

YOUR DIOCESE

Alive in Christ

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YOUR DIOCESE Alive in Christ

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A WORD FROM OUR BISHOP

During the paschal season, our liturgical hymns often make use of vivid images to express the radical renewal brought about by the Resurrection of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. One such image is contained in the words of the following troparion: *When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead* (tone 2).

The image of Life Immortal descending to death is remarkable but even more striking is the description of Christ slaying hell with the splendor of His Divinity. What is this splendor and how did the Lord slay hell with it? The action of slaying is often defined as "to kill violently" and it is not something that is usually associated with the One who says of Himself: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart* (Matthew 11:29).

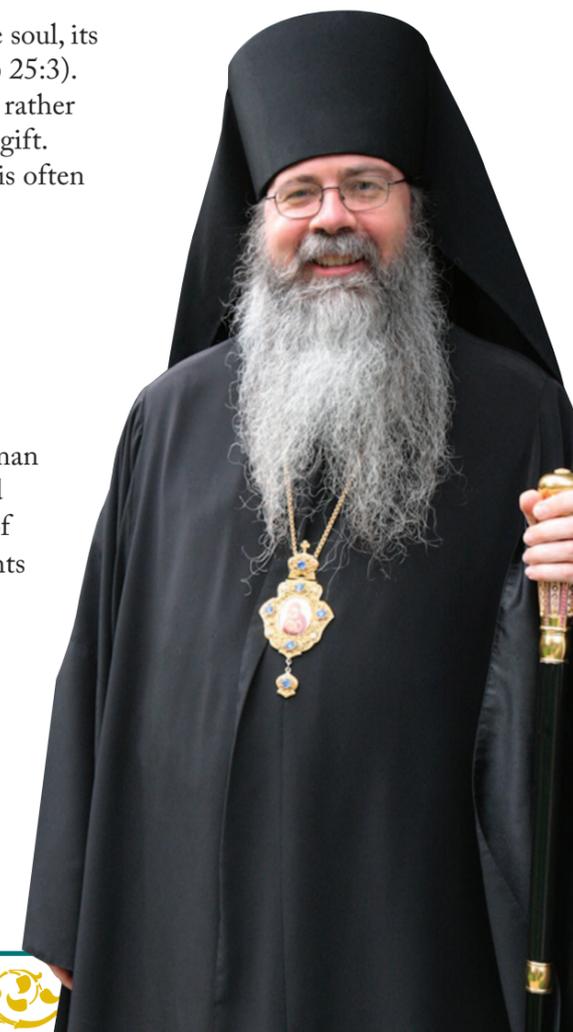
And yet it is precisely this meekness and lowliness which makes manifest the glory of God. Christ slays hell, not with the violence of an earthly soldier wielding a sword, but with the power and glory of His humility. It is for this very reason that when Christ is hanging on the Cross, when He has reached His weakest moment (from an earthly perspective), He is referred to as "the Lord of Glory."

The splendor and glory of the Lord is paradoxically revealed by His extreme humility, a humility which, in the words of St Dorotheos of Gaza, "is divine and cannot be comprehended." (On Humility, 38). At the same time, this divine humility is a virtue that all Christians are called to acquire through a life of repentance and asceticism.

Saint John Climacus explains that "humility is a nameless grace in the soul, its name is known only to those who have learned it by experience" (Step 25:3). This is why the saints of the Church do not try to define humility but rather give us indications of the way we should follow in order to attain this gift. This is also why the Church makes use of striking poetic images: this is often the best way to convey the profound realities of our Christian life.

In addition, all the Sundays of the paschal season give us examples of those who have experienced this way of Christ-like humility. Thomas, the doubter, overcomes his doubt when he is humbled by the glorious appearance of Christ on the eighth day; the Myrrhbearers reveal their humility by their faithfulness and by their watchfulness; the paralytic steadfastly endured his illness for many years, patiently waiting for a man to lower him into the healing waters; the Samaritan woman confessed both her past sins and her desire to be refreshed by the living waters of Christ, and the Blind Man cut through the vain questions and thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees by his grateful acceptance of Christ's healing grace.

During the season when we receive the grace of immortal life, let us strive to follow these examples from the Holy Scriptures, and be spurred on by the vivid images of our liturgical texts, by the examples of the saints and even of persons around us who, not by their words but by their actions, reveal that they have entered upon the humble path of the Lord and can cry out with the powers of Heaven: *O Giver of Life! Christ our God! Glory to Thee!*



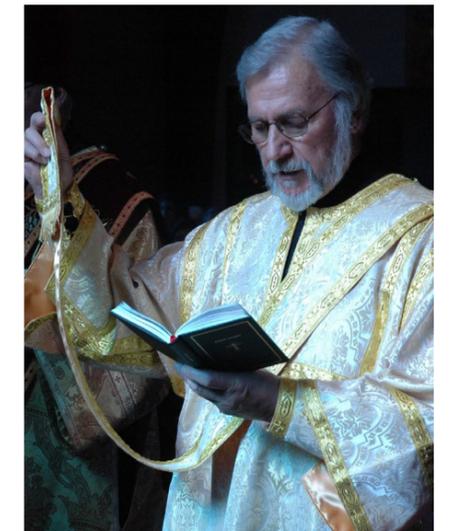
March for Life

On January 22nd, His Grace Bishop Tikhon and many of the faithful from this diocese attended the March for Life in Washington D.C. Prior to the March, His Grace was able to meet with Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey along with seven other Congressmen to discuss legislative issues related to abortion.



On Monday, January 11th, members of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) in Philadelphia met at the Episcopal House near the University of Pennsylvania. The evening began with a Molieben of Thanksgiving. Following this, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, offered a talk on the intersection of theology and technology, especially addressing the topic of virtual reality. After this talk, students shared pizza with His Grace and continued the discussion on technology and theology. Twelve students were in attendance.

On Sunday, February 7th, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, ordained Mr. George Zlatkowski to the Holy Diaconate at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Philadelphia. The St. Tikhon's Seminary Mission Choir sang the responses for the service.



On February 27th, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, made a Lenten pastoral visit to St. Herman of Alaska Church in Shillington, serving Vespers on Saturday evening and Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Fr. John Onofrey, rector of St. Herman's, was awarded the jeweled cross for twenty five years of dedicated service to the church in Shillington.

DIOCESAN NEWS

There are certain people who for some reason swim in the sea. If they can swim properly then when a wave comes against them, they bow down under it and hide themselves beneath it until it passes. Thus, they carry on swimming free from danger. However, if they struggle against the wave it pushes them and throws them a great distance. Once they start swimming again, another wave may come. If they oppose themselves to it, it will again push them and throw them far. Thus, they are tired out and they do not progress. If, as I said, they bend themselves down under the wave and humble themselves under it, it passes without harming them and they can continue swimming as much as they desire. It is the same with the temptations. If a person endures temptation with patience and humility, it passes him by without danger but if he remains afflicted, sorrowful, and considering everything as a reason for it, he damns himself and loads on himself the temptations.

Abba Dorotheos



On Saturday, March 20th, Prof. David Drillock, emeritus Professor of Liturgical Music at St. Vladimir Seminary, led nearly 40 participants in a liturgical music workshop entitled: "Singing with the Angels" at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church in Harrisburg, PA. Participants were taught not only the technical skills required in singing Orthodox liturgical music, but also learned about the theology of the Liturgy, and the history and development of liturgical music from the early Church to the present day.



On Sunday, March 20th, His Grace visited St. Herman of Alaska Church in Gradyville. Bishop Tikhon concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with rector Fr. John Perich and Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery, Fr. Sergius. Fr. Sergius brought with him the miracle working icon She Who is Quick to Hear.



The Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers was celebrated on February 21st at Holy Resurrection Cathedral in the Wilkes Barre Deanery. Visiting Priest, Fr Paul Lazor offered the homily.



On Sunday, February 28th, the Wilkes Barre Deanery Mission Vespers was held at St. Michael's Church in Jermyn.



On February 24th, His Grace celebrated Presanctified Liturgy with rector Fr. Martin Browne at St. John the Baptist Church in Edwardsville along with other deanery clergy.



On the Sunday of St. John of the Ladder, March 13th, Fr. Jason Franchak was officially installed as Rector of Holy Trinity in Pottstown by His Grace.



On Sunday, February 28th, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, served Mission Vespers at St. Mary's Church in Coaldale. Father James Jadick delivered the homily.



The Wilkes Barre Deanery held Mission Vespers at Holy Trinity Church in Wilkes Barre on Sunday, March 7th. Father David Cowan, of All Saints Church, delivered the homily.



On Tuesday, March 9th, His Grace and clergy from the Frackville deanery celebrated Pre-sanctified Liturgy at Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Minersville.



On Bright Tuesday, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, diocesan clergy and families came together to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Church in Bethlehem.

Amusing Ourselves to Death

A book review by Rev. Martin Browne

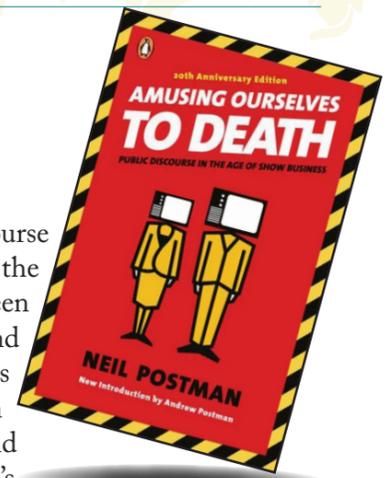
There is the story of the frog that is put in water, the temperature of which is gradually raised until the frog is literally boiled to death. Why does the frog stay in the pot of water? Because he is oblivious to the gradual, imperceptible change in temperature which transforms his environment from one ideal for life to one which is deadly. Some suggest that the cultural water in which we live is similar to the frog's environment, and one of the indicators of a distinctive and possibly lethal change in temperature is the explosion of media with radically permissive, explicit, and often inflammatory content.

An essential text in gaining some perspective on the place and (changing) function of media in our society is a book now over twenty years old, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* by Neil Postman. Dr. Postman was the chair of the Communications Department at New York University who wrote this study on Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business. Written in the mid-eighties, Postman's study and insight predate the internet and the digital media proliferation. However, he recognized the transitional age already arrived, that continues with increasing rapidity. A student of the original media analyst, Marshall McLuhan, Postman accepted McLuhan's fundamental insight that the medium is the message. Essentially, this means that the method of communication shapes the message communicated, and those who communicate are shaped by the methods of communication, whether visual, oral, auditory or other.

In the context of culture, says Postman, under the governance of the printing press, discourse in America was different from what it is now – generally coherent, serious and rational; he then shows how, under the governance of television, it has become shriveled and absurd. To demonstrate this Postman studies the formative influence of print, the typographic mind, on American culture and society and the passage from this to the telegraph, photograph, film, television, and we could continue with the computer and other technologies, and such phenomena as websites, weblogs,

email, texting and the like. In the course of this he discusses the relationship between information and action, and the transformation of this relationship in the television age to one of amusement and entertainment. Postman's point at the end of this study is that only through a deep and unflinching awareness of the structure and effects of information, through a demystification of media, is there any hope of our gaining some measure of control over television, or the computer, or any other medium. To this end Postman suggests the importance of schools in teaching the young how to distance themselves from their forms of information.

Dr. Postman's book provides us with a stimulating and thoughtful opportunity to reflect upon our cultural context, to assess whether we are in boiling water, or water reaching the boiling point. Reading his analysis, we are challenged to consider how influenced we are by our media, both the form and the content, and how much that formation influences our perception and practice of our faith in the Church. Moreover, this analysis provides us as the Church with some important insights into our society as we seek to fulfill the mandate to make disciples of all nations and are tempted to adopt, too often uncritically, the media of the day without considering the impact of the medium on the message. This is particularly true with new forms of digital technology which make instantaneous and decontextualized communication, as often driven by passion as by reason, by emotion rather than love, a driving force in the conduct of our lives in the Church. Recognized as a classic, Postman's book is not an "Orthodox" book, but a book Orthodox Christians would do well to ponder.



2010 Teen Winter Retreat All About Relationships

Twenty-five diocesan high school students held their breath during the second week of February, praying that incoming snowstorms would not spoil the annual Winter Teen Retreat. Thankfully, the clouds parted in time, and on Friday, February 12, the teens began a beautiful weekend together at the Fatima Renewal Center in Dalton, Pennsylvania.

Sounds of joy echoed down the halls of the retreat center as the students arrived one by one, greeting each other with smiles and hugs. Everyone found their bedrooms, unpacked, and enjoyed a pizza dinner before Fr. Timothy Hojnicky of Mechanicsburg, PA, led them in Evening Prayers. Then, they gathered for a small workshop during which Fr. Timothy introduced the theme of the weekend – “Relationships” – and stressed the importance of having a relationship with God and each other as fellow Orthodox Christians.

Later that evening, everyone enjoyed spending their free time in each other’s company. Most of the students sat around on big, comfy couches in the lounge area, listening to music and catching up with each other. A few gathered around a piano in a different room, while others took the opportunity to create valentines at a table covered in arts and crafts supplies. Someone started a lively round of “Apples to

Apples”, a card game that has become a tradition at the Winter Retreat over the years.

The next morning, they gathered for a peaceful Morning Prayers service. After breakfast, they met with Fr. Hojnicky for morning workshop. Using the parable of the Prodigal Son to kick off his discussion, Fr. Timothy talked to the teens very earnestly about how the world around us is full of sin just as the dirty pigsty where the prodigal son had worked before realizing his errors and returning to his father. He emphasized that we all need to come back to our Father in Heaven and maintain a relationship with Him above all else. Then, Fr. Timothy moved on to discuss the relationships we have with parents, friends, and significant others.

After lunch, the group enjoyed a few hours of free time, during which many of the students chose to visit the gymnasium for a game of basketball. Counselors also brought along a boombox so that anyone who was interested could practice Slavic dancing – a skill many of them have learned as part of the Teen Program offered at Saint Tikhon’s Summer Camp.

His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, led the afternoon workshop. Inspired by the recent movie *Avatar*, Bishop Tikhon spoke to the group about

reality and different ways people may try to escape it, whether through watching movies or playing video games. The students offered many other examples of ‘alternative realities’ they are exposed to, such as Facebook and MySpace, and discussed the importance of not losing touch with the real world while surfing the web.

After his workshop, Bishop Tikhon served Vespers and joined the students for dinner before returning to South Canaan. Counselors were amused to show him how the retreat center’s cafeteria tables were arranged in a way that split up the group, had developed a system of pulling together six or seven tables for every meal so that they could all sit at the same giant table together as a “family”.

The group enjoyed one more evening of free time before settling in to bed. They woke up early the next morning for Divine Liturgy, served by Fr. Joseph McCartney. Everyone sang their hearts out during the service. Afterward, they gathered for one more meal before their parents began to arrive.



There was a lot of hugging going on as the teens said goodbye to each other and shuffled out the door carrying luggage, pillows, and sleeping bags. Shouts of “See you at Summer Camp!” were heard regularly as parents corralled their teens out to the parking lot.

Although nobody was happy to go home, everyone had had a wonderful weekend, and they are all looking forward to returning to the Fatima Renewal Center for next year’s Winter Teen Retreat.

For more information about next year’s Winter Teen Retreat and other programs offered by the Office of Young Adult Activities, please visit www.okeyouth.org. *More photos from the winter retreat can be seen at www.doepa.org.*



On January 16 - 18, youth from throughout the diocese gathered in Waymart, near St. Tikhon’s Monastery, for a winter retreat sponsored by the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA).



Young men from St. Basil the Great Church in Simpson and Fr. Joel Weir helped assemble emergency kits for Haitians suffering in the aftermath of the earthquake.



On Sunday, February 21st the young adults at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church assembled Emergency Health Kits comprised of items donated by the faithful of the community for victims of the Haitian earthquake.

Upcoming Youth Events

Spring Teen Retreat
May 15, 2010
8:30am-6:30pm
St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral
Philadelphia
Registration deadline: May 10

Saint Tikhon’s Summer Camp
July 4-10, 2010
For students age 7-17
Registration forms may be downloaded at www.okeyouth.org
Registration deadline: June 1st

Teacher Education Workshops
8:30am - 4:30pm

Wilkes-Barre Deanery:
June 5, 2010, Holy Resurrection
Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre

Philadelphia Deanery:
Sept. 25, 2010, St. Stephen
Cathedral, Philadelphia

Frackville Deanery:
October 9, 2010, Christ the Savior
Church, Harrisburg

Although each Christian generation has its own unique challenges there were those followers of Christ – in various times and places – who suffered extraordinarily for the Faith. They gave their lives completely through sacrificial service or in death, “for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.” *Saints in Times of Trouble* bears witness to twelve such disciples.

The popular *Saints of North America Activity Book*, put forth by the OCA’s Department of Christian Education, has now been complemented by what promises to be an equally useful resource: a workbook focusing on Saints in Times of Trouble.

What makes this brief collection distinct from some others is the diversity of examples presented. Descriptions include, for example, St. John Chrysostom and the deaconess St. Olympias and St. Poppia from the 4th century; St. Aidan (Scotland) and St. Cuthbert (Britain) from the 7th century; St. Alexander Nevsky (the Russian Prince) 13th century, and the Iconographer St. Andrei Rublev, 14th century.

Moving forward, the 19th and 20th centuries are represented by such figures as: St. Barbara the Nun-Martyr of Russia; St. Gorazd, Bishop and New-Martyr of Prague; St. Maria Skobtsova of Paris; St. Mitrophan of China; and St. Patriarch Tikhon.

In addition to facts concerning their lives each entry contains the Troparion and Kontakion for the Saint, and journal questions to facilitate discussions

with students as well as puzzle activities. Further resources, including a large glossary and full color displays of cultural points of interests are cited for those who want more information.

As in the first book, *Saints of North America*, this second activity book features beautifully detailed iconographic line drawings as well as a map of where each Saint journeyed during their lifetime.

A compilation such as this will prove invaluable for parents and teachers alike. God provided a witness to Himself through the men and women herein described. The Church does her children a great service by teaching them about those “heroes” for the faith, to follow in their footsteps.

Christ said, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” He followed with these words, “Rejoice, for I have overcome the world.” *Saints in Times of*

Trouble reveals how that possibility is given regardless of the outward circumstances of one’s life, a necessary lesson for people of all ages.

Saints in Times of Trouble is a result of the creative cooperation of Christine Zebrun, Myra Kovalak, Maria Proch, Valerie Zahirsky, Alexandra Safchuk, John Pusey and other members of the Department of Christian Education. It can be download free at <http://dce.oca.org>.



An activity book for Orthodox Children and Parents by the OCA Department of Christian Education

A Christ Centered Life: Thoughts on the Wilkes-Barre Deanery Parish Administrative Conference

by David M. Brzuchalski
Vice-President and Choir Director
All Saints Orthodox Church, Olyphant

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, and the leadership of our new dean, Father Daniel Kovalak, Rector of Holy Cross Orthodox Church in Williamsport, the Wilkes-Barre deanery of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania held a Parish Administrative Conference on Saturday, April 17, 2010. Parish priests along with more than fifty elected parish council members from throughout the deanery attended this unprecedented event hosted by St. Michael’s parish in Jermyn. The conference began with a continental breakfast where those in attendance interacted in fellowship with their fellow deanery members. Bishop Tikhon opened the event with a half hour presentation followed by the main speaker and coordinator of the conference, Fr. Daniel Kovalak, who delivered a dynamic and eye-opening presentation about parish leadership. Following the main address, a luncheon was served by the parishioners of St. Michael’s. And the entire event was free thanks to the generosity of St. Michael’s parish community and the host pastor Father John Kowalczyk.

Bishop Tikhon welcomed everyone who came to participate in this historic event in our deanery. His Grace spoke humbly and from his heart about lay leadership within the church and how each and every one of us is called in one way or another to participate in Christ’s ministry and to strive to imitate Christ in our daily lives and within our parish communities. He intimated that this conference could and should be the impetus for further such gatherings within the deanery and that possibly the other two deaneries in the diocese could follow suit.

In his opening remarks, Father Daniel reminded us that everything we do should be Christ-centered. He used the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles as the basis

for his presentation. What was remarkable to this writer was the way in which Fr. Dan dynamically and enthusiastically held the audience’s attention for two hours and not one person as much as winced. His remarks were scripturally sound sprinkled with elements of comic relief. Fr. Dan described the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts as the model for all parish councils, as it is for all councils of the Church: parish councils, Holy Synods and Ecumenical Councils. Christ is the Head, the Holy Spirit provides the guidance and the members seek to serve Christ by discerning and carrying out His Will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

My next thought then made me shudder just a bit. “If we, as parish leaders, are to carry on the tradition of that first council, how come we have strayed so far away from Christ, the center of our existence?” Let’s face it: today’s parish council meetings are far from being Christ-centered. So, the ideal way to continue in the footsteps of the Apostles is to try to emulate them in today’s world. Is this a challenge? You bet it is! But, we must be able to rise above our petty differences, and to quit squabbling about where the money is going to come from for this or that and learn to love one another the way Christ loved His Apostles. Thank you, Father Dan, for allowing this observer to reflect on this powerful message.

Fr. Dan then spoke about areas of parish administration, again quoting scripture and comparing our actions and deeds to the events taken from the ACTS of the Apostles. First and foremost, he reminded us that we must worship together. If we don’t know how to worship with one accord and in one place then how can we expect to carry on any of the other responsibilities entrusted to us as the lay leaders of the Church? I then wondered to myself, “How many of us really listen and

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Harrisburg

On Saturday, March 27th (Lazarus Saturday) eight Catechumens were received into the Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church in Harrisburg, PA. Three were Baptized and five were received through Holy Chrism. Our parish community is thankful to Almighty God for His mercy and Divine Providence, which brought us these “newly sealed, and enlisted warriors of Christ our God” and we pray that we may continue to grow as a family in Christ, “bearing one another’s burdens” and sharing the Good News of His Gospel. May He plant His servants: Seraphim (Jamie), Elizabeth (Jennifer), Andrea, Sean, Euphemia (Jennifer), Catherine (Grace), Mary (Evelyn), Suzanne, and Mariah - as plants of truth, and continue to build them on the foundation of His Apostles and Prophets.



Mechanicsburg



Members of Boy Scouts were honored on January 31st at Holy Apostles Mission in Mechanicsburg.



On Lazarus Saturday, March 27th, 7 catechumens were received into the Orthodox Church through the Rite of Chrismation before the Divine Liturgy. We rejoice in the entrance of Malia, Christine, Joseph, Maria, Noah, Jacob, & Ian and pray that God grant them many years!

Berwick



Reverend Michael Demko and Holy Annunciation Orthodox Church in Berwick welcome the newly illumined Hottenstein family: Heather, Naomi, Luke, and Joshua. May God grant them many years!



Holy Annunciation Ladies Organization held its annual Winter Fiesta at the Maria Assunta in Berwick.

UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

May 20, 2010
Diocesan Council
Meeting

May 28-31, 2010
Memorial Day
Pilgrimage

June 20-26
Six Days of Creation
Icon Workshop

July 4-10
St. Tikhon's
Summer Camp

Visit www.doepa.org for more information!

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heed the priest's proclamation just before the Creed at every Divine Liturgy? "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess..." Just think how much more productive our parish council meetings would be if we all accepted this declaration as our parish council motto. I then had an introspective reflection and shocking revelation; I thought, "Just how much do I love Christ and the Holy Church?" And sadly, my answer was, "Not enough." So right then and there I decided it was time to quit "talking the talk" and begin "walking the walk" and actually try to make my life more Christ-centered than it is right now. I venture to add that any participant who wasn't affected in some similar manner just wasn't listening to Fr. Dan's message.

The rest of Fr. Dan's talk focused on our spiritual life, pastoral care, education and enlightenment, mission, and philanthropy. Without going into detail, these areas of parish life are not only the responsibility of the parish priest, but also the ministries of each and every parishioner within the church. For the Lord gave each of us some kind of special talent. In His infinite wisdom, He has placed within each of our parishes individuals with varied and diverse talents. Fr. Dan stressed that Christ providentially allows our parishes to be comprised of individuals with many different kinds of talents. In this way, the parish is able to thrive, for each person offers that special gift back to Christ which was given by Christ in the first place.

The focus then turned to the parish council meeting and its prescribed agenda. Our meetings should (1) have a focus; (2) solve problems; (3) make decisions for the good of the church; (4) develop plans; (5) generate ideas; (6) gather and convey information; (7) report the status of prior deci-

sions; (8) assign tasks to implement plans; and (9) assure accountability. A typical sample meeting agenda should begin with a prayer. Next, roll call should be taken followed by the minutes from the previous meeting. The officers' reports should come after that. The remainder of the meeting should consist of old business, new business, parishioners' interests and the announcement of the date of the next council meeting. Finally, the meeting should conclude with a prayer. Fr. Dan reiterated that parish leadership *is* a ministry and that a vote *is* a commitment.

All in all, the conference was definitely a success and an inspiration to all attendees. Now all of us should go back to our respective parishes and try to utilize some of the tools that Fr. Dan provided during his talk. Some lay leaders will resist, but persistence pays off. If we truly begin with Christ as our Supreme Leader, and believe that He will guide us in all of our endeavors, then surely our churches will grow, prosper and become beacons within our local communities.

This attendee would like to thank our host parish, St. Michael's Orthodox Church in Jermyn, for hosting this momentous event in the life of our deanery. Special thanks go to His Grace, Bishop Tikhon for taking the lead in establishing a new development within our Wilkes-Barre deanery—open communication between parish priests and their church council leaders. And finally, I would like to personally thank Fr. Daniel Kovalak for his warmth, his genuine love for what he preaches, and for his fortitude in educating us in the true nature of what it means to be a parish leader. Follow Christ, and everything else will fall into place. Thanks be to God for such a wonderful day of enlightenment.