

## **DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEETS IN STROUDSBURG**

*The Diocesan Council of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania met on Thursday, May 17, 2012 at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Stroudsburg under the chairmanship of His Eminence, Archbishop TIKHON.*

*Reports were offered by the Diocesan Administration and reviewed by the Council.*

*His Eminence reviewed issues discussed at the Holy Synod of Bishops Spring meeting held last week, including the ongoing revision and implementation of policies on sexual misconduct, follow-up on initiatives voted on by the All American Council, clergy retirement, and the elevation of four bishops to the rank of Archbishop. Fr. Daniel Kovalak led the Council in singing "Many Years" to His Eminence on his elevation.*

*Additionally, His Eminence reviewed upcoming events in the Summer and early Fall and addressed a variety of issues of diocesan importance which are currently under examination or will be in the future, such as Diocesan By-laws, a Talent Resource Bank, uniform parish By-laws, cemetery oversight, continuing education for clergy and initiatives for clergy health. Also discussed were the fire in Nanticoke and the consequences of the fire for the parish, its pastor and the diocese. The extreme generosity of so many people throughout the O.C. A to St. John the Baptist and the Sexton family was noted with sincere gratitude by the Diocesan Council. The Council was briefed by His Eminence, Fr. Tim Hojnicky and Mark Linnehan on the ongoing plans for acquiring property for a parish plant.*

*The Chancellor presented a report that reviewed issues related to parish vacancies and clergy recruitment, including the clergy retreat held at the beginning of Great Lent, meetings with the deans and the Archbishop to review parish and clergy health and performance, a visit St. Vladimir's Seminary in order to offer opportunities for clergy placement to seminarians while presenting the diocesan scholarship to our seminarian, Harrison Russin.*

*The Treasurer presented a report which included the refund of \$7000 to the diocese by the Central Administration from the surplus of the All American Council, and a recent gift of \$1400 to the diocese for use as the discretion of the Archbishop. Statements of Income and Expense and Financial Position along with Receivables were presented. Protodeacon Sergei Kapral represented the Auditors and reported on the audit held on May 8<sup>th</sup> which found everything to be in good order.*

*Fr. David Mahaffey presented a report on the Metropolitan Council which focused on SMPAC related issues, Post Conciliar Commission activity, Financial Committee activity and discussion about the next All American Council.*

*Discussions were also held on the progress of the Revitalization Committee and there was a growing consensus that the Diocese needs to revisit the three-tiered template for parishes that was presented at the 2010 Diocesan Assembly. The state of many of the diocesan parishes and the growing clergy shortage make such a direction imperative and His Eminence indicated that this was the direction the diocese needs to take. The Committee also presented icon cards of St Alexis of Wilkes-Barre which are to be distributed throughout the diocese to encourage the prayerful support of the faithful for the work of revitalization.*

*A draft of Diocesan By-laws was reviewed and some discussion was had with the agreement that the council would submit any suggestions to the By Law Committee within two weeks. A revised draft will be presented at the next Council meeting. His Eminence reviewed some legal matters that are currently under review.*

*The Council also established the date and location of the next Diocesan Council meeting which will take place on Thursday, August 30, 2012 at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank in Harrisburg. In conjunction with their meeting, the members of the Diocesan Council will spend time working at the food bank, as was done in August of 2011 when the Council met in Allentown to work at the soup kitchen sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Council of Churches.*

*In reviewing the dates of the Diocesan Assembly which were set for January, the Council recommended moving the dates from January 18 and 19 (Friday and Saturday) to January 17 and 18 (Thursday and Friday). His Eminence approved this change and will communicate it to the Diocese so that the parishes can prepare accordingly.*

*At the conclusion of the meeting, Protodeacon Sergei Kapral presented Archbishop Tikhon with a copy of a book, "Greening the Orthodox Parish: A Handbook for Christian Ecological Practice", recently published by the Orthodox Fellowship of the Transfiguration. Protodeacon Sergei has been a long-standing member of this Fellowship and has represented our Diocese well in his tireless efforts in raising our awareness of environmental concerns and reminding us of the sacredness and beauty of creation.*

*The Council enjoyed the hospitality of the Holy Trinity Church which provided the space for the meeting as well as a delicious luncheon. Some members of the Council also attended the Vespers service which was served by the Rector of the parish, Fr. Nicholas Solak.*