

REPORT TO THE 49TH DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OF THE DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
JANUARY 19, 2012, BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE

YEAR IN REVIEW

Since the Revitalization Committee was initiated by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, in June of 2011, it has completed one important project and worked with three interested parishes towards their revitalization. This past year saw the implementation of our own Parish Health Inventory Model, which was patterned on the one created by Mr. Joe Kormos of the Diocese of the Midwest. Tailored to suit the needs of Eastern Pennsylvania, it was presented to the Clergy of the diocese this past November at St. Tikhon's Monastery when members of the Revitalization Committee were selected by Vladyka Tikhon to give a presentation of one of the eight areas of Inventory in the Model. These presentations are available to be given to individual parishes at their request to the Diocesan Administrator.

Several visits were made to the “pilot” parishes, but no real progress can be reported as of this date. McAdoo, Catasauqua and Olyphant, St. Nicholas, were the parishes where an interest was first generated; in general it can be stated that the initial enthusiasm has waxed cold. An assessment of the reasons will be given later in the report. The Revitalization Committee was divided along Deanery lines for implementation, with three members of each Deanery available to interact with interested parishes. All members work for the diocese *pro bono*, with joy in serving the Lord as their only reward.

An Icon Card with the image of St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, patron saint of our Revitalization Committee, has been produced with a prayer for revitalization on the back. Copies are available from the Deans. It was also the request of Vladyka Tikhon that each priest and parish celebrate the Akathist to St. Alexis each week in their parishes as a prayer for revitalization as well.

ASSESSMENT

Quantity vs Quality The danger in making an assessment of whether or not this committee has been successful is rooted in quantified results versus qualified results. Any examination of the sum total of “membership” in the diocese would lead one to the mistaken conclusion that it isn’t working. The numbers have gone down, as they have in every year in recent memory. If the goal is to simply increase the number of members, it would not only be a mistaken goal, it would be counter to the Spirit of the Gospel. The Holy Apostles themselves were not in the “numbers” business. Look no further than this comment by St. Luke in the Book of Acts, *And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* [Acts 2:47] The emphasis is placed on “The Lord” who added to their number; they simply continued to do what they were supposed to do: teaching, preaching and helping the poor.

So it should be for us; we all need to be about the business of the church, without worrying about numerical growth. That is why we have taken the “Parish Health Inventory Model” (PHIM) for our foundation. It is an examination of the true “look” of each parish, a *qualified* examination where we

discover the strength and weaknesses of our parish. Used properly, each parish would find what it needed to work on, to grow the parish “Spiritually” so that the Lord would be able to “add” those who are being saved.

Instant Success Likewise, there is no “magic bullet” that would suddenly transform all our parishes into meccas of membership. It takes work, intensely honest and frankly revealing work, that peels away the layers of encrusted bad habits that have formed in many of our parishes. The PHIM looks at eight areas that affect our parish life and helps us to find our strengths and weaknesses to improve the parish so that it may become an instrument of God’s handiwork, calling all people to Salvation.

Who Needs it? Thus far, our limited ability to adequately work with any given parish has been the principle shortfall of the committee’s efforts. At the clergy retreat last November, which was mandatory for all clergy in the diocese, our hierarch asked that each priest begin to do the PHIM in their parishes. Of course, this was immediately followed by his election as Primate of the OCA, so the process was “put on hold”, so to speak.

So now we need to ask ourselves, do we want this program to succeed, or not? Are we interested in growing our parishes, or are we satisfied with the status quo? There are few parishes that would not benefit from performing the PHIM. It should be the desired goal of each parish to complete the inventory this year, if for nothing else than to see where we stand in these vital areas. Having said this, I do not believe that it should be a mandatory task, but one that each parish should want to take up with gladness and voluntary zeal.

THE PATH FORWARD

We find our diocese in a time of transition. Who the next hierarch will be is in God’s hands, and our Holy Synod’s. We have been placed in the capable hands of His Grace, Bishop Melchizedek as our *Locum Tenens*, and His Grace, Bishop Mark as our Administrator. We are not Fatherless, but rather we are children of God in search of a Shepherd who will desire, with all his heart, to take us to a higher level of commitment, both to ourselves, and to the communities in which we live. This is truly the goal of the Revitalization Committee, to bring the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania into a closer relationship with God and with our neighbor. This can only happen if we are all committed, if we all seek the same path that will lead to real and renewed life in the diocese. We should all desire to say with St. Paul, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” [I Cor. 3:6]

I want to express my deepest thanks to my brothers and sisters on the Revitalization Committee for their tireless efforts to revitalize the diocese. It has been my honor to serve with them and I will miss their dynamic and spirit-filled approach to the tasks and troubles we sought to improve. Their many and varied talents are a resource any company would be envious to have. Truly, this diocese is blessed to have them involved. It is my prayer that they continue to labor and assist this God-protected Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania and that their fruits will multiply in the months and years to come.

Members of the Committee are:

FRACKVILLE DEANERY: Fr. Timothy Hojnicki, Chair; Mark Linnehan

PHILADELPHIA DEANERY: Fr. David (Mahaffey), Fr. Martin Browne, Fr. Protodeacon Gregory Moser; Mr. Larry Skvir, Mr. Bill Simpson

WILKES-BARRE DEANERY: Fr. Michael Demko, Vice Chair; Fr. John Kowalczyk; Ms. Jamie Davis, Dr. Paula Holoviak

Submitted with humility and love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr David Mahaffey".

Hieromonk David (Mahaffey)