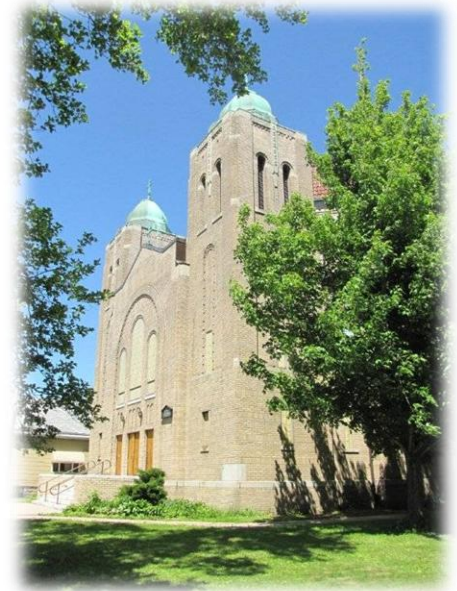


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OPERATION BUFFALO: “Mission Accomplished!”

When **OPERATION BUFFALO** was launched on August 1st the marching orders and objectives were clear. Thus began this unprecedented diocesan-wide project to revitalize Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Buffalo NY. The first step ~ “the mission at hand” ~ was to prepare the parish rectory and Church for the assignment of a full-time priest. It was to be a labor of collaboration and love, bringing together the talents and efforts of the local parishioners and a literal platoon of 35+ volunteers from throughout the diocese. All three diocesan deaneries (New York State, New Jersey, New York City) were represented in the volunteer force. As for those who participated, the experience was called “*inspiring,*” “*wonderful,*” “*an incredible expression of unity,*” and “*a joyful fellowship.*”



Many Christian churches in many cities are being closed at an alarming rate. Of course, there are reasons for this; but in the vision of Bishop Michael, there are also many reasons to care for a parish community in difficult times, and to face the future with a commitment to rebirth and revitalization. At the beginning of this endeavor, His Grace said: “*Because of declining membership, an aged population and limited funds over the past few years, much of the parish complex has fallen into disrepair. This diocesan-wide appeal for willing and able workers to help restore whatever they can will go a long way in ensuring the future of the community.*” Indeed, one man’s “declining parish” is another man’s “mission parish with resources”; it is a matter of perspective, vision, and commitment.

The diocese provided coordination and much-needed funding. Initial financial assistance from the diocese was \$10,000 from the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors [DDB] Fund. Additional “designated contributions” will be available as time goes on, as well as material and spiritual assistance from a variety of sources. In speaking about the DDB, the diocesan treasurer (Matushka Mary Buletza Breton) said: “*The DDB program was accepted at the 2010 Diocesan Assembly and funded with an initial endowment of \$30,000 by His Grace, Bishop Michael. Since this inaugural donation ten months ago, additional donations to the DDB program have just reached \$70,000. These funds are being used for several targeted initiatives, including Parish Revitalization. Saints Peter and Paul Church, recently the focus of “Operation Buffalo,” is the first recipient of a Parish Revitalization Grant. We pray that the faithful and friends of our Diocese will continue to donate to the DDB on an annual basis to replenish the funds being spent so that we can begin additional projects within the targeted initiative categories.*” To learn more about the DDB and the initiatives supported, please visit the webpage at:

nynjoca.org/vfof.html

While hours of physical labor and effort brought forth a material transformation of the parish house and Church, the spiritual life of the parish was being nurtured by its newly assigned priest and rector, Father Volodymyr Zablotsky. From the very beginning, Father Vlad was on-hand, on-site, and on-fire with encouragement as he rolled up his sleeves and labored side-by-side with parishioners and volunteers. Frequent and inspiring visits to the work-site by Bishop Michael added to the spirit of mutual effort among brothers and sisters in Christ working toward the building up of His Body -- the Church.



In the beautifully remodeled parish home, Father Vlad has now been reunited with his beloved Matushka, Jeanne. Together they begin an exciting life of ministry in Buffalo NY. Commenting on this revitalization of a parish that was established 107 years ago, parish council president Marty Napierski said: "This was a fantastic jump-start to our parish! Father Vlad draws people to him like no one I have ever seen ... this young priest ... has completely changed the attitude in our church. He's young, smart, and strong. He has brought us joy and hope. Working alongside him has had a profound effect ... his enthusiasm and ingenuity are contagious, and slowly people are coming back home. All I can say to Bishop Michael is, 'you have revived Saints Peter and Paul parish. Thank you!'"

"Since the very first day of Operation Buffalo," said Father Vlad, "the parish family of Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church has realized many blessings. While the renovation of the parish house is only the first step in much needed repair maintenance work in the entire parish complex including the church and the parish hall, the amazing out-pouring of love from Orthodox faithful from across our diocese provided the necessary boost the parish needed to go forward. The dedication and love of the parishioners of Saints Peter and Paul as well as all the volunteers, some of whom traveled great distances, manifests the great spirit of Christian fellowship that exists in our diocese. It also proves that sometimes seemingly impossible things can be accomplished with God's help!"

The hard work of all the volunteers made it possible for Father Vlad and Matushka Jeanne to move into the renovated parish home on August 26th. "Everywhere I look around -- be it the grounds around our Church, the parish hall, or in every room in our house -- I see the faces of people who took time during one of the most vacationed months of the year and came to Buffalo to share their love for our Church." Father Vlad continued, "The words from the Divine Liturgy in which we pray for 'the benefactors of this holy place' acquired a new meaning for me personally and I am sure for our entire parish as well. The transformation is amazing! Jeanne and I feel very thankful to the Lord for blessing our lives with so many wonderful people -- beginning with His Grace, Bishop Michael, everyone who worked here, and our parishioners." Matushka Jeanne added, "We will remember all of them in our prayers as long as we live here, and beyond."

Shortly after his arrival, Father Volodymyr attended a meeting of the Council of Orthodox Churches in Buffalo. During the meeting, he had an opportunity to meet with other Orthodox clergy. "As Orthodox Christians we must cooperate with each other, and the Council of Orthodox Churches in Buffalo offers a great opportunity to do so," said Father Vlad. During the meeting, on behalf of Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, he



May God grant them, and their faithful parishioners, “Many Years!”

V. Rev. Ken James Stavrevsky
Director of Communications