

Chancellor's Report -2023

Since our last diocesan assembly held in Baltimore 15 months ago, the Diocese of the Midwest has undergone many positive changes. The first of which was the Enthronement in October of 2022 of our new diocesan Hierarch, His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel. I am grateful especially to Fr. Alexander Koranda and the Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral for all they did to make this a truly beautiful occasion. We are grateful to God that Archbishop Daniel has settled into his new home here in Chicago and has "hit the ground running" in his archpastoral ministry.

Under the direction and guidance of Vladika Daniel the diocesan headquarters and offices have been relocated from the residence at (the former) Holy Archangel Michael property to the 2nd floor of the hall and administration building at St. George Russian Orthodox Cathedral on Wood Street in the Ukrainian Village (Chicago). His Eminence's residence and the diocesan offices at St. George Cathedral have been a boost for the community, and His Eminence is especially happy to be living on site next to a parish with a full set of liturgical services. Even so, the moving of the diocesan headquarters to Chicago was a complex and time-consuming project. Space had to be renovated at St. George for the uses of the diocesan offices and episcopal residence. In addition to this, a place had to be procured at St. George Cathedral for the safe storage of the diocesan archives. I am especially thankful to our Vice-Chancellor, the Archpriest Esteban Vasquez, Father John Segvich, Reader Philip Sokolov, and to Mr. Rob Koncel for their assistance in this project. Father John Segvich

Connected to this was the sale of the property from the former parish of Archangel Michael in Burbank, Illinois. This, too, was a lengthy and arduous project. Damage to the Church from leaking water needed to be repaired, and the Church and its many sacred articles, icons, stands, candle-stands, vestments, altar boy robes, tabernacle, the holy altar, etc., needed to be packed up and moved. After being on the market for only a couple of months the diocese received a very good offer, and the property and buildings were sold for 1.2 million dollars. His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel, the Diocesan Council, and the Finance Committee are currently praying and planning on how to best direct these funds towards good educational and charitable diocesan purposes. (More than this will be communicated to the diocese as we move forward).

Vladika Daniel, this past year, has also asked me to review the good work that began under both + Archbishop Job, of blessed memory, and + Archbishop Paul, of blessed memory, on the diocesan strategic plan. Previous work on diocesan laity engagement and the furthering of continuing education for our diocesan clergy will be reviewed. An updated strategic plan will be created in 2024 that better reflects Vladika Daniel's vision for the diocese. Such a strategic plan is necessary to ensure that the short-term goals of the diocese are "in line" with the diocese's long term hopes for continued growth and vitality.

Included in this strategic plan has been the exploration of the need to establish our own diocesan pastoral school. As we all know, we have been blessed by God to have a diocese which has had exceptional episcopal leadership, past and present. As a result of this, and the faithful work of all the clergy and members of the diocese, we have slowly grown to be the largest of

the territorial dioceses in the Orthodox Church in America. And this presents us with the challenge of clergy vocations. While there have been many to heed the call of our Lord to the priestly ministry, many of these are “second career” seminary candidates with spouses and children. Thus, it has become increasingly more and more difficult for them to uproot their families for 3 years and move them either to New York or Eastern Pennsylvania (and to find housing and schools for their children). We lose many possible candidates for the priesthood because of this difficulty.

In response to this, Vladika Daniel has given the blessing for the formation of an ad-hoc exploratory committee to start planning for this local diocesan pastoral school that would include teachers from among our diocesan clergy who have Doctorate degrees. The pastoral school would operate with hybrid onsite and virtual classes. It would offer M. Div. degree by aligning itself (initially) with an existing graduate level theological institution in the Chicago area (possibly St Mary’s – Mundelein). I am happy to report that this committee for the planning of a new pastoral school has already met twice, and plans are on the way for the school to be incorporated as a formal 501c 3 non-profit corporation. We ask for your prayers and support as we move forward with this much needed project.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the work of the chancellor regarding clergy and parishes experiencing conflict or other local crises. By far, the majority of my time as chancellor is spent meeting with and listening to people in the diocese expressing difficulties in parish life. As such I aim to find new ways of working with the faithful and our clergy to find healthy resolutions to these problems. Conflict in parish life is inevitable. But such conflict need not be something detrimental (though it often is). It seems to me that St. Luke the Evangelist was quite intentional in his portrayal of the apostles having serious disagreements in the Book of Acts. Yet through patience, and conciliar love, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, they were able to successfully resolve their differences (E.g., Acts 15:1ff). From this it is important to see how every event in parish life that leads to conflict should be seen as both a challenge and an opportunity, given by God, for all of us to learn and grow.

Finally, I am thankful, especially, to His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel for his support in my work and for his tireless work in our diocese.

Asking for your prayers,

Archpriest Paul Jannakos
Chancellor, Diocese of the Midwest, Orthodox Church in America.