

# Wilkes-Barre Deanery

## Report to the 2011 Diocesan Assembly

Fr Dan Kovalak, *Dean*   Fr David Shewczyk, *Assistant Dean*  
Fr Nicholas Solak, *Secretary*   Fr Martin Browne, *Treasurer*

### Glory to Jesus Christ!

**WORSHIP:** Deanery clergy and faithful gathered on many occasions for worship and fellowship during the past year; most notably our Lenten Mission Schedule that included: Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre and subsequent Sundays at St Nicholas Church, Olyphant, Holy Annunciation Church, Berwick, St Michael Church, Old Forge, and Holy Cross Church, Williamsport. The Holy Wednesday Unction Service was held at Holy Trinity Church, Wilkes-Barre.

We held a Deanery-wide celebration commemorating our heavenly patron, St Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, on his feast day, Saturday, May 7, at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, including Liturgy, lunch and a talk by Fr Martin Browne. Our Deanery family was also invited to participate in various local services; minor feast days, akathists, and intercession services before visiting icons.

Several parishes held major celebrations since our last Assembly: St John's, Edwardsville celebrated their Centennial on June 18; All Saints, Olyphant celebrated their Reconsecration on September 17; and St John's Nanticoke, celebrated their Centennial on October 22. We congratulate those communities on their respective milestones.

Deanery parishes increasingly strive to enhance their respective cycles of services, offering the faithful additional opportunities for corporate worship and fellowship, and an "open door" to those seeking "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3)

**FELLOWSHIP:** Fellowship accompanies most diocesan and deanery services and events, extending the *koinonia* beyond our worship, specially among "the brethren."

Two Deanery Clergy meetings were held since the last Assembly -- on June 9 and November 17 -- at the Perkins Restaurant in Pittston, a central location. Meeting agendas include administrative reports and opportunities to discuss timely issues.

The Deanery includes a number of retired and attached clergy whose involvement and experience are greatly valued and appreciated. A sub-committee of our retired clergy reviewed and proposed changes to the OCA Pension Plan which were forwarded, on behalf of the Deanery, to the OCA for consideration.

Special Deanery events promoting fellowship were a Clergy Family Picnic on July 12 and an Altar Boy Picnic in Olyphant on August 16. Deanery clergy also participate in

Diocesan Retreats and Conferences and were well-represented at the recent OCA All-American Council in Seattle WA.

**OUTREACH/YOUTH:** The number of educational and outreach activities of deanery parishes continues to increase! We were specially privileged to have Dr Tristram Englehardt, Jr. and Fr Joseph Huneycutt, among others, speaking within our deanery.

Several parishes host various youth events and Vacation Church Schools, and provide scholarships to the Diocesan Teen Retreat and St Tikhon's Summer Camp, some deanery homeschooling families are beginning to form a network -- and Holy Annunciation Church, Berwick, has a talented young dance troupe!

**COMMUNICATION:** Official notices from the Bishop and Chancery office continue to be communicated to Deanery Clergy in a timely manner via internet "Dean-O-Grams." We also published hard-copy issues of *Deanery News* with articles and announcements at each of our Lenten Mission services.

**We continue, however, to sense a lack of communication filtering down to the parish leadership level on the urgency of satisfying the adopted OCA/Diocesan Administrative Requirements; which, again, we strongly encourage our parishes to revisit on a regular, ongoing basis.**

**MINISTRY:** Our parishes support food programs to assist local agencies feed the hungry and/or have become regularly involved in staffing and supporting existing soup kitchens. We commend such efforts and urge all deanery faithful to "go and do likewise!"

Some parish campus and prison ministries are developing to various degrees but require additional volunteers and work to bear fruit and some parishes have established visitation ministries to complement the pastoral ministry to the ill and afflicted.

The corporate ministry of our Deanery rallied early in 2011 with the devastating earthquake in Japan. In prayerful response, we forwarded a donation of \$1,600 to IOCC representing collections from our Lenten Mission Services. Tragic storms in the South soon followed, where our financial response was \$500. More recently, the severe September storms within our deanery incited our offering of \$600 to three families particularly devastated.

Recognizing our ongoing desire to support "one of our own," we also contributed \$500 to OCMC to assist the work of Christina Semon from All Saints, Olyphant, in her missionary field, Moldova.

It remains our hope that, once we get our deanery "administrative house in order," parish initiatives for mission and ministry will find their way to the top of our corporate agenda.

**CLERGY:** Though Bishop Tikhon makes part-time assignments to temporarily fill vacancies, present deanery clergy assignments remain largely intact (as of this writing). We rejoice with deanery clergy and faithful who have received synodal and diocesan awards this past year (as noted in diocesan publications). We welcome recently-ordained Deacon John Nightingale of St Nicholas Church, Olyphant to the clergy ranks. And we regrettably bid farewell to Fr David Cowan of All Saints Church, Olyphant, soon to transfer to the Diocese of New York and New Jersey.

**UPCOMING:** Rather than attempt to charter another deanery bus for the coming January, 2012 March for Life in Washington, we'll be providing our parishes a list of existing, local options available to those desiring to participate. We further encourage our parishes to be involved in related local events and initiatives that support the sanctity of human life.

We've set aside **Saturday, April 28, 2012** for a special deanery event (but have yet to determine the nature of the event. Mark the date and watch for details.)

Respectfully submitted,

Fr Dan Kovalak, Dean