



ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

October 2nd, 2024

Your Eminence, Reverend Clergy, Lay Delegates and Observers,

I write to inform you of all the great things going on here at St Innocent Mission in Oneonta, NY. I, Father Micah Breland, have been assigned here since June 1st at the Mission. We have 2 people currently in Catechumen class and 1 person getting ready to become a catechumen this upcoming week. This does not include the over 25 visitors that we have had since I have been at the parish and just about 10 of those have been brand new faces to our mission.

Another part of this growth is from the growth in the lives of our parishioners in that as a parish we have expanded the amount of services that we are having. This is pulling many of us in the mission to learn and to grow in our faith and skillsets for the Lord. More specifically, we have added a great vespers service weekly on Saturday nights as well as weekday liturgies for each one of the 12 great feasts that have come up. Lastly, due to the rise in Spanish-speaking community in the area we are to have our first Spanish liturgy on the 12th of October. Many of them are coming from the local job corps and Spanish is their first language.

With that being said, much of our community has experienced a boom due to the local job corps and colleges and their participation. This has been very refreshing for many in the parish. Our newly formed OCF has 10 students from 4 schools involved in it. This has boosted their morale and of those in the parish that are older to see so many young people coming to Church. In addition to that we have had a regular presence from our parish in the community at a local ministry called The Lord's Table where parishioners will help another local church care

and give food to those in need and struggling with food and other resources. In that same vein we have some parishioners that are more skilled in the trades and have assisted in the local Habitat for Humanity building projects in the area. These ministries have not only blessed us but those in the community greatly.

Our Church has continued with a long-standing men's group that has been open to non-Orthodox and even non-Christians that has helped in the past couple of years bring in people to the faith or at least expose them to it. People in the greater areas that some men of our church are connected, we invite them and sit over a fire or small refreshments and talk about men's issues , challenges and triumphs with a Christian-minded topic. This group has met weekly pretty consistently for a good part of this year but has been meeting for years biweekly at other times.

We have been very blessed to keep a cordial relationship with the local Lutheran Church, and they have invited Archbishop Michael to speak for a lecture annually for 8 years now at the local college, Hartwick(formerly Lutheran School). This had a great turnout with 3 priests present, many from our local parish but many of the local greater community to hear the lecture, including a majority of Non-Orthodox people present.

We have been blessed with a retired Orthodox priest who lives in the area and attends our mission parish and has helped us greatly. He, Fr. Alcuin, being a former Episcopal Priest has furthered the relationship with the Episcopal Church who is allowing us to use their downstairs chapel free-of -charge, communicates with them often. He has given small lectures and talks at their church and has met many times with them and given them Orthodox theological nuggets over his time here. The relationship was a potential hazard with the constant changing beliefs of the Episcopal church but with our relationship and his involvement, our temporary placement at the facility seems no longer to be in jeopardy. Also, Fr. Alcuin will help lead the Spanish Liturgy as he is fluent in Spanish.

In terms of other revenue, we are moving forward quickly with the selling of the land that had proposals potentially on the land but its very build-friendly. The potential sale of both of these properties is projected to be 70k in total sales for our church. This is a very big deal because it has been a long-standing issue for our parish as to what to do. This will help us move towards supporting a full-time Priest and family.

We thank all of you in our Diocese for your prayers, as we continue to grow especially with more services, more website visibility and social media presence to get the word out. We are very thankful for your constant support financially and by your prayers. Without the Diocesan Assembly and Archbishop's support we would not be here. We pray that God continues to keep you and upholds you by his grace.

In Christ,

Fr. Micah Breland

Michah.breland@stots.edu

Stinnocentoneonta@gmail.com