

Diocesan Report 2013/14

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Your Grace, Bishop MICHAEL, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Department of College Ministry would like to thank His Grace, Bishop MICHAEL and the diocese at large for the support shown surrounding the ministry this year, through your sharing of information, funding and most especially, your prayers. There have been some noteworthy milestones reached and yet a great opportunity still awaits the clergy and faithful of this diocese as there is much work to be done.

Introduction

To be an officially recognized chapter, the National OCF requires a constitution with by-laws, a list of student officers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary), a layperson and hierarchically endorsed clergyman. To my knowledge, the only chapters in the diocese that meet these requirements at this time are Princeton University, Cornell University, Fordham University, Hunter College CUNY, and Columbia University. It is expected that Rider University will meet this requirement in 2014/15.

This does not preclude the students from gathering and doing Christ-like activities on campus or with one another, but it does indicate that there is a dire need for clergy from across New York and New Jersey to take the initiative in being involved with college students.

An OCF chapter has been started at Montclair State University working with Fr. Matthew Brown.

The current list of active chapters includes Barnard College/Columbia University, Stonybrook University, New York Institute of Technology (Long Island Campus), Brooklyn CUNY, St. John's University, New York University, Hunter College (CUNY), Fordham University, Montclair State University, Kean University, Middlesex County College, Princeton University, Rider University, Marist College, Cornell University, Syracuse University, Manhattanville College, and a conglomerate including Rochester University, St. John Fisher College, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Monroe County Community College, totaling 18 chapters.

Of those 17 chapters there is a great spectrum regarding who is involved, the frequency of meetings, and whether or not a chaplain is assigned and an active presence. There are some 211 campuses in New York and New Jersey with 1,000 or more students (excluding rabbinical schools, etc.), leaving ample room for growth of chapters and not only protecting our own students, but reaching those of non-Orthodox Christian backgrounds.

Chaplains

I want to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation for all of the clergyman who have either ventured into this ministry or who continue to undertake the extra responsibility and show the extra care for Orthodox Christian college students, whether from this diocese or transplants from other parts of the country. The active participation of priests and deacons in this ministry is indispensable for connecting our students to the Church. For your prayers, time and all of your efforts, thank you!

Student Ambassadors

Special thanks must be extended to Ms. Janine Alpaugh, the diocese's lone *Student Ambassador*. Janine's presence and dedication have been felt throughout the diocese with a number of activities, including the aforementioned New York City gathering, as well as many upcoming endeavors. Janine's tireless

networking with other college students around the diocese has made an appreciable impact. It is regrettable only that she remains the lone Student Ambassador. The potential for our diocesan college ministry efforts to be exponentially more vibrant largely lies with finding other college students with the similar remarkable dedication and love for this ministry that Janine continues to exude. She does this all while attending nursing school full-time at Utica College.

It is this department's hope to have seven Student Ambassadors throughout New York and New Jersey who will function in the same capacity as Janine, by organizing and promoting events for Orthodox Christian students from several chapters to team up.

Diocesan Alumni Coordinator

This department would like to thank Ms. Rebecca Oliver, a recent alumnus of Penn State University who spent the past year in the position of Diocesan Alumni Coordinator. Rebecca brought great energy and ideas to the department but asked to be released for personal reasons in August, 2014. Her presence will be missed and, while difficult to replace, it is a necessity.

The Diocesan Alumni Coordinator will be instrumental in transitioning college students into their early (and later) alumni years, and will facilitate the continued connection between alumni and current college students and finding ways for alumni to give back to the colleges from which they graduated by supporting their local OCF chapter, thereby strengthening the efforts on campus.

A request for Student Ambassadors and a Diocesan Alumni Coordinator with detailed position descriptions was sent to the diocesan e-mail list in August, 2014. All of the positions remain open and I ask anyone with contacts for the appropriate people to encourage their participation in the applicable capacities.

Technology

Special thanks must be extended to Mr. Levan Kiknadze, a student at the City College of New York, who freely offers his time to manage the department's website and social media which at this time include Facebook and LinkedIn. The department's website can be reached through the diocesan website or by visiting www.occm.nynjoca.org. The website is an ever-growing resource for not just Orthodox Christian activities but college issues at large, such as loans and tips for exams and issues particular to college life. Parents of Orthodox Christian students who are in, or plan to attend, college ought to think of the department's website as a resource.

Facebook

The department Facebook page has over 100 followers, the vast majority of whom are college students in New York or New Jersey. This indicates that there is a sizable community of Orthodox Christian college students who have, thus far, not been ministered to in a personal way. It also suggests that there are many more college students than this who may be Orthodox Christian but identify themselves with our faith in a more loose-fitting manner, perhaps culturally. These are precisely the students that a robust OCF ministry could tap into and help to re-capture for the Lord.

Past Activities

In addition to the countless activities of individual OCF chapters, the efforts made by chaplains and students on a local level at their college/university such as weekly Bible and topical studies, social events, service projects and prayer services, the Department was involved with two multi-chapter events in the past year.

On Saturday, March 8th, 2014 an inter-OCF chapter gathering took place in New York City, spearheaded by members of the Columbia OCF and the direction of Dn. Nicholas Garklavs. Nearly two dozen students gathered from Columbia University, Fordham University, Manhattanville College, Barnard College, The Fashion Institute of Technology, Stonybrook University, New York University, and St. John's University, as well as clergy working with the various OCF Chapters, Janine Alpaugh, this department's sole Student Ambassador, and Rev. John Diamantis.

The students spent time getting to know each other, exchanged information about the types of activity they had and what clergy were involved with their chapters. It is noteworthy that while there exist many groups of college students, what might be termed "emerging OCF chapters," it is often the case that the chapters are primarily or solely comprised of Coptic students and/or are in need of a clergyman to work with the students.

On Saturday, June 21, 2014 a conference themed, *The Fields Are White For Harvest: Welcome to College Ministry* took place at Holy Apostles Mission; Lansing, NY. This conference drew very modest attendance, with only 12 people coming, most of whom were already involved at the home parish and/or with the local Cornell OCF. Like the other *Fields* conferences held in previous years, a feedback survey was distributed and it received an average score of 8/10 positive rating with many comments expressing gratitude for the positivity, hopefulness and insights into engaging in this ministry as clergy and laity. For this and the previous *Fields* conferences special thanks must be extended to Rev. Dn. Alexander Cadman, the OCA's representative on the National OCF board of directors, and Mr. Andrew Boyd, Director of the OCA's National Dept. of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries, both of whom came out to speak passionately and with depth of knowledge in this field.

While a great need exists for the information from this conference to be shared amongst all of our clergy, there is some hesitation in scheduling this or other conferences due to the extreme difficulty in getting people to register at all or in a timely fashion. To date, these conferences have been held at Holy Trinity; Yonkers, Chapel of the Transfiguration; Princeton, and Holy Apostles; Lansing.

Planned Activities

At the time this report was written the following activities have been in planning for the following months:

Picnic In The Park

Students from the greater New York City area can look forward to a *Picnic In The Park* sometime in September or October, 2014. This will likely be held somewhere in Central park. Stay tuned for details!

ONE Conference

While not organized solely by this department and not an event only for college students, the ONE conference continues to be a highlight as regards social activity for this demographic on an annual basis. Last year's ONE conference gathered nearly 1,000 youth, college students, and young adults in Jersey City for a day of fellowship, education and prayer. It is a truly inspiring event and one which I hope will be more actively shared in by our college students as time goes on. This year's ONE Conference is scheduled for November 29th.

Fall Retreat

In October/November of this year a retreat at St. Andrew's Camp will be convened for college students.

College Conference

Every year in December, the National OCF sponsors *College Conference*, a multi-day retreat at Antiochian Village which gathers students from around the country for worship, fellowship and education. The students always come back “on fire” for our Lord and will bring this energy back to our parishes and OCF chapters. It is the department’s hope that monies will be allocated for three students from the diocese to attend this year’s College Conference.

March For Life

There is extensive research indicating that the college students of today are not content with learning their faith only from books. They want and express a need to experience their faith and share it. A hope exists for college students from around New York and New Jersey to coordinate rides and participate in the March For Life (2015).

Real Break

Every year in March, the National OCF sponsors *Real Break*, a service-oriented alternative to Spring Break. It is the department’s hope that many of our own students will be encouraged to participate in this worthwhile endeavor and that our parishes will financially and spiritually support the students who choose this over the “typical” spring break activities.

Lenten Retreat

A multi-day retreat is being planned for sometime during the 2015 lenten season, to be held at St. Andrew’s Camp.

Other

As with all ministry, it is vital that new people are regularly becoming involved. This is a real area of need for college ministry which has a built-in turn-over rate as students graduate. Please continue to educate your high school students about the possibility of being involved with OCF and share the good news of what the college students in our diocese are doing!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. John Diamantis, Chairman