

# Diocesan Report

## Department of College Ministry

*Witnessing Orthodox Christianity in College*

November 10, 2015

Report Date: September 21, 2015

Your Eminence, Archbishop +MICHAEL, Very Reverend & Reverend Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Christ: *Glory to Jesus Christ!*

### **Personnel**

The department currently consists of Fr. John Diamantis, chairman, Levan Kiknadze, (Student Webmaster; volunteer), and Janine Alpaugh (Student Ambassador; Volunteer)

### *Student Ambassadors*

Student Ambassadors help to plan, organize, and promote events for other Orthodox Christian students throughout the states of New York and New Jersey. Student Ambassadors are instrumental in, and passionate about, the work of college campus ministry.

Janine Alpaugh has been serving in the role of *Student Ambassador* faithfully. She has been instrumental in helping to organize and promote events, especially in upstate NY where she attends college. She also has been using social media to effectively reach those students for whom we are in contact.

The department is hoping to recruit several *Student Ambassadors*, each to help with these activities in smaller portions within the diocese. If you have someone in mind for this role who fits the description above, please contact Fr. John.

### **Updates Diocesan/National**

Clergy have been sent updates and notices of various sorts on many occasions. Among them were 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](http://www.occm.nynjoca.org)) is fully functional and contains a variety of resources for college ministry, from student-related financial information to starting an OCF chapter. The department has an active Facebook page, the purpose of which is 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 diocesan website and offering clear and timely communication to reflect this department's goals and activities throughout the diocese the past year.

### *First 40 Days*

Information for the number of students who were included in this initiative was requested from the National OCF office. A total of 35 names from all jurisdictions were collected for students coming to attend college in New York and New Jersey in the fall of 2015.

### *Real Break*

The National OCF office reported in 2014 that 40 students who listed their home address as NY/NJ participated in a Real Break trip. In 2015, that number was only four.

## **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 OCF chapters of various health/involvement for our diocese. Due to an absence of contact information, outdated information, or simple failure to respond to inquiries from this department or the national OCF office it is impossible to determine with absolute certainty the degree to which chapters are active and healthy. The following nineteen are believed to meet with some regularity and/or with a consistent clergy presence.

Of note, some chapters (Marist, Rutgers, and LIU Brooklyn) are currently inactive, which is to say that they do not have any recognized student gatherings of any kind for Orthodox Christians. Happily there are a number of new chapters that have either begun or have been chartered in the last year. They are County College of Morris, Montclair State University, Rider University (emerging), The College of New Jersey (emerging) and Hofstra (emerging).

The sticky issue of having non-Chalcedonian “OCF” chapters and traditional OCF chapters with non-Chalcedonian students and student leaders still exists. These are prominent throughout New York and New Jersey.

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. A “chartered” chapter is one which has a spiritual advisor, defined student officers, a constitution, is registered with the National OCF office and actively meets with some regularity.

### **OCF Chapter Information**

#### **New Jersey**

##### *County College of Morris*

This chapter is emerging. Involved as potential spiritual advisors are Fr. David Fox (OCA), Fr. John Theodosion (GOA), and Fr. William (ACROD). Efforts are being led by Spyridoula Fotinis, student.

##### *Montclair State University*

The spiritual advisor is Fr. Matthew Brown (OCA). This chapter is chartered.

##### *Princeton University*

Fr. Daniel Skvir (OCA) is the spiritual advisor. The Princeton University OCF meets weekly. This chapter is chartered.

##### *Rider University*

Fr. John Diamantis (OCA) developing an OCF here. This university is coupled with Westminster Choir College.

##### *Rutgers University*

This chapter was actively meeting on a weekly basis until this year. Fr. David Garretson (OCA) is the spiritual advisor and is looking to re-boot.

##### *The College of New Jersey*

Efforts have been made at starting a chapter here, with only sporadic contacts. Fr. John Diamantis (OCA) is working to develop an OCF here.

## **New York (City)**

### *Barnard College*

This chapter has traditionally been combined with the chapter at Columbia University. Dn. Nicholas Garklavs (OCA) is the spiritual advisor. The group meets weekly and is chartered with OCF.

### *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*

This chapter has traditionally been combined with the chapter at Barnard College. Dn. Nicholas Garklavs is the spiritual advisor. The group meets weekly and is chartered with the National OCF.

### *Fordham University*

Fr. Elias Villis (GOA) is the assigned chaplain. The group meets weekly and is chartered with the National OCF.

### *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) as spiritual advisor.

### *St. John's University*

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

## **New York (Long Island)**

### *Hofstra*

This is an emerging chapter as of 2015. Fr. Luke Melackrinos (GOA) is the spiritual advisor.

### *LIU Post (Formerly C.W. Post)*

There is no active OCF at this campus at this time.

### *New York Institute of Technology (NYIT)*

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

### *Stonybrook University*

This is comprised of Coptic students. This chapter meets bi-weekly and has no formal spiritual advisor.

## **New York (Upstate)**

### *Clarkson/SUNY-Potsdam*

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

### *Cornell University*

This chapter meets weekly. The spiritual advisors 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*

This chapter is inactive as of 2014.

### *SUNY (Albany)/St. Rose/Skidmore*

Fr. Matthew Brown is the spiritual advisor. This chapter has been meeting since 2013. They are chartered, meeting once a week on Wednesdays at 6pm. The student president is Artem Timofeev.

### *Syracuse University*

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

### *University of Rochester*

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

## **Prospective Chapters**

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

## **Training**

### *Leadership Conference*

An OCF Leadership Conference was scheduled for September 11 and 12 at St. Vladimir church in Trenton, NJ. Two days before the conference was scheduled to happen, the student representatives from the National OCF pulled out. This, combined with a total of two clergy and three students who were planning to attend, forced the cancellation of this conference.

### *Wake Up Your Parish With College Ministry*

Held February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 this webinar was sponsored by the Diocese of Western PA and focused on encouraging clergy, students and laity to become involved with college ministry. It featured Joseph Kormos (organizer), Andrew Boyd (OCA's National Director of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries), Dn. Alexander Cadman (Board member of the National OCF and spiritual advisor of Penn State's OCF) and Fr. John Diamantis (District Chaplain for New York and New Jersey and author of this report).

*All American Council*

Andrew Boyd (OCA's National Director of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries) organized this workshop held on two days at this year's All-American Council. It focused specifically on campus ministry. Presenters notwithstanding, one priest and no laity from this diocese attended the workshop.

**Student Retreats/Conferences**

*ONE Conference*

Though not a product of this department, the ONE Conference continues to gather between 800 and 1,200 high school, college aged, and young adults each year. These events have been held in various locations in New Jersey for the past three years. Our youth (including college students) are always invited to these events. This conference is a collaborative effort by many non-Chalcedonian groups, led primarily by the Coptic and Indian. They actively seek participation in developing the program from the various jurisdictions represented in the Assembly of Bishops, including this department.

*Upstate NY Retreat*

This student-organized retreat has been a bright spot for college ministry in NY and NJ as this brings students from several OCF chapters together for a weekend's worth of worship, fellowship, education and service. Many thanks to our Student Ambassador, Janine Alpaugh and Gregory Fedorchak for coordinating this event again!

*I Love Therefore I Am Conference*

This is a young adult retreat (not only college students) organized by the Bulgarian and Greek archdioceses held October 2—5<sup>th</sup> in Syracuse, NY to which college students and spiritual advisors of all jurisdictions were invited.

**Conclusion**

Much good work is being done, for which the students should receive the bulk of credit. I am grateful for them and the support of those clergy who have stepped up to be engaged in this work and for the ongoing encouragement and backing of His Eminence Archbishop MICHAEL.

There remains an *enormous* potential for growth in this ministry. This potential can only begin to be realized when our clergy who are not already involved do so in a responsible way by taking the time to help with a local college campus on a regular basis and promoting OCF activities within the parishes. To that end, it is my hope that drastically increased participation in this department's trainings and other various events be emphasized as a priority in the future.

On behalf of the students we serve and the parents who entrust their beloved youth to our care, this department expresses its deepest gratitude to all who have answered the call to serve in the mission field of college ministry!

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