

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT – 2018

Last year's report began with the recognition that the year before was one of transition and renewal, and so this report begins with this too. Rather, it is better to say continuing transition and renewal, since both are processes that take place on many levels simultaneously. On the surface, or visible plane of our diocesan life, this transition and renewal was evident in the diocesan-wide activity of parish bylaw updating and approval that is required by the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, which was unanimously approved by the last All American Council in 2015, and requires compliance by December 31, 2017. Parish rectors, councils, together with deans, the chancellor and the archbishop were involved in this tedious and sometimes difficult task, which lacks the excitement or missionary purpose obvious in other activities of church life. However, as I noted in an article in Alive in Christ, good administrative order is a necessity mandated by Saint Paul and essential to the optimal functioning of the Church in its fulfillment of its mission. Thanks to the dedicated and competent efforts of so many, the task has been accomplished in our diocese.

We have also had to implement a coordinated program for background checks, which are essential to maintaining our commitment to providing safety in our church life for the vulnerable in age or condition from predators or, as the Scripture terms them, wolves in sheep's clothing. Given our human disinclination to change, this transition, too, has proven challenging in some respects, but nevertheless has been persevered in to the credit of parishes and rectors. The purpose of this new system is simple – integrated reporting, reliable recording and comprehensive compliance with the policies of the Church on preventing sexual misconduct.

Our Continuing Education program for clergy provided several opportunities for practical pastoral development that was well received. We did have a transition in this area as Fr. Nicholas Solak stepped down so as to focus on other responsibilities, and Father John Edward was appointed to take his place. This coming year will have additional opportunities for learning that recognize the challenges we face in our parishes from various social pathologies, such as opioid abuse and addiction and internet-related issues such as cyber bullying and pornography, to name but two. Additionally, we will hold another Pre-Lenten clergy retreat in February, as was done last year, which had Fr. Chad Hatfield as our speaker.

The publication of Alive in Christ continues with efforts to include a broader range of articles, including suggestions in the form of topics or reprints from both clergy and lay members of the diocese. Once again, I encourage those who have suggestions to make them known to me so we can evaluate them and hopefully pursue them.

Following up on last year's Assembly presentation by Bill Marianes, we welcomed him back on Pentecost weekend to deliver a one-day workshop that offered a broad scope of concrete, proven suggestions that enable parishes to renew their lives as effective experiences of, and witnesses to, the saving, transformative power of the gospel. This represented an effort to offer good seeds for us to plant and nurture in our

parishes. It would behoove all of us to evaluate what we have done with what we received from Bill's presentations in the last year and, where necessary, recommit ourselves to pursuing them. Of all of the proposals, he brought forth, the one he said was most effective was the small group approach, focused on common interest or activity, which built up the community by establishing or deepening relationships among parishioners. Many of our parishes are small groups, however, acting in the mentality of being a parish with the size and formality that term typically suggests. Why not treat ourselves as we are in so many cases- small groups of people - and work on establishing and deepening the relationships that exist there - not out of need, i.e. fundraisers, but out of interest?

As we enter 2018 we look forward to the All-American Council in St. Louis in July, which focuses on the theme of "For the Life of the World", observing the 55th anniversary of the publication of Very Rev. Schmemmann's book of that title. As one of countless people who were profoundly influenced by that work, and whose journey to the Orthodox Church began with our reading of it, perhaps it would be a wise idea for every parish to have a book group, or series of presentations based on it as part of parish education or even parish retreats. While he has been subject to much criticism for various ideas he advanced, some of it scurrilous and unbecoming professed Christians, Fr. Alexander obviously touched a nerve with **For the Life of the World** - diagnosing a fundamental ill in our society and showing how Orthodox Christianity offers the remedy for healing that illness, with clarity, beauty and truth. It is easy to nit pick, but the enduring power of this work and the man who wrote it deserves attention. **For the Life of the World** is, I believe, more relevant today than when it was written.

As evidence of the power of our faith to draw new members, we added to the ranks of our clergy this year with three new priests - Fathers Ignatius Hunter, Matthew Joyner and Seraphim Reynolds, and three new deacons - John Black, Scott Staller and Steven Orr. We welcome Fr. Matthew to our diocese, having come to us from the Diocese of the Mid West via St. Tikhon's Seminary, all of the others coming from within our diocese. We also congratulate both Fathers Ignatius and Mat. Seraphima, and Matthew and Ashley on the newest additions to their families, their sons Daniel and Liam, respectively. Fr. Michael and Matushka Catherine Demko welcomed daughter Kirianna to the family this past year as well. We welcome the new deacons to their service in their own parishes of Holy Trinity in Pottstown, Christ the Saviour in Harrisburg, and St. Herman of Alaska in Glen Mills.

We also wish to congratulate Father John Perich and Mat. Eugenia for the thirty years of service they have offered to St. Herman's, making it the unique community it is, known for its hospitality to all and its engagement with the world around it, near and far, and through various media, both old and new. Father Dan and Mat. Myra Kovalak endured a great trial during this year with their customary faith and perseverance, in addition to which they led Holy Cross Williamsport in celebrating forty years, thirty-nine of which they have served there building up the community both literally and spiritually. As a diocese we pray that the Lord will reward them for their dedicated labors and grant them both many more years of health and service. We also wish to acknowledge Fr. David and Mat. Sharon Shewczyk for over thirty years of priestly service to our diocese

in Simpson, Alden Station and Wilkes-Barre, in addition to many years of teaching and oversight of pastoral practice and liturgical education at St. Tikhon's Seminary. This will be Father David's last Diocesan Assembly with us as he will retire and relocate to North Carolina next month. Some make their presence and influence felt by motion, others by quiet. Father David is one of the latter. In the midst of a very full, active pastoral life, he has brought quiet and gentleness, not to mention beautiful singing to his brothers in the priesthood and all those he has served. Having had him as a teacher in the seminary and a colleague in the priesthood, I know that I speak for all of us in saying we will miss his quiet, powerful presence, but wish him many years of health, golf, and continued service in his new home. These thoughts also include Mat. Sharon and their sons Timothy and Nicholas, who have shared these decades of pastoral service with Fr. David. We also bid farewell to Fr. Michael Hatrak and Mat. Valeria who retired after forty plus years of service in Minersville, returning to Western Pennsylvania. Father and Matushka were recognized at last year's Assembly with a Synodal Gramota.

Congratulations to St. Nicholas in Coatesville, to Father Stephen and Matushka Jackie, the Parish Council and faithful on their celebration of 100 years! His Eminence served and a banquet was held to mark the occasion in October. We wish Father Stephen and the faithful Many Years!

I would like to thank the members of the Diocesan Council for their service this year, in particular the Diocesan Administration of Treasurer, Mr. Joe Tosca, and the deans, Fr. Nicholas Solak, Fr. Timothy Hojnicky and Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk, each of whom has carried their weighty responsibilities with diligence and concern in the midst of other demanding responsibilities both in their own parishes and beyond. Once again, I sincerely ask the forgiveness of any and all whom I have neglected during this past year or have offended in word or deed.

Yours in Christ,

V. Rev. Raymond Martin Browne
Chancellor