



Communications Department Report to the 60th Diocesan Assembly

Overview

The year 2023 continued the upward trend for the Office of Communications. News/Photo submissions were increased once again, and many parishes became active with publicity.

www.doepa.org

The Diocesan website saw an average of 11,641 visitors a month during 2023. The LOWEST number of monthly visitors was in February with 8,562 visitors. November 2023 is now the undisputed leader EVER in visitors with 17,287 - a truly whopping number. Please note this data does not include December which hasn't wrapped up as of the time this report was written)

In 2021, we had 200 news submissions. In 2023, the number grew to 240 (as of December 22). We had a few new parishes begin submitting photos and news which is great. The national FOCA began submitting items, as well as OCPM and the Seminaries. The youth portion of the site underwent some significant changes, and the camps/retreats are soon to be (if not already) incorporated into the site. There are still many churches from whom we receive nothing at all. As has been stated before, it would be great if this changed in the new year.

DONATE buttons were added to the website last year. This feature is not monitored by the office; rather the Treasurer controls it.

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 or 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 is 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
Frackville
Glen Mills
Harrisburg
Jermyn
Mechanicsburg
Minersville
Mount Carmel
Nanticoke
Old Forge
Olyphant (All Saints)
Olyphant (Saint Nicholas)
Saint Clair
Stroudsburg
Wilkes-Barre Holy Resurrection Cathedral

PLUS

MANY items from the Diocese, FOCA, IOCC, the OCA, OCPM, and Diocesan Youth.

This year FIVE parishes were removed from the above list with 2 new parishes added. Sadly, 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 correct? This is truly the first place a person goes when preparing to make a decision.

Major Clean Up Coming in 2023 2024

2023 was to see a "clean up" of the back-end (ie storage) of the Diocesan website. This did not occur as the hours needed simply to keep up with postings were more than budgeted for. Cleaning up the files is much more than selecting all and deleting -

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

there needs to be careful consideration as to how things will be affected by this, and it will be a time intensive process. The Office will do its best to begin addressing this in 2024, but if we continue trending the way we are, it is not financially feasible.

Youth Emphasis

As mentioned earlier, the YOUTH section of the website is going to be integrated with the camp/retreat registration. Fr. John Parsells (website management system (OWS)) has set this up with assistance from Mark Linnehan and others. This should allow better tracking of registration.

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
Assistant to the Archbishop
Communications