

Wilkes-Barre Deanery
Report to the 2010 Diocesan Assembly

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Glory to Jesus Christ!

The Wilkes-Barre Deanery strives to buttress the life of each deanery parish in essential areas of WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, EDUCATION/OUTREACH, LEADERSHIP and MINISTRY.

WORSHIP

Deanery parishes increasingly seek to enhance their respective cycles of liturgical services; specially offering the faithful additional weekday opportunities for corporate worship and fellowship. Whether a weekday Daily Vespers, an Akathist Hymn, or hosting services in conjunction with visits of various wonderworking icons, such initiatives have led to the rediscovery of worship as a hallmark of parish life for many and an "open door" to those seeking "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3)

Our 2010 Deanery Lenten Mission Services were held at the following parishes: Holy Resurrection, Wilkes-Barre, St Michael's, Jermyn, Holy Trinity, Wilkes-Barre, St John's, Edwardsville, and All Saints, Olyphant. The Unction Service on Holy Wednesday was held at St Michael's, Old Forge. Several Deanery parishes collaboratively hosted additional weekday lenten services, some of which were celebrated by Bishop Tikhon.

We anticipate continuing the Lenten Mission schedule in 2011 and encourage all deanery faithful to attend.

FELLOWSHIP

Opportunities for fellowship accompany most deanery services and events, extending the *koinonia* beyond our worship, specially among "the brethren."

The only clergy transition since last year's Assembly has been the part-time assignment of Fr Joseph Lucas to St Basil's Church, Simpson, whom we welcome.

The format of Deanery Clergy meetings has been changed and now aims at enhancing the fellowship of the brotherhood and providing mutual support. Two meetings were held since the last Assembly -- on April 27 and October 7 -- at the Perkins Restaurant in Pittston, a central location. Meeting agendas include usual reports and opportunities to discuss timely issues. The Deanery includes a number of retired and "attached" clergy whose participation and involvement in, and unique contributions to, our corporate life are greatly valued and appreciated.

Other Deanery events specially promoting fellowship were a Deanery Clergy Family Picnic in Williamsport on July 1 and a Deanery Altar Boy Picnic in Olyphant on August 19.

EDUCATION/OUTREACH

The number of education/outreach activities of individual deanery parishes has increased exponentially over the past year -- which is to be commended and encouraged. Particularly during the Fall, one could conceivably attend lectures, concerts and/or classes hosted by deanery parishes from one to several times in any given week.

In addition to the Diocesan Clergy Retreats, a number of Deanery clergy participated in the Summer Symposium, June 15-16, hosted by St Tikhon's Seminary on the theme of "Autocephaly." And our Deanery church school directors and teachers participated in the OCEC Teacher-Training held June 5 at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre.

In previous years, it seemed some parishes deferred to the annual St Tikhon's Lecture Series to fulfill the need for ongoing adult education. The re-design of that series and the plethora of parish offerings this past year suggests we are rediscovering that the fundamental initiative for parish education must come on the local level.

LEADERSHIP/COMMUNICATION

During the past year, internet communication has developed significantly. The Bishop's office has become proficient in providing timely notices, reminders and updates to clergy and parishes on diocesan issues and events which certainly supports our established administrative structure.

To provide further detail and emphasis to particular issues and events, as Dean, I publish occasional Dean-O-Grams as "official" communications. We also published hard-copy issues of *Deanery News* at our Lenten Mission services that included articles by our clergy and various announcements.

On Saturday, April 17, we hosted a well-received Administrative Conference at St Michael's, Jermyn, that gathered over 50 parish clergy and lay leaders to consider specific responsibilities and governing models of parish leadership. Bishop Tikhon spoke of the critical importance of such gatherings, his desire for ongoing leadership training throughout the diocese, and the role of the Dean in pursuing proper "administrative housekeeping" for deanery parishes.

MINISTRY

The course of ministry for our Deanery was set early in 2010. We sponsored a deanery bus to the annual March for Life in Washington DC, and are planning to do likewise in 2011.

But the greatest ministry challenge to all of us came in the form of the devastating earthquake that rocked Haiti. At the urging of Bishop Tikhon, nearly every Deanery parish responded to the disaster with prayer and support: financial and material. Thousands of dollars, scores of cleaning buckets and hundreds of health kits generated by our parishes found their way to the affected area via IOCC and their humanitarian partners. Our response indicated not only our will to "love our neighbors" but also our ability to rise to such challenges on a timely basis as the Body of Christ in a tortured world. We express our thanks to all who helped us help others.

Our deanery also provided support to a missionary to Guatemala, Larissa Hatch, and commend her pastor Fr Nicholas Solak of Holy Trinity, Stroudsburg, for inspiring her to do so as well as his own missionary endeavors at Hogar Rafayou Orthodox Orphanage in Guatemala City. Several deanery parishes continue to support OCMC missionary to Romania, Christina Semon, from All Saints Church, Olyphant.

It is our hope that, once we get our deanery "administrative house in order," parish initiatives for mission and ministry will find their way to the top of our collective agenda.

UPCOMING

In addition to the March for Life bus in January, our Deanery is planning a deanery-wide celebration in honor of our patron saint, St Alexis Toth, at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre on Saturday, May 7, 2011. It will include Liturgy, lunch, a speaker, and fellowship. Please mark the date and plan on joining us.

Respectfully submitted,
Fr Dan Kovalak, Dean