paul M Jannakos

This past February I accepted the invitation from His Eminence, Archbishop PAUL to become the new chancellor of the Diocese, following in the footsteps of the Archpriest John Zdinak whose long and faithful ministry produced much good fruit. I am humbled by this new position in the life of the Church and am grateful to both the Archbishop and Fr. Zdinak for their continued support as "I learn the ropes."

Besides the usual work of the chancellor in assisting the Archbishop in his oversight of the diocese and the work of the diocesan deans, we have begun the task of implementing the two strategic plan initiatives identified by the Diocesan Council at their yearly retreat last January. These initiatives touch on the interrelated aspects of the life of the clergy and laity in our parishes.

The clergy initiative is to focus on the need for ongoing *priestly formation and development*. For on the one hand, while it is clear that the Orthodox Church in America has several very fine graduate level seminaries to prepare and educate young men and women for service in the Church as priests, it is not as clear how well our Church has done in its overall expectation of how parish priests should continue being educated and trained as pastors. A mandate of the 16th All-American Council that took place in Seattle at the end of October 2011 was unanimously passed requiring all clergy in the OCA to participate in the many classes, forums, retreats on pastoral life that are available by our seminaries, dioceses etc. Since then, there has also been the establishment of the very fine "Thriving in Ministry" (TIM) small group program for pastors and their wives led by Fr. Nicholas Solak. This program focuses more or less on the shaping of a *pastoral identity* from personal perspectives and experiences.

Yet in its assessment of the things that are most needful at the January 2021 retreat, our Diocesan Council decided that more attention should be given by the diocese to assist its clergy in ongoing learning and growth in a wide-range of *pastoral skills* such as teaching, preaching, leadership development, communications (both online and offline), administrative skills, the pastoral guidance of the faithful in confession (and in the office), conflict management and resolution, just to name a few. In addition to this, it is hoped that a *two-way pastoral mentoring* project will be created so that young priests might have the opportunity to learn from experienced priests and vice-versa, so that older priests who may be feeling "stuck" in their parish ministry might be given new and creative ideas from their younger peers. As such, a team of clergy has volunteered and is now working on the best way to author a means and method that will integrate both the academic and practical dimensions of this initiative.

The second initiative is for the laity of the diocese to become more *fully engaged* within the life of the Church by using their gifts and talents to strengthen and reinvigorate their local parishes. For while it is commonly known and accepted that one of the biggest indicators of parish health is the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual health of its priest, ("So goes the priest, so goes the parish"), the Orthodox Church in America has placed an emphasis also on the need to recover a more proper understanding of the role of the laity in the Church's life. Even though the "higher ministries" will always be given their proper attention and honor, the many other ministries of the Church that belong uniquely to the laity should not and cannot be ignored. "*And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some*

pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11).

To this end, a team of persons from the diocese has been diligently working on a plan to offer each of our parishes a platform through which a more robust challenge can be directed to our laity to become more thoroughly engaged with the life of the parish. Once again, the point of emphasis here is not to force upon ourselves just one more “religious program” that is extrinsic to the sacred ethos of Orthodoxy, but to affect the opposite, that is, to see how the Church’s worship and sacraments *necessitate* intentional lay engagement in ministry. So, using a working model from Bill Marianes and the “Stewardship Calling” ministry, (www.stewardshipcalling.com), the lay initiative team has set as their goal “*to develop and implement an effective laity engagement platform in at least 17 parishes within 24 months.*” This project includes a set of designated lead measures that will be assessed before and after implementation to help ensure the longevity of the work. The lead measures chosen so far are the following:

1. Liturgy & Sacraments - “First things first: Attendance - Sundays & Feast-days, etc.”
2. Stewardship – “Money matters...”
3. Ministry - “Participation in the work of the Church/Christ”
4. Fellowship - “The parish as a spiritual/surrogate family, support, etc.”
5. Personal Growth - “Growth in faith & knowledge, employment of talents.”
6. Parish Vision - “Parish members know and “buy-in” to its vision.”

To date, many hours of work by this laity engagement team have been committed to the formulation of this initiative so that it might, in the end, address the genuine needs of our parishes and find creative solutions to assist in fulfilling these needs. This is no small task in that our diocesan makeup is extremely diverse: some parishes are urban, some suburban, some rural (or even semi-rural), some are older, some younger, some larger, some smaller, some stable, some unstable, some are flourishing, some are maintaining what they have, some are dying.

Despite these challenges, let us pray that both initiatives be blessed by God so that our diocese may truly continue to thrive and grow. -

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