

Diocesan Report
Department of College Ministry
Witnessing Orthodox Christianity in College

November 12, 2013

Your Grace, Bishop +MICHAEL, Very Reverend & Reverend Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

In June, 2012 Bishop +MICHAEL created our diocesan Department of College Ministry. The goal of this Department is:

“...to encourage the college students of our diocese and those transferred to colleges near our parishes to fully participate in the life of the Church—through worship, witness, service, and fellowship while they are in college. This department will also help train leaders, organize events, provide consultation in campus ministry for pastors and lay leaders across the diocese, maintain OCF-related data and a cache of ministry resources, and oversee future programs for our diocesan college students.”

This department works closely with the National Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) office.

Personnel

The department currently consists of the Fr. John Diamantis, chairman and Mr. Gregory Fedorchak, webmaster.

Student Ambassadors

A request was made to the diocese on September 18th to identify *Student Ambassadors* from throughout New York and New Jersey. Student Ambassadors help to plan, organize, and promote events for other Orthodox Christian students throughout the states of New York and New Jersey in whole or in part. Student Ambassadors are instrumental in, and passionate about, the work of college campus ministry.

To date no names for Student Ambassadors have been submitted to the department.

Student Intern

Subsequent to this report's preparation the department hopes to identify a student intern whose responsibility it will be to assist with the development and management of the department website and social media pages. The department hopes this will be a paid internship, upon receiving funding approval by the diocese.

Updates Diocesan/National

Clergy have been sent updates and notices of various sorts on many occasions. Among them were included a protocol letter detailing the procedure for interested parties to become engaged in OCF work, notices about events happening at the national level including College Conference, Real Break, First 40 Days Program, and Orthodox College Student Sunday.

The department website (www.occm.nynjoca.org) is being developed. In addition, look soon for an OCF Facebook page, the purpose of which will be to incorporate and advertise events for all of the OCF chapters throughout the diocese. Many thanks are extended to Fr. Ken Stavrevsky for his diligent efforts in updating the website and offering clear and timely communication to reflect this department's goals and activities.

First 40 Days

Two OCA parishes in the diocese (St. Basil's Orthodox Church; Watervliet, NY and Saints Peter and Paul; South River, NJ) reported their names for the National OCF's "First 40 Days" program. This initiative attempts to collect and distribute information for incoming freshmen students in an effort to introduce them to their local OCF chapter and parish before they set foot on campus. Student information was shared with local OCF chaplains.

Chapters

The Department has been busy compiling information for chapters that exist and sorting through the information to determine the health of each chapter. In our diocese are 269 college campuses with at least 1,000 students. The National OCF office lists 28 existing chapters of various health/involvement for our diocese. Due to an absence of contact information, outdated information, or simple failure to respond to this department's inquiries it is impossible to determine with absolute certainty the degree to which chapters are active and healthy. I estimate the following 16 to meet with some regularity and/or with a consistent clergy presence.

Below are summaries of the chapters in the diocese listed with the National OCF office known or believed to be presently active in some capacity.

New Jersey

Princeton University

Fr. Daniel Skvir is the assigned chaplain. The Princeton University OCF meets weekly. This chapter is active and chartered with the National OCF. They have an established student leadership.

Rutgers University

This chapter is active and chartered with the National OCF. They meet weekly. Fr. David Garretson is the assigned chaplain. They have an established student leadership.

New York (City)

Barnard College

There is a Coptic OCF already formed. It had been led by Fr. John Rizkalla (Coptic) with the endorsement of the university. Dn. Nicholas Garklavs has been assisting and assumed the chaplaincy position for this chapter in 2013. This chapter has traditionally been combined with the chapter at Columbia University.

Brooklyn College

This is reportedly a Coptic chapter with clergy of the same. Fr. Gerasimos Makris (GOA) has offered to be involved with meetings as an additional resource. The group meets Tuesdays from 12:30-2pm.

Columbia University

There is a Coptic OCF already formed. It had been led by Fr. John Rizkalla (Coptic) with the endorsement of the university. Dn. Nicholas Garklavs has been assisting and assumed the chaplaincy position for this chapter in 2013. This chapter has traditionally been combined with the chapter at Barnard College.

Fordham University

Fr. Elias Villis (GOA) is the assigned chaplain. Awaiting reply for more information.

LIU Brooklyn

This chapter no longer exists. The former chaplain was Fr. Gerasimos Makris (GOA).

New York University (NYU)

This is an emerging chapter with Dn. David Chow (OCA) projected to assist. The former chaplain, Fr. Nathanael Symonides, has removed himself from involvement. The chapter has active student leadership.

St. John's University

There is an active Coptic-led group already established on this campus led by Fr. Michael Sorial (Coptic). Fr. Nathan Preston (Albanian) has offered his assistance to this chapter.

New York (Long Island)

LIU Post (Formerly C.W. Post)

The assigned chaplains of LIU Post are Fr. John Bartholomew (OCA) and Fr. John Vlahos (GOA). Both clergy will be available for religious forums, pastoral needs etc. and will try again in 2013 to develop the group.

New York Institute of Technology (NYIT)

There is a large and very active Coptic/Indian group of approximately 40 students. I have not yet heard of involvement from clergy. A second group of canonical Orthodox students may also exist, but has not yet been verified. The chapter has active student leadership.

Stonybrook University

This is a collection of Coptic students with whom Fr. John Klingel has been meeting since October 2012. With Fr. John's presence and the cooperation of the current group we hope to integrate our own canonical Orthodox students. This chapter meets bi-weekly.

New York (Upstate)

Cornell University

This chapter meets weekly. The chaplains are Fr. Thomas Parthenakis (GOA) and Fr. James Worthington (OCA). They have student leadership. The chapter is active and chartered with the National OCF.

Marist College

The student leader is Eleni Waskiewicz. The group meets bi-weekly or monthly on campus, with no Orthodox Chaplain. There is no consistent clergy presence. The group mainly meets for purely social activities or to visit a local Greek parish together.

Syracuse University

This chapter has 10—15 students and meets monthly for pizza and discussion. The chaplain is Fr. David Smith (GOA).

University of Rochester

This group meets regularly with about 15 students. The chaplain is Fr. Patrick Cowles (GOA).

Clarkson/SUNY-Potsdam

This is an emerging chapter. The contact is Dr. Jessica Suchy-Pulalis. No chaplain is assigned, no student leaders have been chosen yet.

Prospective Chapters

Efforts are being made to establish chapters at three New Jersey colleges/universities: Ramapo College, Seton Hall University, and Rider University. The projected chaplains for these will be Fr. Steven Kaznica (MP), Fr. Thaddeus Franta (OCA), Fr. John Diamantis (OCA), respectively.

Diocesan Programs

College Ministry Workshops

In November 2012 the OCA national department of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry invited our diocesan department to join it and Jennifer Nahas, Executive Director of the National OCF, to offer a joint presentation/training at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

Three attempts were made to hold "The Fields Are White for Harvest: Welcome to College Ministry" workshops for prospective clergy, student and lay leaders of OCF chapters in 2012/13. The workshop's themes are "The Effects of Campus Ministry on College Students," "The Effects of College Ministry on Parishes," "Challenges and Opportunities in College Ministry," and "How to Start an OCF."

One workshop never found its footing upstate with a host location and was cancelled before it began. In May, 2013 another workshop was scheduled to be held at Protection of the Holy Virgin Cathedral in New York City. This was cancelled as a result of zero registrants.

On June 8, 2013 was held the only workshop with registrants on the campus of Princeton University. Fifteen clergy, students, and laity attended. The workshops received an average feedback score of 8 of 10.

Student Conferences

Modeled after the National OCF's annual "College Conference" for which several hundred college students from around the country annually convene between December 25th and the New Year, the DOCM created "Love 2 Serve."

Love 2 Serve was a gathering for college students of all jurisdictions throughout New York and New Jersey to gather in fellowship and be made aware of opportunities to serve; locally, nationally and abroad. It was scheduled July 12—14 at St. Basil's Academy in Garrison, NY. The event was cancelled due to having zero registrants by the deadline.

Alumni

Plans are underway to create and develop an active OCF alumni department. The alumni department will help to support (financially, spiritually, and socially) the work done at the local chapters from which they graduated. There are a variety of programs that are envisioned to facilitate this.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Fr. John Diamantis
Chairman,
Department of College Ministry