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2015 Diocesan Altar Servers Retreat

The 5th Annual Diocesan Altar Servers Retreat was held at Saint Basil Academy in Garrison NY from Friday, 6 February to Sunday, 8 February 2015. Over fifty participants were present for all or part of the weekend. Altar servers and clergy came from each of the three deaneries (New Jersey, New York City, New York State) as well as from the Carpatho-Russian Diocese.



His Grace, Bishop Michael, together with six priests, a deacon, a sub-deacon, and a tonsured reader led the retreat. The weekend was blessed with young men and boys who came to learn about the vestments worn by a Bishop while enhancing their skills as servers at the Lord's altar and learning about the history and theology of the Divine Liturgy. They are now prepared to better assist during the divine services in their home parishes.

Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Saturday and Sunday mornings, with evening prayers on Friday evening and Vespers on Saturday evening. All altar servers had the opportunity to actively participate by singing in the choir, reading, and serving in the altar. The choir and readers were under the direction of Luis Camacho (Choir Director, Holy Assumption Orthodox Church, Clifton NJ) who attended for the entire weekend to lead singing and reading while providing instruction on the order of the Divine Liturgy.

The weekend was filled with fun, fellowship, education, and prayer. As they arrived at Saint Basil Academy, participants were treated to a pizza dinner and free-time on the basketball court. Besides playing basketball and swimming in the pool, they also had the opportunity to watch movies or play board games.

This year's theme was *"The History and Theology of the Divine Liturgy."* A session was led by Dr. Paul Witek (Lecturer of Pastoral Practice & Praxis and Assistant to the Dean, Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary). Paul is well-known throughout the diocese for his knowledge of historical and theological aspects of divine services. He discussed and reviewed the meaning and the importance of the Divine Liturgy by evaluating and explaining its history, meaning, and theological understanding. Some participants were so inspired they remarked they may someday attend seminary to further their education and future service in the church.

Another highlight was the traditional Saturday night session: "Orthodox Jeopardy" with game-host Bishop Michael. The participants were divided into two groups and asked questions based on what they

