



YOUR DIOCESE

# Alive in Christ

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN MICHIGAN • SPRING 2013

THEOPHANY  
AROUND  
THE DIOCESE



49TH DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY



NATIVITY SERVICES AND EVENTS

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Christ is Risen!

As we move into 2013, you will notice a new direction with the Diocesan Magazine, Alive in Christ. Each issue will feature an article about revitalization, what it exactly means to your diocese, your parish, and to you. Our first article is intended to cause some soul searching - read it and take an honest look at your own parish - does anything sound familiar? How can we break out of these cycles? Why do we need to do this? What can I do - I'm one person? We're all too old.

Our plan is to give you tools and inspiration to take steps and chip away at this challenge. Our guest writer, Joseph Kormos, presents an interesting and thought provoking look at the obstacles facing most parishes today. Furthermore, he provides sensible methods to overcome these bumps in the road. This won't happen overnight, but is a gradual process. Please read. And think. Then see how you can help.



Alive in Christ is produced by the Department of Communications of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania, a diocese of the Orthodox Church in America.

**EDITOR**

His Grace, Bishop MELCHISEDEK  
His Grace, Bishop MARK

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Aric Gingo

**EDITORIAL STAFF**

V. Rev. John Kowalczyk  
Matushka Sandra Kopestonsky

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Aric Gingo

**COVER PHOTOGRAPH**

David Kessler

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In the interest of keeping current, events that have occurred prior to the most recent issue date will not be included.

Please submit articles and photographs (with captions) to Aric Gingo at communications@doepa.org.

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To the Parishioners and faithful of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Jaroslav Pelikan, one of the great historians of the Christian Church in the twentieth century, and himself a convert to Orthodox Christianity, has written “Christians were Christians only because Christianity brought to them liberation from death. If one would penetrate to the heart of ... Christianity one must be present on the night when the Easter liturgy is celebrated.... The ... words of the Easter troparion... repeated a thousand times in tones ever more and more triumphant, repeated to the point of ecstasy and of an overflowing mystic joy -- “By His death He has trodden death beneath His feet” -- here is the great message of the Byzantine Church: the joy of Easter, the banishing of that ancient terror which beset the life of man...”

While this is true, and remains true, it is only part of the story. It is only the triumphant end of the story. Equally important is how our Lord got to that point, and how he bequeaths it to us that we may, each of us, take our own proper place in the story. In order for Jesus to trample down death “beneath His feet”, he had to go to the place of the dead. He had to destroy death from “the inside out.” He had to take up His cross to die.

It has long been pointed out that the Liturgical year of the Church begins in September, at just that point when the world begins its plunge into the darkness of winter. At the point of deepest darkness we celebrate the fact that a Light comes to shine in the darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it. Various people have discussed whether this lack of comprehension means that the darkness does not understand the light, or tries -- and fails -- to extinguish the light. For our purposes, these are not mutually exclusive statements. Each in its own way, is true.

The earthly life of our Lord is the story of how he was, in the words of St. Paul, tempted as we are -- and, yet did not sin. That is to say, our God loves us so much that in order to save us he lived and experienced the human life which we live. In the words of the Church fathers, he became as we are so that He could make us like He is.

To accomplish that, He had to take one final step. He had to go the “headquarters” of Death. He had to go to the realm of death and fill it -- make it explode -- with life, His life. The victory which our Lord obtains through the cross is the victory whereby no matter where we go, He, God Himself, will be there waiting for us. The only question is whether we, each of us, will enjoy His company. To that end we, each of us, have been given the period of the Great Fast, with its many crosses to bear, to aid us in getting ‘into shape’ spiritually, mentally, and physically, so that we may with clear vision see and rejoice in that light which has come into the world to save us.

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is risen!

+ *Melchisedek*

+Melchisedek

Bishop of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania  
locum tenens of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania



Reports from Diocesan Assembly  
[www.doepa.org/diocesanassembly2013](http://www.doepa.org/diocesanassembly2013)

# 49<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Assembly

## BETHLEHEM, PA

The 49th Diocesan Assembly was held at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Bethlehem, PA on Saturday, January 19, 2013. Divine Liturgy was celebrated before the Assembly. Those attending moved to the hall where the meeting began. The meeting was well attended by all deaneries.

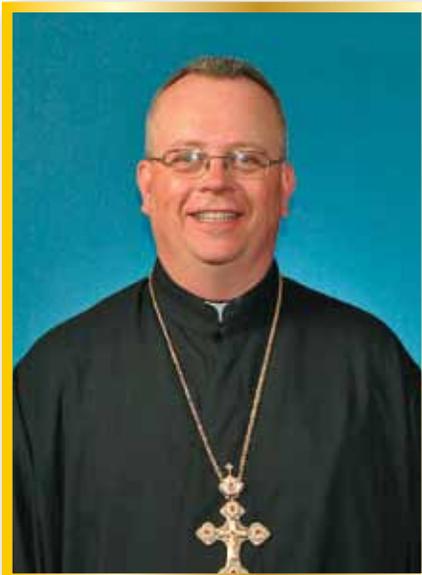
Photo gallery of liturgy and the meeting  
[www.doepa.org/news\\_events](http://www.doepa.org/news_events)





**DIOCESAN CLERGY MEETS AT ST. VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY**

The clergy of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania met for a retreat on February 25, 2013 at St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, New York.



**CONGRATULATIONS TO FR. JAMES JADICK!**

As of March 20, 2013, Fr. James Jadick has been granted retirement from the United States Air Force Reserve. He completed 26 faithful years of service with the Reserve and has reached the retirement age of 60. Father Jadick is rector at Holy Ascension Church in Frackville where he continues to service the parish and the community. We are happy to have him in our Diocese.



**DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEETS AT HOLY TRINITY, STROUDSBURG**

The Diocesan Council met on March 4, 2013 at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Stroudsburg, PA.



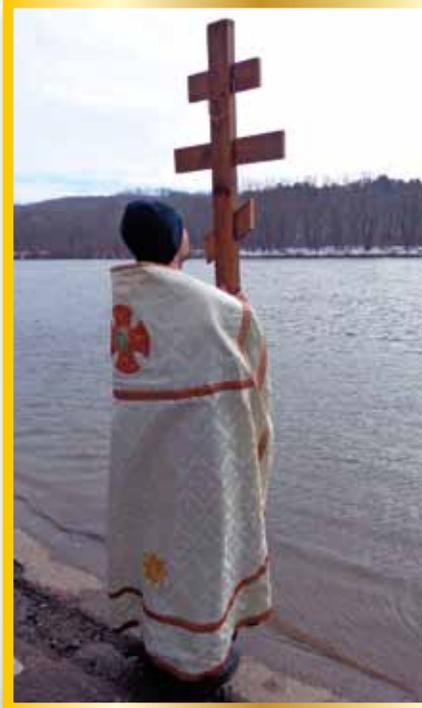
On February 28th, 2013, Bishop Mark hosted a luncheon at the Diocesan Center for retired clergy who substitute at our diocesan parishes when needed. Attending were Fathers James Chuta, Daniel Geeza, Timothy Hasenecz, Stephen Kopestonsky, Eugene Pianovich, Archimandrite Michael Thier, Claude Vinyard along with Chancellor Father John Kowalczyk and Diocesan Treasurer Fr. Martin Browne. The luncheon provided a wealth of experience and an opportunity for serious and enlightening discussion among the clergy.

# THEOPHANY

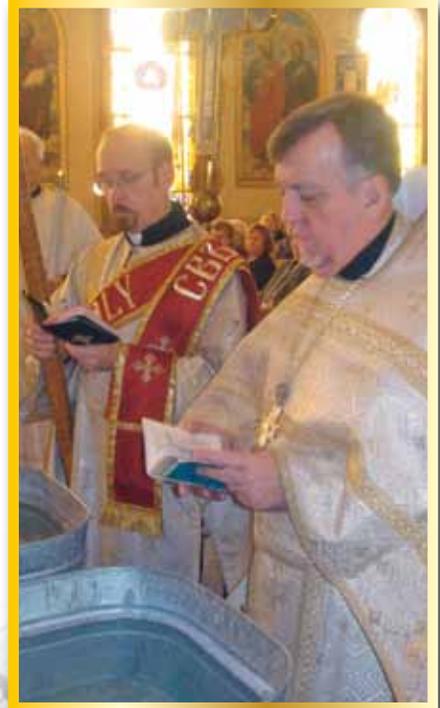
## CELEBRATIONS IN THE DIOCESE



EDWARDSVILLE - Blessing of the waters at St. John the Baptist.



BERWICK - Fr. Michael Demko blesses the waters of the Susquehanna River.



JERMYN - Blessing of the waters at St. Michael's.



STROUDSBURG - Fr. Nicholas Solak and the parishioners of Holy Trinity blessing McMichael's Creek.



HARRISBURG - Clergy and parishioners of Christ the Saviour blessing the waters of the Susquehanna River.

# The Feast of the Nativity

SERVICES, CONCERTS, GOOD DEEDS AND OF COURSE, YOLKAS!



BETHLEHEM - Nativity service at St. Nicholas.



WRIGHTSTOWN - Nativity service at St. Mark's.



WILKES-BARRE - Wyoming Valley Pan-Orthodox Choir at Holy Resurrection Cathedral.



JERMYN - Nativity service at St. Michael's.



HARRISBURG - Nativity service at Christ the Saviour.

AROUND THE DIOCESE



BERWICK - Christmas Carolers from Holy Annunciation continue a 50 year tradition of caroling on Christmas Eve.



WILKES-BARRE - Yolka program at Holy Trinity.



HARRISBURG - Fr. Daniel Ressetar presents items donated by the Christ the Saviour to the Harrisburg Ministry of Mother Wright.



GRADYVILLE - Yolka program at St. Herman of Alaska.



EDWARDSVILLE - The Sunday School of St. John the Baptist ring the bell for the Salvation Army.



JERMYN - Yolka program at St. Michael's.

AROUND THE DIOCES



WILKES-BARRE - Sunday School from Holy Trinity collect donations for Toys-4\_Tots.

# PARISH EVENTS

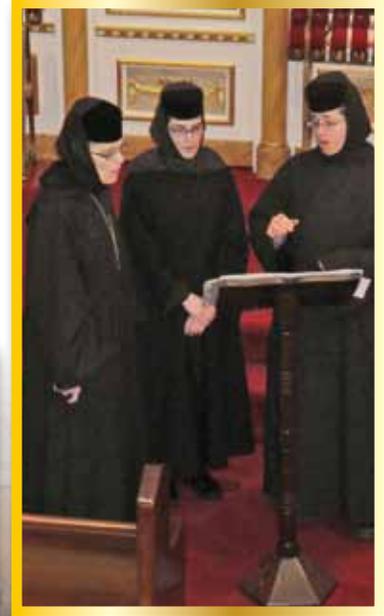
## GOINGS-ON IN THE DIOCESE



PHILADELPHIA - Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk welcomes His Grace, Bishop MELCHISEDEK to St. Stephen's.



MINERSVILLE - Youth of the Frackville Deanery enjoy bowling.



LOPEZ - Ancient Hymns concert at St. Vladimir's.



WILKES-BARRE - Parish Council sworn in at Holy Trinity.



PHILADELPHIA - His Grace, Bishop MARK celebrates with the clergy and parishioners of St. Nicholas on the occasion of the parish's 95th anniversary.



OLYPHANT - His Grace, Bishop MARK, honors Joseph Fetchina for 70 years of service



STROUDSBURG - Holy Trinity holds their monthly Community Breakfast.



PHILADELPHIA - His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON, speaks with Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk at the Novogodny Ball in the Philadelphia Deanery



WILLIAMSPORT - Rachael DeParlos and Virgil Tikhon Fowler were united in the Sacrament of Marriage at Holy Cross



BERWICK - His Grace, Bishop Mark honors Andrew Mihaly for his years of devoted service to Holy Annunciation and presents Father Michael Demko, pastor of Holy Annunciation, with the Nabedrenik.



JERMYN - His Grace, Bishop MARK visits St. Michael's.

AROUND THE DIOCESE



HARRISBURG - His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON, visits Christ the Saviour.



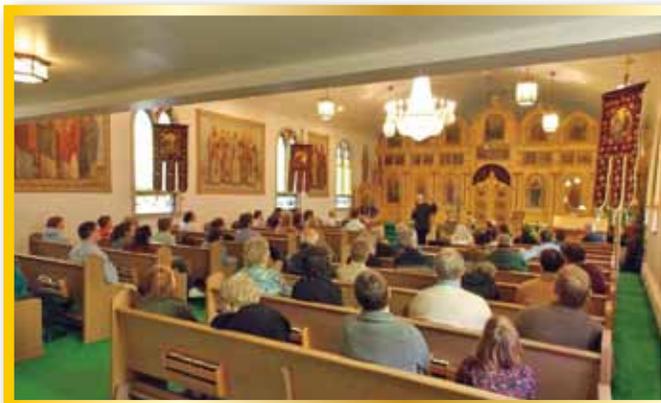
EDWARDSVILLE - St. John's honors Scouts on Scout Sunday.



WILKES-BARRE - Holy Trinity honors Scouts on Scout Sunday.



MECHANICSBURG - Holy Apostle's honors Scouts on Scout Sunday.



BERWICK - Author Klaus Kenneth on one of his many stops throughout the Diocese, delivers a lecture to Holy Annunciation parishioners and guests.



Father Igumen Sergius, Abbot of Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Monastery, South Canaan, PA., received a gift for the monastery church, an icon of Priest-Martyr Maksym of Carpatho-Rus, from Father Daniel Ressetar, the great-nephew of the saint and pastor emeritus of Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church, Harrisburg, PA. Written by iconographer Cheryl Ann Pituch, whom Father Daniel commissioned to do three similar ones, the second icon was given to Christ the Saviour Church; the third became the property of the Ressetar family. Inserted into each icon are relics of the saint.

*Priest-Martyr Maksym of Carpatho-Rus, pray to God for us.*



WRIGHTSTOWN - St. Mark's introduces their new website.

# "All is Well at St. XXXXXX"

## The Greatest Danger Is the Illusion That 'All is Well'

Joseph Kormos, Parish Development Ministry Leader;  
Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania, Orthodox Church in America

Once we happened to thumb through old report packets for past (OCA Midwest) Diocesan Assemblies. A 1995 report from a heritage parish jumped off the page. "All is well here at St. (parish name withheld)." Twenty or so years before the report the parish had been a community of nearly 200 adults -- but by the time of the report the parish had declined to less than 70. Through the backward lens of history we know that this parish continued to severely contract for at least another ten years -- though we can report signs of a better future have recently emerged. While numbers are only a part of the story, by the time of this report the parish was in the midst of long slide that would continue for another 10 years. Yet, the parish reported "All is well".

All Is Well?

How does a parish in obvious "peril" and in the midst of a 30+ year decline offer an "all is well" observation? Was there a sense that the parish was stuck in negativity and it was time to accentuate the positive? Was there a felt need to suppress bad news? Was the parish blind to its vital signs? We are reminded that C.S. Lewis once noted that "The greatest danger is the illusion that all is well". As we've worked with parishes to help them explore the road to a (hopefully) brighter future we've become fascinated with the mechanisms of change. What helps break parishes out of a downward spiral? What keeps them trapped in the momentum of such a cycle? Here are some of those forces as we've observed them.

### **Forces ("Anchors") Holding a Parish to the Status Quo**

#### **In-Grown Eyeballs**

A sense that we are here for "us" and we can't learn from others. Parishes with a predominance of this attitude isolate themselves from solutions or opportunities outside their walls -- and "ruttedness" prevails.

#### **Limited Budgets**

Particularly ministry budgets. Nothing brings fresh ideas to a halt like hearing "We can't afford it".

#### **Hiding Bad News**

This often includes "excessive peace keeping" (fear of playing with matches; fear of boat rocking).

#### **Lack of "Intentionality"**

Many Orthodox parishes simply do not drive things forward. The mind set is "we just come to church" -- according to their own limited frequency. This can be particularly true in an older parish - where the last directed effort of note was to build a church - 87 years ago.

#### **No Sense of Vision/Mission**

Or -- multiple competing visions. Both lead to paralysis. Parishes and their leaders need to regularly ask "What are we trying to be? What is God calling us to do"

#### **Gatekeepers**

Lay patriarchs or matriarchs intent on keeping things the same may be the strongest anchors. Occasionally the priest fills this role.

#### **Leadership Vacuum**

The aging of a parish can lead to an overall torpor and resistance to change -- but more importantly it may create a leadership vacuum -- an inability to pass the torch to a new set of parish stewards who can become responsible and accountable for building a bright parish future.

#### **A Change that Backfires**

Not all changes are good. Not all good changes are successful. Instead of allowing a failed change to implicitly eliminate all changes -- dig deep to understand how seemingly unsuccessful initiatives could have resulted in better outcomes. Pace? Communication? Dialogue? Multiple steps? Committed core group?

#### **Excessive Nostalgia**

Learning from and building on the parish past and heritage can be valuable. Living in the past never is.

No doubt we've missed a few -- but that should hold us for now for the "anchors".

Now let's identify those forces that can help parishes move forward.

The Initiative for Revitalization in the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania was started in 2011, with the formation of the Revitalization Committee. Have they visited your parish? They want to schedule an appointment with you. The Parish Health Inventory Model (PHIM) has been available for use since September of 2012 - did your parish complete it and give yourselves an honest evaluation? The Parish Health Inventory Model (PHIM), Revitalization Committee members and contact info as well as many other revitalization related documents, tips, and information can be found at

<http://doepa.org/revitalization.html>

Visit this page TODAY and take the first steps in making your parish stronger.

## How do parishes get out of ruts?

At one time we naively thought that a well constructed “Saturday workshop” could be enough to enliven a parish and reverse troubling trends. However the imposition of good ideas from “outside” is rarely a recipe for a parish and its leaders to change well worn habits. Parishes can be extremely resistant to outside ideas and stimuli. Instead they persist in what has become familiar and comfortable. As someone once said “When we don’t know what to do, we do what we know.” However, parishes (and other organic systems) can change quite readily in response to inner forces. Through our own observations and our readings here are a few inner mechanisms that can rattle a parish -- unfreezing expectations and disturbing its false equilibrium.

### Inner Forces Driving Change

#### Serious Study and Powerful Questions

Sometimes a discussion in a bible study or adult class can spill over into a broader parish conversation and lead to an appetite for renewal. An ad hoc discussion informs a “Why can’t we?” mentality. The probability of this is enhanced when a particularly relevant topic is chosen. “What should a Christian community be like? What are its values and behaviors?” Start with Acts 2:42-47. If you need more we think there is a lot to be learned from the Parish Inventory Model.

#### “Environmental” Change

While most effective changes usually need to be “our idea” they may germinate from an (external) environmental change. Perhaps there is a change to neighborhood demographics or economics -- implying a needed response by the parish. Perhaps a new apparently “successful” neighbor church springs up across the street. While the first reaction may be to bury our head -- occasionally this new environment may cause parishes to engage. Again the question “What is our Lord calling us as a community to do right now -- in this situation,” is hard to beat.

#### Grants

An outside grant of a small amount of cash can remove internal obstacles to achieving a modest forward moving action. Grants require accountability and can help silence (or at least ‘soften’) the “we can’t afford it” crowd.

#### New People

The potential for change created by a new priest is obvious along with the potential for new dynamics available from a second priest or even by engaging a parish administrative specialist. We’ve seen positive results from all. Sometimes a change in lay ‘faces’ can be almost as significant. The departure of a core lay person due to death, job transfer or being “fed up” can cause introspection or send the parish scurrying to plug holes - perhaps discovering new gifts in the process. Conversely the arrival of new people -- so long as they’re not treated as a “source of funds” or simply new “workers” -- can spark change. One priest told us that the arrival of a single family -- with their differing experiences, behaviors and practices from another parish has been the single most important factor in his parish’s reawakening.

#### Shared Unhappiness of Leaders

A little leaven can leaven the whole lump. We’ve seen parish situations where one or two credible, respected lay persons get serious about change. They step up and conclude “We’re heading in the wrong direction and we’re simply not going to let that happen here”. The question “What will happen to our church if we keep doing the same thing over and over?” can be helpful.

#### Exposure to Something Better

“Shared unhappiness” can be clarified when leaders get a glimpse or vision of new results. Results that fit so powerfully with the parish’s inward sense of mission as to disturb old comforts and make the status quo untenable. It may be group attendance at a conference (or even a webinar) or a visit to another parish. A “benchmark” exchange designed to learn, “How does this other parish do it? How have they built this ministry? How have they ...” helped one parish begin their push to get “unstuck”.

#### Face Facts -- Publish Some Data

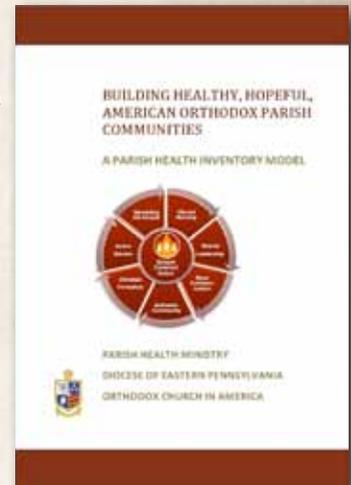
English author Samuel Johnson noted that, “The view of the gallows clarifies the mind.” Unfortunately in withering parishes that view seems to be constantly cloudy. Nobody wants a continual flow of negativity but occasionally it’s time to face facts. Gather key data -- not opinions but verifiable facts -- to help people understand the true parish situation. This can be particularly important in declining situations. Parishioners tend to think of their parish as it was --not as it is. We recently visited a parish to give a talk. My wife who accompanied me asked a nice lady at coffee hour “How large is the parish”. Though the liturgy had been attended by about 70 people, she replied “Oh, about 250.” The parish, which had been shrinking slowly from about 250 in the late 80’s, now numbered 58 adults. (Editor’s Note: This document is available on the DOEPA website under the “Revitalization” tab)

#### Worship Changes

Most priests and parishes have a number of desired, desirable, fully Orthodox worship modifications they’ve had on the back burner. Move that choir out of the choir loft. Change the music to make it work for your current situation. Engage a broader cross section of the parish in liturgical responses. Engage children. Worship changes --particularly those on Sunday -- are noticed and experienced by all and reinforced weekly. They can help a parish learn that “we can successfully adapt to new situations.

#### In 2012 We Have Little Excuse (Editor’s Note: 2013!)

None of the above change drivers is enough on it’s own -- but they can begin a journey. Some of these “mechanisms” were available to St Xxxx in 1995. But all of them and more are available to us now. In 2012 we have little excuse for long periods of parish decline without serious renewal efforts. In the words of one experienced priest we know: “Coasting is steady, steady is stagnant and stagnant is dead”. So...don’t coast! Particularly downhill.



# Teen Winter Retreat 2013

*Story Courtesy of Kimberly Metz*

Winter Storm “Nemo” brought historic amounts of snow to New York, New Jersey, and New England this past February...but it was no deterrent to our annual Diocesan Winter Teen Retreat, held the weekend of February 8-10, 2013 at the Fatima Renewal Center in Dalton, PA. Of the 42 students who were scheduled to arrive, 35 braved their way through the snow squalls that Friday night to join in the fun!

This year, our keynote speaker was Fr. Stephen Vernak of Christ the Saviour Church in Harrisburg. He taught the group about the lives of the twelve apostles, and discussed how all of us can serve Christ as his apostles on a daily basis in our own lives. Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, Spiritual Advisor for the Office of Young Adult Activities, was also present, and celebrated Vespers and Divine Liturgy. Bishop Mark also joined us on Saturday evening for a chat with the students. Additionally, Seminarian Gabriel Bilas served as our choirmaster for the weekend.

When the students were not in workshop with Fr. Stephen, there was plenty of free time to spend together. Many of our students made use of the comfy couches in the lounge area to hang out, play cards, and learn more about each other. Others spent time talking with Fr. Tim and Fr. Stephen during their free time. Still others braved the snowy parking lot to examine the snow left over from the blizzard on Friday night. We did not get to go on our annual hike because of the snow, but we did have the opportunity to Skype with high school senior Stephanie Yuschak all the way from her home in Moscow, to learn about how things are different for an Orthodox teen living halfway around the world.

It was a very successful event by all counts, and everyone is looking forward to returning to the Fatima Renewal Center for next year’s Winter Teen Retreat.



Bishop MARK chats with those gathered.



Fr. Stephen Vernak addresses the group.



A spirited game of Jenga during free time.

For more information about the Retreat and other programs offered by the Office of Young Adult Activities, please visit [www.ocayouth.org](http://www.ocayouth.org).

# What Are You Doing This Summer?

## ST. TIKHON'S SUMMER CAMP

Consider joining in the fun at St. Tikhon's Summer Camp, held this July 7-13, 2013! Spend the week playing and praying alongside other young Orthodox Christians on the grounds of St. Tikhon's Monastery and Seminary. Together, we will learn more about our faith while spending plenty of time in the great outdoors. The camp program is open to all children between the ages of 7-17. Visit [www.sttikhonscamp.org](http://www.sttikhonscamp.org) to download your registration form. The registration deadline is May 31, 2013.

## THE DOEPA MISSION TRIP 2013

### **This Year's project: The Revitalization of Assumption of the Holy Virgin in South Philadelphia**

The vision of this mission trip experience is meant to fulfill the commission of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ who told his own disciples: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Amen. (Matthew 28:31)

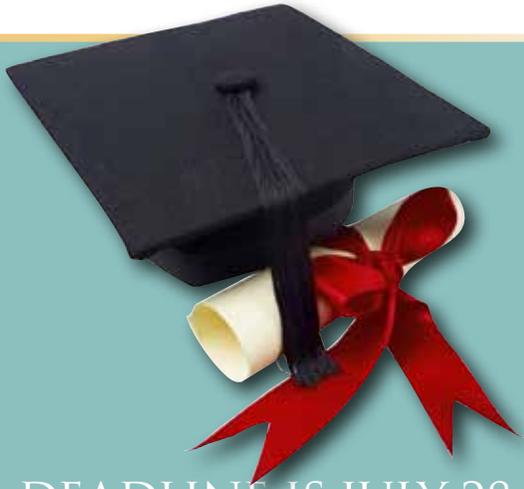
By God's Grace we will hold this trip from:  
**Monday, July 15th – Sunday July 21st, 2013**

- The Trip is open to all members of the diocese age 16 and above (younger if a parent attends)
- The Cost will be 250\$ per person- but we will also be accepting other donations as well to add more to our materials costs for the revitalization effort
- All team members should attend these meetings
- At these meetings all details will be explained with daily schedule and assignments given out
- Tool needs and supplies will be assessed
- The Team will stay on the grounds of the Assumption of the Virgin with meals and lodging provided on site

If you would like to attend see the Facebook page or you can email Fr. Daniel - [fr.danielm@gmail.com](mailto:fr.danielm@gmail.com) for more info or questions.

# CALENDAR

May 12	Bishop MARK Hierarchical Visitation	St. Michael's Orthodox Church, Jermyn
May 13	Diocesan Council Meeting	St. Michael's Orthodox Church, Wilmington, DE
May 18	Bishop MELCHISEDEK & Bishop MARK Hierarchical Visitation	50th Anniversary Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church, Harrisburg
May 19	Bishop MARK Hierarchical Visitation	All Saints Orthodox Church, Olyphant
May 25	St. Tikhon's Seminary Graduation	St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary
May 27	St. Tikhon's Pilgrimage	St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary
June 9	Clergy Wives Retreat	Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church, Harrisburg
June 15	Philadelphia Deanery Financial Accounting Meeting	Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Pottstown
June 16	Bishop MARK Hierarchical Visitation	St. Mark's Church, Wrightstown
July 28	Orthodox Family Day	Jim Thorpe - Mauch Chunk Lake Park
June 30	Bishop MELCHISEDEK Hierarchical Visitation	Holy Apostles Mission, Mechanicsburg



## ATTENTION GRADUATES:

Add one more thing to your post-graduation to do list! The Fall issue of *Alive in Christ* will feature our 2013 High School and College graduates. *Alive in Christ* would be honored to share your accomplishment with the Diocese. Submissions will also be posted on the Diocesan website. Instructions can be found at

DEADLINE IS JULY 28 [www.doepa.org](http://www.doepa.org)

## SEEKING CHOIR DIRECTORS

### **HOLY TRINITY • Catasauqua**

seeks a choir director to lead our choir in Divine Liturgy services. For more information, please contact James O'Brien at 610-682-7888 or Suzanne Cressman at 215-407-7336.

### **CHRIST THE SAVIOUR • Harrisburg**

seeks a choir director to lead our singers and faithful in the Divine services. Interested parties should contact Fr. Stephen Vernak at 717-652-1825 or [svernak@hotmail.com](mailto:svernak@hotmail.com).

More information on both positions is available at [www.doepa.org/announcements](http://www.doepa.org/announcements)