

## **Philadelphia Deanery Report**

Archpriest David Mahaffey, Dean  
Diocesan Assembly, 2009

This is my first report as Dean of the Philadelphia Deanery. I came to this position by appointment of His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, after the leave-taking of our former Dean, Archpriest John Udics. Fr. John was the Dean of this Deanery as far back as my memory serves me, and I want to acknowledge his loving and caring work in that capacity for nearly twenty years. Fr. John was also the Rector of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Parish in Philadelphia for over twenty years and we are also grateful for his constant and abiding love of Christ that he expressed to the Faithful of St. Mary's Parish during that time. He also served as the secretary for the Philadelphia Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood for many years and is sadly missed by the clergy of Philadelphia, as well. It is an honor to follow his leadership example and I pray that Fr. John continues to have many happy, healthy and productive years in his new position within the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

This year saw many changes to the pastorates of the Deanery. Archpriest Dimitri Oselinsky, former Rector of St. Nicholas Church in Bethlehem has now retired; we congratulate Fr. Dimitri, and his Matushka Mary Ann, on this retirement and express our most heart-felt and humble gratitude for their many years of dedicated service to the Orthodox Church in America and his leadership within the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Deanery, and the Lehigh Clergy Brotherhood as well. Priest Timothy Hasenecz continues to be a blessing to many people in the Lehigh Valley through his Chaplain's Ministry with the Lehigh Valley Hospital System and due to increased responsibilities in that capacity, requested release from his duties as Rector of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Catasauqua. His Grace kindly granted that request and Fr. Timothy is now attached to St. Nicholas Church in Bethlehem (his home parish). We offer our thanks and gratitude for Fr. Timothy's work with Holy Trinity Parish and his tireless efforts for the ill and afflicted.

These events also gave us two new additions to the Deanery in the form of priests. At St. Mary's Assumption Parish at 28<sup>th</sup> and Snyder in Philadelphia, Priest Matthew Cantrell came to replace Fr. John Udics on Pentecost. Fr. Matthew comes from the Holy Annunciation Parish in Frackville, along with his Matushka Jennifer, and children Joachim and Henry. We welcome Fr. Matthew and pray that God will grant him and his family a long and fruitful Ministry at St. Mary's. Holy Trinity Parish in Catasauqua has also received a new Pastor, Priest Andrew Bartek, who comes to the OCA from the Carpatho-Russian Diocese. Fr. Andrew assumed his duties at Holy Trinity on October 1<sup>st</sup>, and will be living in the Rectory when it is available for occupancy, until then he lives near New York City. We also welcome Fr. Andrew and ask God's blessing upon his efforts with Holy Trinity Parish, that they may be blessed with continued growth and abundant life in Christ.

St. Nicholas Church in Bethlehem also saw a change in Pastors, two actually, following Fr. Dimitri's retirement. Due to the delay in finding a priest to replace Fr. Dimitri, it was necessary to utilize the services of an interim priest; this role was proficiently filled by Archpriest James Mason, who served the parish from the end of June until my appointment on October 1. We are thankful to Fr. James for his very capable care of the Faithful of St. Nicholas during this time of transition.

In addition to Lenten Mission Vespers, a normal part of Deanery activity, new events were held within the Philadelphia Deanery. In cooperation with St. Tikhon's Fall Lecture Series, three of the four speakers were booked to come to Philadelphia for a presentation (Fr. Daniel Byantoro of Indonesia; Fr. Damascene of St. Herman's Monastery in Platina, CA; and Fr. Moses Berry, OCA priest in the St. Louis area, mentioned below in the appropriate parish report). In addition, we have taken the Feast of St. Nicholai of Zicha and South Canaan as our patronal feast day, and adopted the Icon of the Holy Theotokos, She who is Quick to Hear as our patronal Icon; through the prayers of St Nicholai and the Holy Theotokos may we all be strengthened for the task at hand.

The clergy of the greater Philadelphia Deanery realize our Lord's words, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;" [Mark 9:37] have never been more applicable to any time than they are now, have pledged to work diligently to bring the light and love of our Holy Orthodox Faith to our Deanery. With the infusion of so many new priests to compliment the more senior membership, we are inspired towards a new level of activity and under the leadership of His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, whom we hope to soon see "seated" in his Diocesan City, we see a new day dawning on the City of Brotherly Love.

## **Parish Activities**

**ST. NICHOLAS, BETHLEHEM** – In addition to normal parish activities, the following events occurred at St. Nicholas: Lenten Mission Vesper Service (Lehigh Valley Clergy Brotherhood); Visit by His Grace, Bishop Tikhon on the retirement of Fr. Dimitri Oselinsky; visit by Christina Semon, OCMC Missionary; Russian Days Festival in September; Lafayette College Christian History class visit church and given a presentation by Fr. David Mahaffey; host of the Annual Diocese Assembly; St. Nicholas Choir, under the direction of Reader Nicholas Lezinsky, sang for Memorial Day Pilgrimage at St. Tikhon's Monastery and gave an Annual Christmas Concert.

**ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA, GRADYVILLE** – In addition to normal parish activities, the following events were held at St. Herman of Alaska: Supported OCMC Missionary Christine Semon; gathered clothing and other goods for distribution at St. John of Kronstadt Homeless Shelter in Brooklyn, NY; gave financial assistance to Emmaus House in New York City, as well as other needy organizations in the greater Philadelphia and Delaware area; held the funeral for retired Deanery Priest, Archpriest Nicholas Yuschak who was attached to St. Herman's; as Fr. John Perich continues to deal with his medial issues, he is assisted in the Divine Services, formerly by Fr. Jason Franchak, and now by Protodeacon Gregory Moser, Fr. Joel Weir of St. Tikhon's Seminary, and Deacon Joseph Edwards.

**ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY, PHILADELPHIA** – In addition to normal parish activities the following events occurred at St. Mary's: Hosted the Philadelphia Deanery Lecture Series speaker, Fr. Moses Berry; Fr. Matthew leads the OCF at University of Pennsylvania on Tuesdays.

**ST. STEPHEN'S CATHEDRAL, PHILADELPHIA** – In addition to normal parish activities, the following events occurred at St. Stephen's: In April Fr. Peter Gillquist gave a lecture

titled “ Why Evangelical Christians are becoming Orthodox” ; This Fall they hosted two of the three lectures that were presented in conjunction with St. Tikhon’ s Lecture Series. Fr. Damascene (Platina, CA) gave a lecture “ Christ the Eternal Tao” and talked about his missionary work in China. Fr. Daniel Byantoro gave a lecture “ Christianity and Islam” and gave very instrumental knowledge of many key aspects of Muslim faith; 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the consecration of our church edifice with His Grace, Bishop Tikhon joining them for this event; the Cathedral also continues to be the educational center for the St. Tikhon’ s Seminary Diaconate Program with classes held on Saturdays during the school year; Fr. Victor also continues to reach out the Russian Immigrant community and is a valuable resource for this important missionary work in the Philadelphia Area.

**HOLY TRINITY, POTTSTOWN** – In addition to normal parish activities, the following events occurred at Holy Trinity: Hosted the Sisters of Mercy of Minsk, Belarus, for a presentation and fund raiser; had a visit and presentation by Fr. Sergius of St. Tikhon’ s Monastery;

**ST. MARK, WRIGHTSTOWN** – In addition to normal parish activities, the following events occurred at St. Mark’ s: 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities, culmination in Hierarchical Liturgy with His Grace, Bishop Tikhon in October; Vacation Church School June 29-July 3; installation of set of twelve Icons of the Major Feasts; newly painted church interior; Advent Retreat, Dec. 6, 2008, on “ St. Nicholas – Prophet of Charity” ; Great Lenten Retreat with theme, “ Christ’ s Church in the Third Millenium” ; Presentation on Icons by Iconographer, Katerina Papaioanou, a former parishioner now living in Lake Mary, Florida, on July 12.

**ST. MICHAEL, WILMINGTON, DE** – In addition to normal parish activities the following events occurred at St. Michael’ s: Lenten Retreat with Fr. John Nehrebecki; Vacation Bible School; Lenten Mission Vespers Service; held “ Basics of Orthodoxy for inquirers; led OCF at University of Delaware with meetings on Sunday evenings, and retreats with Fr. Justin Matthews and singer/songwriter Ron Moore in Fall of 2008, and with Bishop Tikhon in Fall of 2009; supported the establishment of a mission parish in Dover Delaware along with Fr. Stephen Hutnick of the local Ukrainian priest; established a pledge system to fund the parish instead of a “ dues” system; the parish has taken out a \$500,000 mortgage<sup>1</sup> to fund the construction of their new parish hall, for which ground breaking ceremonies were held last month with His Grace, Bishop Tikhon; support an African priest’ s salary for an entire year, and contributed to OCMC Missionary, Christine Semon; St. Michael’ s Good Samaritan project helped two needy family in the Wilmington area.

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<sup>1</sup> Mortgage was made though the RBO’ s loan program at a rate of only 6% for 20 years, a rage far better than that offered by any bank.