

Evangelism School August 7-9, 2024
Diocese of New York and New Jersey
Orthodox Church in America

A. Outline

Thanks to the generous funding for the Evangelism School over the past two years, we have been able to work with over thirty clergy, seminarians and laypeople spread throughout ten parishes in the diocese. They have all given high reviews of the school. Lately we have been asked if we can consider modifying the School to concentrate on parish revitalization, a critically important subject throughout the Diocese. As such it is proposed that this year's School focus on that topic.

The goal is to gather experienced clergy who have been successful in working in the field of parish revitalization while still focusing on the basic principles of evangelization. Many of the principles of evangelization directly relate to parish revitalization because so many parishes have grown themselves out of a decline but also that focusing on these principles allowed for a shift in thinking in parishes.

The requirements for the School will remain the same while the focus will shift. It will be three-day school to educate clergy and lay people on the basic principles of evangelism and parish revitalization. The school would consist of classes and practical instruction from different instructors and experienced clergy. It would be held at St. Gregory the Theologian Church in Wappingers Falls, NY, due to its central location to the Diocese. A group of one clergy and one layperson from a maximum of five parishes would attend each session. The parishes would be selected by His Eminence Archbishop Michael in consultation with the deans. The list of instructors will be approved by His Eminence upon his recommendations and that of the CME.

B. Details

- 1. Time:** The proposed date for the school is to begin Wednesday, August 7 and end on Friday August 9. The participants are expected to arrive on Tuesday, August 6 in the evening and depart Friday late afternoon. This will also coincide with the Feast of St. Herman of Alaska on August 9.
- 2. Location:** St. Gregory the Theologian Orthodox Church in Wappingers Falls, NY. Local hotels will be arranged for the area at a reduced price.
- 3. Cost:** The costs for the participants in the school will be paid for by the Diocese. This includes travel, hotel and meals up to the \$10,000 provided by the Diocese. A clearer costs analysis will be made once the participants are identified and appropriate housing is arranged.
- 4. Course Outline:** Each of the six course sessions would be two hours. There would be specific goals and objectives for each course. All books and material would be provided. A complete course outline would also be available. Students would be expected to complete the readings prior to the school. Each day would also have a roundtable discussion and an open session in order to discuss specific topics, share experiences and solicit questions. There will be three

roundtables and two open discussion session. A cycle of liturgical services would also be integrated. The following is a list of the proposed topics:

a. Evangelization I

The methodology of Orthodox evangelization. Special reference will be made to basic principles of the Orthodox theology of evangelism and various approaches toward implementing this theology. There will be review and an examination of the resources available to assist the parish.

Instructor: Fr. Eric Tosi

b. Evangelization II

This class will examine the application of evangelism principles especially those relating to older parishes or parishes in decline. Various case studies will be presented and explored which can be applied to the local circumstances. *Instructor: Fr. Eric Tosi*

c. Parish Case Study One

Fr. Thomas Soroka took over St. Nicholas Church in McKees Rock, PA, outside of Pittsburgh, and was able to turn the parish around into a dynamic and growing parish. He will share his story of struggles and vision which enabled that turn around. He will also focus on the issues that revolved around moving the parish in a new direction. *Instructor: Fr. Thomas Soroka*

d. Parish Case Study Two

Fr. Joseph Lickwar has vast experience in leading and revitalizing parishes and has faced many unique challenges. He is also the Chancellor of the Diocese and can share his insights on parish challenges from a unique perspective. *Instructor: Fr. Joseph Lickwar*

d. Parish Case Study Three

Fr. David Garretson took over Ss Peter and Paul Church in South River, NJ that had been static and in need of leadership to move forward. He also will share his story of the challenges of moving the parish in a new direction. It remains one of the larger parishes in the Diocese. **Instructor: Fr. David Garretson**

f. Reflections of a Parish Priest and Diocesan Bishop

Prior to becoming the Dean of St. Tikhon Seminary and subsequently Diocesan Hierarch, Archbishop Michael had extensive experience in working with established parishes and injecting them with new life. His Eminence will share those experiences, the challenges and set out a vision for the parishes in the Diocese to move forward. *Instructor: Archbishop Michael*

g. Roundtables

The specific goal of each roundtable discussion is to discuss within the group certain challenges that each parish faces in contemporary parish life. It will be facilitated by an instructor who guide the discussion through the three topics. The three topics will be:

- i. What are factors that hinder a parish to revitalize?*
Facilitator: Fr. Eric Tosi

ii. *How does the ethnic dimension of the parish affect the outreach of the parish?*
Facilitator: Fr. Thomas Soroka

iii. *What can parish leadership do to effect change in a declining parish?*
Facilitator: Fr. David Garretson

h. Open Discussion

This session is to be facilitated by the bishop or a senior priest and will be a chance for the students to share their issues and challenges and solicit possible solutions. There are no chosen topics but rather they will be guided by the topics that are raised during the course of the school. **Facilitator: Archbishop Michael**

The course outline:

| | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| 8:00 AM | <i>Morning Prayers</i> | Morning Prayers | <i>Divine Liturgy for St. Herman (move breakfast to 9:30 AM)</i> |
| 9:00 AM | <i>Breakfast</i> | <i>Breakfast</i> | <i>Breakfast</i> |
| 10:00 AM - Noon | Theology of Evangelism 1 - Tosi | Theology of Evangelism 2 - Tosi | Parish Case Study - Garretson |
| 11:00 AM | <i>Break</i> | <i>Break</i> | <i>Break</i> |
| Noon | <i>Lunch</i> | <i>Lunch</i> | <i>Lunch</i> |
| 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM | Parish Case Study - Soroka | Parish Case Study - Lickwar | Reflections on Parish Life and Revitalization – AB Michael |
| 2:00 PM | <i>Break</i> | <i>Break</i> | <i>Break</i> |
| 4:00 PM | Roundtable: Factors Question - Tosi | Roundtable: Ethic Factors - Soroka | Roundtable: Leadership - Garretson |
| 5:00 PM | <i>Vespers</i> | <i>Great Vespers for St. Herman</i> | <i>Vespers/ Conclusion by Archbishop Michael</i> |
| 5:30 PM | <i>Dinner</i> | <i>Dinner</i> | <i>Dinner/Depart</i> |
| 7:00 PM | <i>Open Discussion</i> | <i>Open Discussion</i> | |

C. Criteria of Success

Clearly the criteria of success will be determined by the short-term by the students reporting back to their respective parishes on the program and to begin to implement some of the lessons learned. The long-term criteria of success will be experienced in the changing atmosphere in the parish and the gradual growth that ensues.