

14th All-American Council Concludes

Diocese of New England well represented



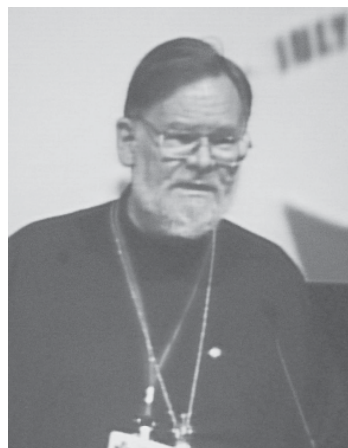
Many of the New England clergy and lay delegates gather with His Grace, Bishop Nikon (Photo: Paul Salina)

Clergy and lay delegates from throughout North America gathered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada from July 17-22, 2005 for the 14th All-American Council of The Orthodox Church in America. Almost 1,500 men, women and children attended the Council as delegates, observers, youth observers or just attendees. Virtually all the parishes of the Diocese of New England were represented by at least one delegate.

A detailed description of each day's events can be accessed at the OCA website: www.oca.org. *The Orthodox Church* newspaper



Matushka Cindy Voytovich directed the youth choir at the Thursday Divine Liturgy (Photo: Paul Salina)



Diocesan Chancellor, Fr. Michael Westerberg, presents those nominated to Church-wide positions (Photo: Paul Salina)

will also publish detailed narratives and some of the reports that were delivered at the Council.

The focal point of each day of the Council was, of course, the worship. Divine Liturgies were served on Sunday, Monday and Thursday mornings. Matins was served on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday morning. Daily Vespers were held each day except for Tuesday, when a beautiful new Akathist to the Saints of North American was served.

The thorough reports of both the Primate and Chancellor of the Church highlighted the work of the Church and its departments, boards, commis-

COUNCIL TO 8



Diocese of New England • Orthodox Church in America

Volume 15 • Number 8 • September 2005

<http://www.dneoca.org>

O.N.E. (ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND)

Diocese of New England, Orthodox Church in America
Published monthly except for July-August

His Beatitude, Metropolitan HERMAN, Locum tenens
His Grace, Bishop NIKON, Administrator
The Very Reverend John J. Dresko, Editor

Advertising: This publication will accept advertisements. However, we reserve the right to refuse any advertising that we find unacceptable for a publication of this type. **Rate:** \$50.00 per quarter page, \$100.00 per half page, \$175.00 per full page.

Subscription: Distributed free of charge to diocesan members. \$10.00 per year or any part thereof for others. Subscription outside of U.S.: \$15.00 (U.S. Currency).

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Hardware: This issue was composed on an Apple Power Macintosh G5 with 1.5 gb RAM, a Umax Astra 3450 scanner, and a Hewlett-Packard LaserJet 5MP laser printer. **Software:** Microsoft Word X & PageMaker 6.52. Reproduction done at GT Graphics, Forestville, CT.

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ON THE DOCKET

A listing of upcoming events in the Diocese.
Please forward any dates you wish to be included to the Editor.

September 18, 2005

90th Anniversary Celebration
St. Nicholas Church, Norwich, CT

September 19, 2005

SVS Lectures: The World of the Prophets, 7:00 P.M.
Fr. Paul Tarazi
Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT

September 25, 2005

90th Anniversary Celebration
Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT

September 26, 2005

SVS Lectures: Christ and Culture, 7:00 P.M.
Dean John Erickson
Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT

October 1, 2005

ORTHODOX EDUCATION DAY
St. Vladimir Seminary, Crestwood, NY

October 2, 2005

Annual FORCC Scholarship Banquet
Holy Trinity Greek Church, Bridgeport, CT

October 3, 2005

SVS Lectures: Confronting the World in the Second Century
7:00 P.M., Fr. John Behr
Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT

October 7-8, 2005

100th Anniversary Celebration
Holy Trinity Church, Springfield, VT

October 10, 2005

SVS Lectures: Liturgical Music and Culture, 7:00 P.M.
Mrs. Helen Erickson
Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT

October 17, 2005

SVS Lectures: Liturgy and Culture, 7:00 P.M.
Dr. Paul Meyendorff
Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT

October 28-29, 2005

42nd DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, CT

Around the Parishes

Hartford, Connecticut

Prayerful congratulations to Monica Kapral, who was received into the Holy Orthodox Church at All Saints in Hartford, through the Sacrament of Chrismation. Monica joins the community with her husband Mark. Many Years!

It was a joyful occasion, too, as we hosted the Special Assembly called to act on the vacancy of the Bishop of Hartford and New England. It was good to welcome His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman; His Grace Bishop Nikon; our national chancellor, Fr. Robert Kondratick; the Metropolitan's secretary, Fr. David Brum; Subdeacon Peter Ilchuk; Martin Paluch, photographer, and others from the national chancery. It was good also to welcome the clergy and lay delegates from throughout New England. Special thanks to parish members, Chris Evans, Nick Medynski, Joan Holobinko, Cathy Vargas, Mark and Susan Ranstead, Peter and Olga Malick, Phyllis Sturtevant, the Andrzejewski family, Michael Stenko, and John Holobinko and choir members. And a special note of gratitude to Stephanie Hendewich who, each hierar-

OUR DIOCESE

PEOPLE
PLACES
EVENTS

chal visit, prepares the bread and salt for presentation.

Another get together for our parish was our annual Old Fashioned Picnic coordinated by Cathy and David Vargas. The always fund-event was held mostly in our auditorium this year as the hot weather kept most of us from the Church grounds. The food and fellowship were not diminished.

Congratulations to Betsy Medynski and Ryan Fitzgerald, our two high school graduates, who were presented with gifts from the parish and the R Club at our annual Church School graduation. Betsy, the daughter of Nick and Jan Medynski, plans to attend Kueka College in New York State; and Ryan, the son of Robert and Marianne Fitzgerald, will be attending the University of Connecticut. They were presented with Bibles and gifts from the parish and R Club. Certificates and keepsakes were presented to all of our students. Special thanks to Cathy Vargas, coordinator of the Church School. Many Years!

Plans are underway for an expanded Scarborough Fair and Tag Sale Aug. 20. Besides the popular tag sale and food, Susan Ranstead, coordinator, is introducing a mini-carnival for youth and the young at heart in the community, with bouncing rides, pony rides, games and more. The parish is seeking someone knowledgeable about the Church who can speak Spanish and is willing to

spend the day at the event answering any questions. If you can volunteer please contact Fr. William at All Saints.

Persons attending All Saints are enjoying the new carpeting, recently installed. The improvement was made possible by a gift from Archie Meshenuk in memory of his sister Olga Meshenuk, a long-time faithful member of the parish. Memory Eternal! Many Years!

Memory Eternal to Paul Opalak, Mary Tincovich, Anna Pac, Mary Ziruk and Anna Listoric, who fell asleep in the Lord. They will all be missed.

- submitted by Fr. William DuBovik

Claremont, New Hampshire

It has been a rather busy month at Holy Resurrection parish since the last newsletter in *ONE*.

On Sunday, June 19, parishioners, relatives and friends witnessed the wedding of Andrew Gibson of Claremont and Faith Wood of Chester, VT at the church. Following the ceremony, almost everyone walked several blocks to La Café Cubana in downtown Claremont for a gala reception. Some attendees remarked that a formal liturgical wedding procession to the post-wedding celebration would have been appropriate, as that has been a tradition in parts of Russia, the Ukraine and Eastern Europe. After the celebration, the newlyweds left for a wedding trip to France, Spain and Portugal.

On Sunday, July 10, there was the wedding of Oleg Ustinov and Ajia Sapale, both of Claremont. The wedding reception followed the ceremony in the church hall.

After parishioners said farewell last month to the Blake Keller family which relocated to Shanghai, PRC, two additional families have relocated elsewhere: the Gregory DePardo family returned to Cranston, Rhode Island and the Jonathan Friedman family moved to Texas where Jonathan will be the head neurosurgeon at a new clinic in that state.

Holy Resurrection will be sharing John and Amy Konkle and their family with Saint Jacob of Alaska Mission in Northfield, VT in a support role there, hopefully maintaining a "dual citizenship" in both congregations.

Then, on July 24, there was a triple baptism, performed by Father Andrew, successively, on Peter and Nikolai Adams and Caspar Ustinov. The first two are brothers adopted last year from a Russian orphanage. They, with a family



Nikolai Adams is baptized in Claremont

“Communicant” and “Community”

by Father John Dresko

The recent All American Council, gathered in Toronto, had as the theme *Our Church and the Future*. As I pondered that and meditated on some of the problems we face, I was led to ask the question, “What does it mean to be an Orthodox Communicant in an Orthodox Community?”

An Orthodox Communicant is a faithful being.

St. Paul says that faith is the hope and assurance of things unseen. From the moment of our baptism into the Church, even as infants, we are full members of the Church, communing from the same chalice and the same Lord as everyone else, young and old. Our faith is measured in our participation in the Faith, not our knowledge. We can know *about* God while not *knowing* Him.

Obviously, part of our growing experience in the life of the Church is to learn the tenets of the faith. But, conscious, analytical, “testable” knowledge of the faith has never been seen as the measure of our membership in the Body of Christ. When we reduce the life of the parish to the life of the church school, we are making our children good Protestants, but poor Orthodox.

An Orthodox Communicant is a worshipping being.

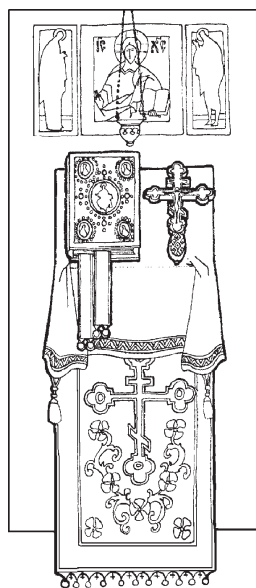
It is clear from Orthodox theology and from reading the Scriptures that we each are placed on this earth to praise and worship God. That is done by being present for the Divine Services. Perhaps it is sad that it needs to be said, but it needs to be said – it is a sin to simply avoid, miss and skip the services of the Church. Period.

A worshipping Orthodox communicant is also one who prays not only in the church building, but also uses the prayer of the Church to

inspire and edify a personal prayer life. The “liturgy” of the Church (“liturgy” means “common work”) is carried out of the building to transform and transfigure the world by the way we live our lives. If the Divine Liturgy makes the liturgy of our life prayerful and holy, the whole world is affected.

An Orthodox Communicant is a penitent being.

One essential aspect of our relationship with God is that we have willfully chosen to separate ourselves from Him. When we realize that, we humbly and sorrowfully approach God and confess our sin while seeking forgiveness.



The problem in our parishes (and our society) today is that we have no realization that we are separated from God, we have no sorrow that we are separated from God, and we believe that we have done nothing for which to be forgiven.

The Sacrament of Confession is necessary to the spiritual life of any Orthodox Christian. This is true for both adults and children of confessing age. It is impossible to be an Orthodox Communicant without

being a regular confessor of sins.

An Orthodox Communicant is a communing being.

A great misunderstanding for many years in the Church was the teaching that participation in Holy Communion was a yearly obligation that was necessary to maintain our voting membership in the Church.

The great misunderstanding of the Church today is at the exact opposite end of the poles. We have numerous faithful (perhaps even the majority) who approach the chalice every week without any kind of fear, preparation or respect. An even worse sin is that there are people who want to be “regular” communicants but see nothing wrong with just skipping services for 2-3 weeks (or more!) and then coming back to the chalice as if nothing is wrong.

“Regular” means just that – regular. Going to regular communion means that we strive to maintain a life compatible with that act. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann used to say that each day we should say a prayer of thanksgiving for the Eucharist we just received and a prayer of preparation for the Eucharist we are about to receive. We live from Eucharist to Eucharist. Confession is not necessary each and every time when someone remains a regular communicant – *provided that we have not excommunicated ourselves through our behavior.*

One example of behavior that excommunicates us is ignoring the services of the church. We pray for those who are “absent for a cause worthy of a blessing.” Simply choosing to not be present is not worthy of a blessing. Confession is necessary to restore us to a proper relationship with the Lord and His Church.

But an Orthodox Communicant needs a *place* in which he or she can commune. That place is the Church –

particularly the local parish – the Orthodox Community.

An Orthodox Community must be a place we like to be.

Our parish, indeed, the whole Church, should be a place we like to be, in fact, a place we love to be, would rather be than any other place.

St. Peter said to the Lord at the Transfiguration, “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” How often it seems that we don’t feel that way. It’s almost as if the Church were a place that we tolerate, much like the dentist’s office: “It’s good for me to be here, no matter how uncomfortable it makes me.” Or it is just another schedule-buster: “Well, I put off my gardening and dinner is going to be very late because I’m not home to turn the oven on.” Or has the appeal of television summer reruns: “Well, there’s nothing else going on at this time, so I’m here.”

Our parish is where God shows us the way to salvation. He does not use the TV for this purpose. He does not call us to assemble at the soccer field. He certainly will not come to us lying in bed through the Sunday newspaper. He does not tell us to gather as a “family” to share a big breakfast and our own “special time.” He tells us to *assemble* on the Lord’s Day as the Church, treating each other like brothers and sisters, rejoicing in the presence of our true family.

An Orthodox Community must be a place where we support each other.

The whole world is a place that tells us to take care of ourselves “because no one else will.” “Be your own man!” “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!” Etc., etc.

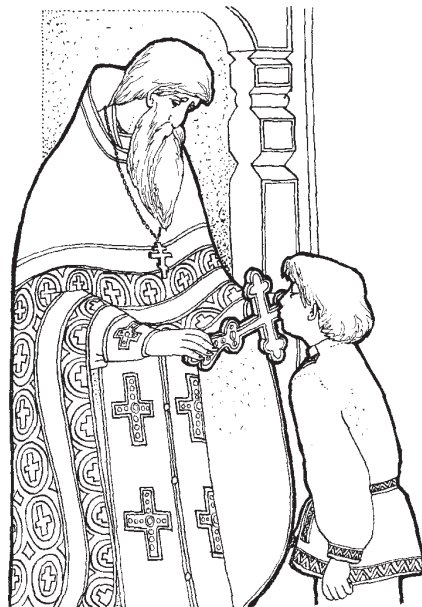
God, however, tells us that it is only in the Church, where we experience Him in each other, that we find the true path to salvation. The Church is where we lean on each other; where we fall down together and help each other up; where we lift each other up in prayer. “The only thing we can do by ourselves,” Fr.

Thomas Hopko loves quoting Russian philosopher Khomiakov, “is go to hell.”

An Orthodox Community must be a place for which we care.

If the Church is truly God’s Kingdom experienced on earth, a place where we support each other, where we find salvation, where we would rather be than any other place, is also the place for which we must provide *care*.

We find nothing wrong with the bank expecting us to pay our mortgage and in return they let us



keep our house. Nor with our mother expecting some help from us when she is recuperating from surgery. Nor with a family reunion at some cousin’s house. Nor with praying for a dear friend who is gravely ill. Nor with ignoring our own safety when our child is at risk from some danger.

Why, then, would we find it hard to believe that we should financially support the Church so we can keep the House of God? Or offering prayers, food and assistance to someone ill or injured and recuperating? Or with fellowship on a parish level (a “family reunion,” no?) in picnics, coffee hour, and other

functions? Or by extending ourselves in faith by caring for the Church even when it seems we can’t care so much for ourselves if we do that? If we love the Church, we care for her and her members – generously. It is that simple.

An Orthodox Community must be a place that defines all other places.

Think of the places that are very special to you. Your home and family. Your neighborhood and friends. Your place of employment and co-workers. Your backyard. Your kid’s ball field. Any place that you can think of that takes a piece of your life can only truly be seen when looked at with the eyes of faith in the Church.

How can you have a family if it doesn’t reflect the love and sacrifice of the Church community? St. Paul equates the life of the Church with marriage – Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride. How can you be a loving friend, or spouse, or child, unless you reflect God, who is love? How can you be a parent without reflecting our Father who is in heaven and our Mother Church? Who or what is a better example of loving sacrifice? Indeed, how can any place in your life have meaning or importance, unless it is first seen through the Church? It can’t.

Of course, that also means a challenge for the community of the Church and especially for my local parish. That community has to be faithful to the Christian message to be an adequate example that I may follow and pattern in the rest of my life. We each have to work to ensure this.

(This article is edited from an article written and published in 1995. Father John Dresko is Rector of Holy Trinity Church in New Britain, CT and Editor of Orthodox New England.)

FORCC Banquet

The Fellowship of Orthodox Christian Churches of Connecticut (FORCC) announces the recipients of their 2005 Scholarships and their home parish. *Smerznak, Medak & Kidwell (\$1000.00 each) Scholarships* were awarded to Theophilos J. Giannakopoulos, St. George Cathedral, Hartford, and Katherine Bakes, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Bridgeport. Four FORCC (\$500.00 each) Scholarships were awarded to: Nicole C. Bikakis, Jessics C. Demont and Gregory Papachristos, members of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Bridgeport, and John Khalil Sakakini, Saint Nicholas Antiochian Church, Bridgeport.

All recipients will be honored at our annual scholarship banquet to be held at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Hall, Park Avenue, Bridgeport, on October 2nd. Father Costas Sitaras will be the guest speaker. Topic of discussion will be *The Orthodox Family*.

Donation is \$35.00 for Adults and \$10.00 for Children under 12. Advance ticket sales only. For tickets, contact your Parish representative, or Nina Kosowsky @ 203-924-0936. Tickets deadline is September 27th. Tickets **will not be sold** at the door.

Proceeds of this dinner provide major funding for FORCC. Please join us for great food, fun, and fellowship. Meet and greet old acquaintances and make new ones.

Forms to place ads in our Benefit Banquet Program book are available at your local parishes. ALL ADS MUST BE PAID AND RECEIVED BY September 15th. Mail completed form with check payable to FORCC, to Bill Balamaci, 106 Southport Woods Drive, Southport, CT 06490.

Next meeting is scheduled for September 15 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Park Avenue, Bridgeport.

- submitted by Barbara Ann Dixon

Our Lady of Sitka Icon to be in New England

The Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church, 285 Alden Avenue, New Haven is privileged to announce that on Wednesday, October 19, 2005, they will feature the Icon of the Mother of God "Our Lady of Sitka." Akathist will be served at 7:00 P.M.

The Icon will also be featured at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, 165 Park Drive, Boston, MA. on Tuesday, October 18. Akathist will be served at 7:00 P.M.

A history of the icon is available at:
<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsLife.asp?FSID=102283>

Image of the icon:
<http://ocafs.oca.org/GetImageDetail.asp?IP=july%2F0708SitkaIcon%2Ejpg>

Located at the Cathedral of St Michael the Archangel in Sitka, Alaska is one of the most revered Icons in North America: the Sitka Mother of God.

This Icon has been attributed to a famous Iconographer, Vladimir Lukich Borovikovsky (1758-1826), a protege of the Empress Catherine II who was instructed at the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg, Russia. In addition to being a great portrait painter, Borovikovsky also painted many of the Icons for the Cathedral of the Kazan Icon in St Petersburg.

Painted in the style of the Kazan Mother of God Icon, on canvas, the Sitka Mother of God Icon is 36 x 17 1/2 inches in size. An exceptionally beautiful and detailed riza of silver covers the Icon of the Theotokos and Christ child, and the Image of God the Father blessing from above.

The Cathedral received the Icon as a gift from the laborers of the Russian American Company in 1850, two years after the Cathedral was completed. Even with their meager wages, these men generously made their contribution to the Church.

Miracles have been attributed to the Sitka Mother of God Icon over the years. It is believed that the gaze of the eyes of the Theotokos have led to the restored health of those who prayed before the Icon.

Because of the peaceful gaze of the Theotokos, the Icon has been described as a "pearl of Russian ecclesiastical art of ineffable gentleness, purity and harmony...." And "...the most beautiful face of the Mother of God with the Divine Child in her arms is so delicately and artistically done that the more one looks at it the more difficult it is to tear one's gaze away."

Originally part of the main Iconostasis at the Cathedral of St. Michael the Archangel in Sitka, Alaska, the Icon is now permanently located on the far left side of the Iconostasis in a special place of honor.



PARISHES FROM 3

entourage, traveled up from Georgia to be baptized in Claremont. Caspar resides with his parents in Claremont.

Rowan and Talia Sheehan of Sharon, VT were blessed with a new daughter at their home on July 27. She is named Cassia Mary after St. Cassiane, the Hymnographer.

- submitted by Lawrence Johnson

New Haven, Connecticut

For those of you who like to plan ahead – far, far, ahead – we have the schedule for our 2005 Fall Lecture Series and our Spring 2006 Lecture series. The Fall Lecture Series begins on Monday, September 19 and ends on Monday October 17. The topic will be *Church and World: Church and Culture*. Lectures begin at 7:00 P.M. and end at 9:00 P.M.

The Spring 2006 Lecture Series will begin on Monday May 1 and end Monday May 22. Father Paul Nadim Tarazi will be the speaker and the topic will be *An Exposition of the Book of Isaiah*.

Our Choir was invited by the Zion Lutheran Church, Orange, to perform in concert on Sunday, June 12. Choir members and guest singers from other parishes, under the direction of Lydia Westerberg, sang Orthodox Liturgical Music. School-aged girls from the parish (Elizabeth Calandro, Caitlin and Ashley Mitchell, Maria Shevelkin, Rebecca and Emily Swimmer) joined in singing several selections.

A medley of hymns from the Vesper (evening prayer) Service, Matins (morning prayer) Service, the Divine Liturgy and various seasonal

hymns were sung. The Zion Lutheran Choir concluded the concert with a Bach chorale. Refreshments were served following the concert. A videotape of the concert was made and will be shown in upcoming months on public access television.

Sincere sympathy extended to several parishioners and former parishioners on the loss of their loved ones. Peter & Patricia Karlak Family (Brother John), Louise Shimchick Family (Mother Albina), David Barrett family (Mother Laura) and George and Maureen Parsenios Family (Brother-in-law). May their Memories be Eternal!

The Mosher family (Deacon Joshua. Matushka Jennifer and children) came for the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. Six-year-old Elias served for the first time in the altar.

Congratulations to Nicole Maldera for making the Dean's List at Southern Connecticut State University. Nicole is in entering her junior year (Nursing Program) and is in the top 10% of her class. Also, Christopher and Larissa Koblosh Chapin on the birth of their son, Zachary Michael on July 5. Proud Great Aunt and Great Uncle

(Matushka Lydia and Father Michael Westerberg) and grandparents Father Michael and Matushka Nadia Koblosh are all beaming from ear to ear.

Construction has begun on our lift to assist those who are unable to use the stairs, gain access to the auditorium. Also, the work on our iconography is continuing.

Lots of activities scheduled for October. Wednesday, October 12 we will once again host the Stremsky Children's Choir from Russia. Wednesday, October 19, we will feature the Wonderworking Sitka Mother of God Icon from Alaska. Sunday, October 23 we will host the Yale Slavik Chorus. Sunday, October 30 we will have a Parish Open House from 3:00 – 5:00 P.M. There will be conducted tours and an explanation of our iconography.

- submitted by Barbara Ann Dixon



Students from Boston University and the University of Connecticut visit St. George Cathedral in Boston, where they got a tour led by Fr. Arthur Liolin, Chancellor of the Albanian Archdiocese (OCA).

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DEADLINES**

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November 1st**

COUNCIL FROM 1

sions and ministries over the past three years. The reports also called the faithful of the Church to active servanthood and stewardship in the years coming.

The Council revolved around five “pillars,” which formed the context of each day’s work. The five pillars were: Vision and Identity, Clergy Formation, Parish Health, Evangelizing North America, and Orthodox Relationships.

Diocesan members were actively involved in many aspects of the planning and execution of the All-American Council. Besides the active participation of many clergy and lay delegates in daily activities and interaction, some diocesan members had active leadership roles: Fr. Steven Voytovich (Clinton, CT) was the chairman of the Credentials Committee, maintaining an accurate accounting of those registered and participating in any given session.

Matushka Cindy Voytovich spent the week helping with the youth program, preparing and directing the youth choir, which sang some responses at the Thursday morning liturgy.

Our diocesan Chancellor, Fr. Michael Westerberg (New Haven, CT), in addition to serving as Group Leader of the OCA Pension Plan and reporting on such, served as Chairman of the Nominations Committee. He coordinated the nomination and presentation of all candidates for Church-wide positions including the Metropolitan Council.

Fr. John Dresko (New Britain, CT), in addition to serving on the Preconciliar Commission which planned the All-American Council, is Director of the OCA Department of Stewardship. He was tasked by the Primate of the Church to develop and present the Fair Share Proposal for the funding of the Church in the next triennium.

The proposal was the continuation of the discussion begun at the 13th All-American Council in Orlando. The system of funding was based on what the Diocese of New



Fr. John Dresko, New Britain, CT, presents the Fair Share Proposal to fund the Church (Photo: Paul Salina)

England knows as a workable and understandable system. Following the presentation, and some clarification questions, a vote was taken. After some initial confusion over a hand count, “yes” and “no” ballots were collected. The delegates overwhelmingly approved the proposal, 57.5% to 42.5%.

Each parish will be getting instructions about the new fair share financial figures for 2006 from the diocesan treasurer.

Canada proved to be a wonderful host country and the All-American Council, as usual, a wonderful blend of fellowship, worship and work. Old friends seeing each other for the first time in three years, inspiring liturgical services and sermons, and challenging reports, presentations, workshops and luncheon forums made for a week worth spending.

The 15th All-American Council is tentatively scheduled for 2008 at a location to be determined by the Metropolitan Council of The Orthodox Church in America. There is much work to be done in the time until we gather in worship and fellowship again. Join in!

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