



Orthodox Church in America
Diocese of New York and New Jersey
Department of Youth Ministry

2021 Diocesan Assembly Report

Your Eminence, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

This report highlights what the Department of Youth Ministry has accomplished this past year, our social media presence, my involvement in cross-jurisdictional initiatives, and goals for the year ahead.

Undertakings

- **Virtual Winter Teen Retreat: December 30, 2020**
 - **46 teens from 4 different jurisdictions, 15 states, and 2 countries** joined the virtual retreat. Archbishop Michael shared with us the life of Saint Herman of Alaska in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of his canonization. Fr. Benjamin Tucci led us in a discussion on sainthood and holiness. Fr. John Dunlop took us on a virtual field trip to Kodiak, Alaska where he gave us a tour of Holy Resurrection Cathedral which houses Saint Herman's reliquary. We came back together in the evening for Little Compline served by Fr. Ben with teens chanting the prayers and concluding with singing Memory Eternal for the newly departed Archbishop David of Sitka and Alaska. The remainder of the evening was spent playing games and casually chatting with each other.
 - **7 Diocesan Parishes Represented:** Paramus (2), Saddle Brook (2), South River (1), Trenton (2), Wappingers Falls (2) (NJ Deanery); Elmira Heights (1), Ballston Lake (1) (NY State Deanery)
- **Virtual Lenten Teen Retreat: Saturday, April 17, 2021**
 - **20 teens from 3 different jurisdictions (OCA, GOA, ROCOR), 8 OCA dioceses, and 9 states** joined the virtual retreat led by Fr. Joshua Makoul of the Antiochian Archdiocese on the theme of *Finding Balance Through Self-Care and the Church*
 - **5 Diocesan Parishes Represented:** Brick (1), Paramus (2), Saddle Brook (2) (NJ Deanery); Elmira Heights (1), Ballston Lake (1) (NY State Deanery)
- **Honoring our Graduates**
 - We once again honored high school and college graduates from our diocese by featuring their accomplishments and photos in the *Spring/Summer 2021 Jacob's Well*, the official magazine of our diocese. This continues to be well-received by students, parents, and parishes. If you haven't already, learn more about our 2021 graduates [here](#); their achievements are quite impressive! May God grant them many blessed years!
- **Fall Teen Retreat: November 5-7, 2021 at Camp Shiloh in Hewitt, NJ – POSTPONED**
 - Postponed due to low registration
- **2021 Altar Servers Retreat: November 20, 2021 at Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne NJ**

- **Registration remains open.** Discussions will be on (1) Potential Ways of Serving: Altar Server, Reader, Blessed Sub-Deacon and (2) Services of Ordination to the Ranks of Clergy. Contact Fr. David Cowan for further details.

Social Media Presence

Our Department continues to have a presence on the platforms listed below; click the links if you wish to view the pages, **and follow us!**

- **Facebook:** 788 followers, up from 543 in 2020; mainly used for advertising our own diocesan sponsored events, sharing photos and write-ups from our past events, in addition to promoting and other activities. Parishes are welcome to send announcements for youth events that their parish is hosting and submit photos to be featured. Please feel free to email any of the above to me at nynjocayouth@gmail.com.
- **Instagram:** 502 followers, up from 369 in 2020; mainly used for sharing Orthodox inspirational quotes, photos from events, and greetings on Feast Days. This platform is most popular with the teens who have attended our events, and is intended to showcase live events/real-time updates from events to keep parents informed of what is happening throughout the weekend.
- **YouTube:** Our channel has gained traction this year. If you visit our page, please subscribe. You will find video montages and various recordings, including recordings from our 2 virtual retreats this past year.
- **Youth Department Website:** Since its launch in August 2016, we have had over 5,792 visitors to the site. The website has allowed us to “Go Green” and have event participants register online, which has been much more efficient and easier to keep track of attendees’ paperwork. There is a Media Gallery filled with pictures, videos, and articles from past events, in addition to a page dedicated to Upcoming Events.

Beyond Our Diocese

2021 Year of the Youth

At its annual meeting in October 2020, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America declared 2021 the Year of the Youth, with the intent of augmenting ministry to children, teens, and young adults across the country. You can find more information on the Year of the Youth Hub [website](#), and learn how to get involved for the remainder of the year.

- **Youth Witnessing to the Faith Video Series:** *Here's an activity that anyone in Grades K-12 can participate in! Consider submitting a short, 1-3-minute video clip answering one of these questions between now and January 7, 2022:*
 - What is your favorite thing about Nativity? What does "Christ is Born" mean to you?
 - Watch this [short video](#) to learn more and, if you're interested, [fill out this form](#), and I'll reach out with specific instructions. You can watch the Pascha videos on YouTube [here](#).

22nd Annual Youth & Camper Worker Conference

The **Orthodox Church in America is hosting** this [annual conference](#) at Antiochian Village Conference Center in Bolivar, PA from February 3-5, 2022. I am coordinating this event along with Fr. David Subu from the OCA's Romanian Episcopate, as we both sit on [The Orthodox Youth Directors in North America \(ONYDA\)](#). People need not be an official “youth worker” or “camp worker” to attend, so if you have an interest in ministering to our young people, I encourage you to join us... especially since our jurisdiction is the host. *Registration will be opening within the next week.* We have an excellent line-up of speakers! If you are interested in learning more about the conference, please get in touch with me via [email](#).

Goals for Remainder of 2021 and 2022

- **Diocesan Youth Participation in the OCA's 20th All-American Council's Youth Program**
 - **When:** July 18-22, 2022
 - **Where:** Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor Hotel (Baltimore, MD)
 - **Theme:** "Becoming Vessels of Grace"
 - **Ages:** All youth who have completed kindergarten up through 12th grade
 - *I ask that when parishes are determining who their parish delegate will be to please consider a parishioner who has children to attend so that our young people can take advantage of a national youth program. We had several youth from our diocese participate in the 2018 Council in Saint Louis and described the experience as "life-changing." Registration for the Youth Program will open in January. The OCA has offered scholarships in the past.*
- **Host 2 retreats** between now and November 2022, virtual or otherwise.
- **Showcase 2022 Graduates** in Spring/Summer 2022 Jacob's Well.

Closing

The last time I was with a large group of diocesan youth was at our Annual Girls' Retreat in November 2019. While our virtual events over the past two years have been successful and have allowed our young people to meet peers from across the country, nothing can compare to in-person fellowship. Over the coming weeks I will be consulting with Archbishop Michael and Fr. Martin Kraus (Youth Department Chaplain) to discuss our Department's path forward. If you have any suggestions, I would love to hear them.

Many thanks to Archbishop Michael for his continued support, guidance, and active participation not only in the planning stages of our events, but also for his **presence** at all of these events. It continues to be my joy to serve the church in this capacity, helping our young people grow in their faith through worship, witness, service, and fellowship.

Respectfully submitted,



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*"The youth are not only the future of our Church, but they are also the present."
-Archbishop Michael*