Office of Communications

Orthodox Church in America Diocese of New York and New Jersey

RELEASE NUMBER 2012.25.1





Holy Resurrection Church in Wayne NJ was the site of this year's Clergy Conference held on 21-22 August. The conference theme was *marriage counseling*, with a focus on "FOCCUS" (a valuable resource for pastoral pre-marriage preparation). Through the inspiration and with the blessing of Bishop Michael, the conference welcomed 28 diocesan priests as participants. Thanks to the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors [DDB] Program, funding for this event ~ "support for our existing" parishes" ~ was available and certainly well-allocated. Complete information and an invitation to join the ever-growing list of DDBs are available on the diocesan website (nynjoca.org) in the "Vision for Our Future" section.

The conference facilitator/trainer was Maggie Hock. She is the North American Director of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America Department of Marriage & Parish Family Ministries. Khouriya Maggie is a fully licensed and credentialed Psychotherapist and Mediator (LMHP, CPC, LPC), specializing in crisis and trauma, individual, marital, parenting, group therapy and corporate dynamics. Her degrees include: B.A. in Organizational Management; M.A. in Management; M.S. in Counseling with a Superior Scholar designation at Creighton University. She is currently completing a Psy D. Maggie resides in Omaha NE along with her husband, Father Donald (Nectarios) Hock, who has served as pastor of Saint Mary Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church since 1992.



Clergy participants in the intensive 2-day conference training will receive certification to facilitate the FOCCUS© pre-marriage preparation program. The FOCCUS© Pre-Marriage Inventory is not a test and is not used to predict marital success or failure. Rather, it is a tool used to help couples identify, discuss and work through important relationship issues before they get married. Although the FOCCUS© Pre-Marriage Inventory is used by many educators and counselors, it is not primarily a

teaching or counseling tool. Rather, it is a discussion instrument designed to optimize the marriage preparation process. By providing comprehensive content and tailoring discussion to important topics that best serve an individual couple, the FOCCUS© Pre-Marriage Inventory is an excellent choice for those preparing couples for marriage. The fact that, in collaboration with the developers of the FOCCUS© Pre-Marriage Inventory, Khouriya Maggie developed and wrote elements of an Orthodox specific version of the inventory is especially noteworthy.

How The FOCCUS© Pre-Marriage Inventory Works:

A 5 Step Process Worth Taking!



STEP 2

STEP 3 FOCCUS Inventory STEP 4

Bishop Michael emphasized the fundamental importance of providing sound doctrinal teaching as well as practical pastoral counsel to our youth, our soon-to-be-married couples, and our married couples as they face the challenges of living a sanctified relationship in the midst of the cares, troubles, and temptations of a culture in which essential Christian perspectives are challenged and often rejected.

"No matter what the prevailing pressure of the culture or the legislation of the state may proclaim, the timeless teaching of the Church echoes the rule of marriage revealed to us by the Lord, written in the Scripture, and re-affirmed by the wisdom and examples of the Saints ... Because "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), no matter what the government or society may say, like Saint Peter and the Apostles, "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). We need not be afraid to stand in opposition to prevailing trends, as the earliest followers of Our Lord stood bravely and boldly, upholding the ideal of Christian marriage in the non-Christian empire of their time. Having said this, we must never forget the Lord's greatest commandment of love, which includes, after loving God above all else, the imperative, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). This means we must never condemn anyone, but reach out to everyone with the living, healing, saving love of God in Christ Jesus. It means to walk in truth toward

all, to do what is right for all, and to affirm what is good and holy on behalf of all. Let us bear witness to the truth taught by Our Lord, and lived by His Saints, in our daily conversations with our families, our fellow Christians, our neighbors and co-workers. Let us teach the Orthodox Christian vision of marriage, as a path to salvation shared by husband and wife, to our children, godchildren, and all those who come under our care as parents, godparents, pastors, and Christian educators." ~ His Grace, Bishop Michael

On behalf of the conference participants, Bishop Michael sincerely thanked Khouriya Maggie for her outstanding efforts in providing meaningful and practical guidance, and hands-on tools, to our diocesan clergy as they seek to offer sound pastoral teaching and counseling to those preparing for the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The gratitude was confirmed in the resounding applause by the clergy, and the heartfelt singing of "Many Years!" for Maggie Hock.