



The Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia

Communications Department Report to the 58th Diocesan Assembly

Overview

The year 2021 was less hectic than 2020, as many variables and unknowns were clarified. Instead of changing information constantly as circumstances warranted, the department got back to the business of managing the timely communications of the Diocese.

www.doepa.org

The Diocesan website saw an average of 12,400 visitors a month during 2020. The LOWEST number of monthly visitors was in April, with 9,321 visitors. August saw a high of 114,602. We can confidently say we are looking at traffic of close to 12,000 a month. This has more than doubled in 5 years.

These numbers also must be viewed through a different lens. Up to the preparation of this report, we only had 137 news submissions/announcements. This is a slight increase over the year 2021. And still our web traffic remains around 12,000 unique visitors a month.

Submissions from parishes were posted as they are received - that is, if many news items are submitted, the first one received will appear first. ALL news items are staggered to appear at different days during the week. This keeps the website fresh. Submissions (unless needing approval from His Eminence) are ALL posted. They may be delayed if I am away from my office, but they will all eventually appear - but again, they will be staggered in order of receipt. ALL news items stay featured for a period of three weeks. There is an algorithm that will bump items out of the rotation if there are too many (common around major feasts).

This process was disregarded for some major events - typically the repose of a noted person. In those cases, all other news stories were suspended for a short (typically 3 day) period, to return for their allotted time.

Thanks to all parishes for abiding by the policy regarding secular events (food sales etc.) - the Department once again advises all parishes to use their websites and social media outlets to promote these items.

Parishes submitting news items this year:

Berwick
Bethlehem
Edwardsville
Glen Mills
Harrisburg
Jermyn
Mechanicsburg
Minersville
Mount Carmel
Olyphant (All Saints)
Olyphant (Saint Nicholas)

Philadelphia (St. Stephens)
Pottstown
Stroudsburg
Wilkes-Barre (Holy Resurrection Cathedral and Holy Trinity)
Williamsport

This year 6 parishes were removed from the above list and only 3 added. Additionally, many of the above parishes submitted one story and were never heard from again. It is important to realize that publicizing your parish is a major part of “sustaining the mission.” It is a way to let the public know what you are up to, and show that you are active and do good works. It is imperative that your parish makes publicity and specifically the internet a key part of your parish life. We need to broaden our vision regarding this topic - do people want to be part of a community that is stuck in first gear? Or are people looking for a community that is busy, active, acting as an agent of good deeds? Most are looking to be part of a community that is the latter, where do they find that? Lastly, what is your parish’s web presence - what appears when someone googles “Orthodox Church in My Area?” Does your church appear? Is the information presented correctly? This is truly the first place a person goes when preparing to make a decision.

Facebook/Social Media

The Diocesan social media is handled by others. This is a key component to spreading our message. Your parish should also have a social media outlet, and it should be updated regularly - weekly at least. Share your good news with everyone - it generates interest. It is also the spot to promote your events - whether religious or secular in nature. These are easy tools to use requiring a dedicated soul and time (and some photos!)

Conclusion

The Communications Department continues to spread the message of the Diocese. The results can be seen in record numbers of visitors to the website. It is good to see the amount of parishes participating; all need to be more regular with this. The website is updated frequently with the goings-on of the Diocese. Be a part of it! Share your good news! Do you have a parish website? Parish Facebook? Or a Parish Communications Coordinator? These are all important parts of a healthy parish. Please feel free to contact me by email or phone with any questions.

Yours in Christ

Aric Gingo
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Communications