

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

June 3, 2015

Dear Reverend Fathers,

As many of you know, the loss of our Christian youth is a staggering problem today in our country. Statistics show us that more than 60% of our young people are graduating high school, going to college and never returning to their faith group. I do not mean their parish or community, but their faith. In other words, more than 6 out of 10 Orthodox young adults will abandon Orthodoxy. This is a huge challenge for all of us.

As the official campus ministry of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) works on behalf of all Orthodox to connect students to Christ and His Church during college. Through its campus-based chapters, regional events and programs such as College Conference and Real Break, OCF engages Orthodox college students across the continent in fellowship, education, worship, and service.

To fulfill this mission and seeking to reverse the trend of loss of faith so prevalent among our young people, OCF has just launched its fourth year of the First Forty Days Initiative – a program designed to help your parish’s high school graduates seamlessly join the OCF network by integrating them into the life of an OCF chapter during the first forty days of their college experience. It is critical to personally contact every first-year Orthodox college student so that they know that an Orthodox family awaits them on campus. Research has shown that most college students build the habits and peer groups they will maintain for their entire college career in the first six weeks of their freshman year. The Church must be here for them during this critical time.

The First Forty Days Initiative allows local OCF student leaders, spiritual advisors, and lay coordinators to introduce themselves to all new incoming students, making sure that they know about Orthodoxy on campus and nearby Orthodox parishes. These students will also receive a summer mailing directly from the OCF office with information and materials to help them navigate their freshman year of college as orthodox college students. It is our hope that through this personal connection, our young college students will not only stay connected but deepen their faith during their years in post-secondary education and graduate to be faithful stewards of parishes across the country.

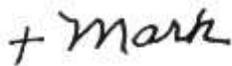
Fathers, I am writing to you for your assistance and I am expecting your compliance. I ask that you please submit your parish’s high school students’ information online to the OCF North American office by July 15<sup>th</sup> to ensure that your students will be directly contacted by OCF and greeted on their college campuses at the beginning of the fall semester.

Please visit the following webpage to submit your information to OCF online:  
[www.ocf.net/parents-parishes/connect-students/student-contacts/](http://www.ocf.net/parents-parishes/connect-students/student-contacts/)

Please be assured that contact information will remain confidential and will be released internally to the OCF network.

I am most appreciate for your assistance in this important matter, assuring you of a remembrance in prayer, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Mark". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Mark" is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

+MARK  
Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania