

Report of the Diocesan Spanish Language Outreach Ministry – Diocesan Assembly 2023

Glory to God In The Highest! Gloria a Dios en la Alturas !

Hello, my name is Jose Alberto Sanchez Fierro, also known as Ioannis. I am the Current Spanish Language Catechist for the OCA Diocese of New York and New Jersey, since 2017.

I am a convert who was baptized in the Greek Orthodox church in Mexico back in 2005. I was trained and certified there as a Lay Catechist. I started teaching Orthodox Catechism in the United States in 2013 at the Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Washington Heights. I taught there for 2 Years.

In April 2017 I joined the OCA Diocese of New York and New Jersey and began the Spanish Catechism program and outreach under the supervision of Father David Cowan.

For a year we did the outreach at the seniors' residence across from the Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers. I had to leave the country for a year and a half due to visa rules, but we continued to have Bible studies over video conference. We resumed our ministry in person when I returned.

When Covid started, again we had to Catechize people on Zoom or Face Time with Father Vlad Zablotzky in Yonkers. The people we have catechized who have now been Baptized or Chrismated into the Orthodox Church include Jorge (Chrismated at Holy Trinity in Yonkers and attends there), Patrick-Spyridon, Silouan-Spiridon, and Marina (Baptized and attending Sts. Peter and Paul in Syracuse New York), and Maria (Baptized and attends Holy Trinity in East Meadow, Long Island, New York).

Also, our latest Catechumen Demetrios, a teenager, was Baptized in September of this year at Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers and he is a member of the choir there.

Currently we are Catechizing the Following People: Andy, Justin and his twin Brother Jeremy, Miguel coming from Jehovah Witness, Irving, Marryanne, Carlos, and Gerson.

We have put Banners on various churches introducing the Orthodox Faith. The banners are in these Churches: Saint John the Baptist in Passaic NJ, Holy Trinity in Rahway, NJ, SS Peter and Paul in Jersey City NJ, and Saint John Chrisostome in Woodside, Queens, NY. These banners have information on our Spanish Catechism classes and people can scan the banners with their phones to be sent to our web page that is attached to the Diocesan web site and our Facebook page.

We have flyers, books and USB memory cards also with books and Orthodox Chanting in Spanish. I travel and meet the Catechumens in the area where they reside and if they are far away we do the class by zoom, We are available for Catechism until Midnight as our Catechumens work different hours of the day, and some are going to School and work.

Also I try to be with the Catechumens at different Churches on Sundays.

We are also working on a podcast with Elizabeth Porter from Rochester, "LAS PUERTAS SIEMPRE AVIERTAS" ("The Doors Are Always Open").

In the past year we have done numerous Orthodox Forums with the name FORO HISPANO. Some of the interviews are published on our YouTube channel. On this forum we had as our hosts Spanish speaking priests from different Orthodox Jurisdictions: ROCOR in Puerto Rico, Antiochian from Ohio, an OCA priest from Mexico, and a monk from the Greek Orthodox monastery in Puebla Mexico.

Before I finish I would like to thank my Catechism Team : Fr. David Cowan , Fr. John Morris, Elizabeth Porter, Kyriakos Aronis, and our Catechumen Andy; and also a special thanks to my local priest Fr. Vlad Zablotzky for his support and guidance. Our Team will speak on Day 2 of the Diocesan Assembly, Friday, Nov. 3, at 3:30 PM, to share more on the work of our ministry.

I ask for your Prayers for the success of our Catechism Ministry. With Love In Christ. Ioannis Sanchez
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