



# Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania

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## Annual Report of the Chancellor 4 November 2023

*Glory to Jesus Christ!*

I begin my 12<sup>th</sup> annual report by reviewing the six broad areas of responsibility given me in my role as Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and W PA. (Please note that the position of chancellor remains a part-time position - all this diocesan work is in addition to my responsibilities as full-time parish priest at the Holy Ghost Church in Ambridge.)

1. The ruling bishop assigns areas of responsibilities and scope of decision-making, but, in general, the ruling hierarch relies on his chancellor as a trusted assistant in the day-to-day administration of the diocese and holds him accountable in assigned areas.
2. The chancellor supports and/or guides the work of the various departments, projects, and committees.
3. The chancellor assists in the development and accomplishment of the diocesan goals, including such areas as budget and financial management.
4. The chancellor guides and/or supervises the work of the other members of the diocesan administration.
5. The chancellor serves as a voting member of the Archdiocesan Council and is responsible for planning the Council's meetings and later for implementation of the Council's decisions in cooperation with other members of the diocesan administration, committee chairs, etc.
6. The chancellor represents the ruling hierarch in religious and spiritual activities and acts with the blessing of the hierarch in his absence in dealing authoritatively with clergy/laity of the diocese as well as inter-Orthodox relationships and relationships with other religious bodies and laity organizations.

Here is a review of some selected tasks/activities done as chancellor since our 2019 Assembly occurred:

- ~ Frequent contact with ruling hierarch concerning diocesan administration
- ~ Preparations for Archdiocesan Council meetings (i.e., agenda/ compilation of needed reports/ meeting notifications, etc.) as well numerous meetings of subcommittees
- ~ Meetings with investment firms concerning diocesan investment accounts
- ~ Coordination of the hierarch's Archpastoral visitations, meetings calendar, and transportation needs
- ~ Frequent communications with the deans
- ~ Frequent communications with OCA Chancery staff and administrations of other Orthodox jurisdictions and O.C.A. dioceses concerning common administrative matters
- ~ Numerous meetings/ emails/ phone calls with clergy and laity concerning problems, requests for assistance, transfers, conflicts, etc. in diocesan parishes
- ~ Frequent communication with Building & Grounds Chair Dn. Seraphim Truckley

- ~ Numerous conversations (phone/emails/meetings) with Joseph Kormos concerning Parish Development Program + group emails to diocesan clergy and laity about the program's goals
- ~ Frequent updates concerning the diocese to the group email list
- ~ Attended the 2023 Parish Development Forum in Parma, Ohio
- ~ Communications with Archpriest Alexander Cadman, Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy Coordinator, + contacts with local priests & laity concerning policy implementation
- ~ Worked with Dr. Kristie Mertz and Barry Migyanko to upgrade the diocesan web site and diocesan Facebook page
- ~ Regular chancery administrative duties (done at least once a week at the chancery office and at my Ambridge parish office remotely during the remainder of each week) – working with Administrative Assistant Omelan Mycyk and Archdiocesan Treasurer Alexi Parshook frequently
- ~ Provided personal car transportation for the archbishop when other modes weren't available
- ~ Budget preparation process coordinated with archbishop, treasurer, and budget committee
- ~ Monitored the status of the three-year-old Legacy Parish Assistance Program (LPAP)
- ~ Planned January 2023 diocesan retreat in conjunction with the New Kensington parish, Fr. John Parker, and Fr. David Vernak
- ~ Attended the OCA Pastoral Conference in Mandelein, IL; concelebrated at the Liturgy as W PA Chancellor at the invitation of His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON
- ~ Planned February 2023 diocesan clergy gathering in Allison Park with assistance from Fr. David Vernak and Fr. John Mikita
- ~ Planned/attended the Southwest Deanery clergy appreciation dinner with the hierarch in October
- ~ Officiated with the Deans at the annual diocesan Lenten Vespers service at Allison Park
- ~ Met with St. Constantine Pittsburgh School's new administrator (twice)
- ~ Attended groundbreaking ceremony for the Greek Metropolis of Pittsburgh's new diocesan center with our hierarch near Washington, PA
- ~ Attended the IOCC Pittsburgh Committee's Ukrainian assistance service/dinner with our hierarch
- ~ Met with two diocesan seminarians beginning their first year studies + follow-up semester updates
- ~ Visits and communications with several hospitalized diocesan clergy
- ~ Planned and/or concelebrated at Ordination Liturgies for four new diocesan deacons
- ~ Planned and concelebrated at the funeral services for the departed +Archpriest John Sidor in conjunction with Mother Christophora at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery.  
*+MEMORY ETERNAL!*
- ~ Helped plan the celebration and concelebrated at the Liturgy in Altoona for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priesthood ordination of Archpriest Andrew Matychak.
- ~ Helped coordinate and concelebrated at the funerals for two long-time and key laity leaders for the Archdiocese: +Serge Daniels and +Gregory Nescott. *+ MEMORY ETERNAL! +*

An overview of the Archdiocese: we currently have officially 40 parishes configured into three geographical deaneries - Eastern Deanery (16 parishes); Northwest Deanery (11 parishes); Southwest Deanery (13 parishes). Thirty-eight of the 40 parishes are considered "active" (at some level!) with full-time priests, part-time priests, or services being periodically conducted by visiting priests or deacons. Two of the 40 parishes (Duquesne and Patton) are considered "inactive" spiritually and financially since they currently do not have any parish services or activities. Some statistical perspective: ten of the 38 "active" parishes listed are without an officially assigned priest [Amsterdam (Wolf Run), Blairsville (Black Lick), Donora, Lyndora, Mingo Junction, Monessen, Monongahela, Philipsburg, Steubenville, and West Brownsville] although there is always the possibility that appointments/transfers may decrease that number. These parishes are serviced on behalf of the hierarch by the chancellor, local dean, assigned deanery priests, retired diocesan priests, non-OCA priests, diocesan deacons, or local reader service.

There are currently 40 priests officially under the omophoron of Archbishop MELCHISEDEK – 27 on “active” service (with varying types of assignments) and 13 priests officially “retired.” Changes since last year include the repose of retired +Archpriest John Sidor, the retirement of Archpriest John Kopcha, and the transfer of Archpriest Michael Zahirsky to the Diocese of the Midwest (OCA). There are now 18 archdiocesan deacons attached by the hierarch to the various parishes within our boundaries - including four deacons who have been ordained in 2023 (Deacons John Kerstetter - Beavertown/ Christopher Meholick - DuBois/ Mark Vukelic - Weirton/ Nicholas York - Carnegie). Total number of OCA-Archdiocese of PGH and W PA clergy is therefore “58.” The current official 2023 parish adult census membership for the Archdiocese is 1,716 - - this compares to 1,786 last year.

The area dean, working in concert with the chancellor, becomes responsible for parishes spiritually and administratively on behalf of the bishop when no priest is assigned, assisted by other priests and deacons as the local dean and/or chancellor assign. The deans work closely with me concerning the scheduling of clergy to service these vacant parishes. The large number of vacancies spread far apart geographically causes much difficulty, but we DO strive to service these parishes equitably. This task becomes more difficult when clergy vacations start to multiply during the summer months for additional parishes. Fr. Mark Meholick is Dean of the Eastern Deanery while Fr. Andrew P. Nelko is Dean of the Southwest Deanery. In addition to my duties as Chancellor, I also function as Dean of the Northwest Deanery - with Fr. Thomas Soroka as Associate Dean. I offer my THANKS to all these dedicated clergy administrators – I *appreciate* their hard work in these sometimes “thankless” positions!

#### Items of Note:

1. The diocesan hierarch expects each of the diocesan parishes to enact a minimum **cost-of-living adjustment** for the salaries of our parish priests effective January 1, 2024, to be no less than 3.5%, *with 5% being preferred*. (This is based on the annual Social Security increase projected for 2024 to be 3.5%.) Each parish is urged to exceed this 5% level if possible - - we must continue to strive and raise the base salaries of the diocesan clergy after years of lagging behind what is offered by other OCA dioceses as well as other Pittsburgh area Orthodox jurisdictions. It is increasingly difficult to attract - and keep – quality clergy in the Archdiocese. Parishes with questions about the level of clergy support required nationally within the OCA should consult the page dealing with the subject of clergy compensation at [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org). These O.C.A. standards of compensation are what parishes with vacancies are expected to provide as new priests are assigned by the hierarch in the Archdiocese.

2. **Substitute clergy honoraria** in the Archdiocese that will continue unchanged in 2024 - *substitute priests* celebrating Sunday Liturgies should receive no less than \$225 *plus round-trip vehicle mileage* per the I.R.S. rate in effect on that date from the parish utilizing his services. (We are currently using \$.66 per mile, although that may be adjusted on January 1, 2024.) Overnight lodging and miscellaneous expenses as they arise would, of course, be discussed and agreed upon in advance. *Deacons* substituting on Sundays in our parishes should receive no less than \$175 *plus round-trip mileage*. Honoraria for other weekday services or special services can be discussed separately should they arise. Please contact your local Dean, or me, should questions arise about these stipends.

Reminder: clergy substitutes in our parishes are coordinated through the local dean – NOT arranged independently by the parish or the parish priest. Any parish priest who will be absent on a Sunday from the parish assignment must notify the dean as far in advance as possible- - this

includes such things as vacations, health issues, etc. Also, any parish that is forced to forego a Sunday Liturgy due to inclement weather should notify the local dean, so he is aware of this cancellation. This helps make the assignment of clergy much more orderly and avoids conflicts.

Selected 2024 Major Planning Objectives include:

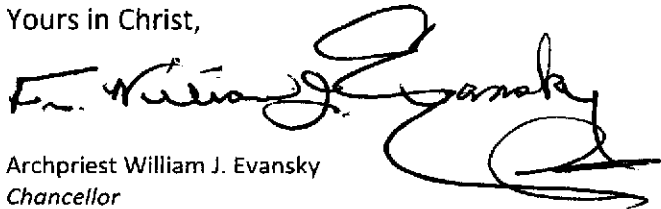
1. March 8 retreat for the diocesan clergy presented by Steven Christoforou (FOCUS) plus a March 9 retreat for both the clergy and laity by Mr. Christoforou. Additional retreats are also being explored for 2024 by Fr. Vernak and me, with His Eminence's blessing.
2. Youth retreat - currently being planned by a temporary clergy subcommittee, possibly presented by Orthodox Youth and Young Adult Ministry (OYM). Additional youth activities are also being considered - - assuming sufficient diocesan clergy/laity leaders are found to be involved in the planning/implementation.
3. Additional "clergy appreciation dinners" for the priests/deacons in each of the three deaneries. (The Southwest Deanery gathering in October 2023 was *delightful!*)
4. Diocesan-wide clergy spiritual gatherings and educational programs.
5. Parish councils leadership training program to enhance this important lay ministry in each parish.
6. Planning for Parish Development Ministry restructuring in 2025.

Conclusion

Exodus 14:13-14 tells us: *Be of good courage; stand still and see the Lord's salvation which He will accomplish for you today - the Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.* These words struck me as I recently read them while preparing this annual report. I believe they tell us that the many "battles" we will face in 2024 to strengthen God's Holy Church can be faced courageously if we never forget that we are NOT facing them along - it is GOD'S BATTLE as well. Through our steadfast prayers, may the Lord go before us and guide us in 2024 as we "battle" to strengthen our apostolic mission for our Lord Jesus Christ and His "Good News!"

I offer my most sincere *thanks* to all the clergy and laity of this God-protected Archdiocese who worked along side me during these past 12 months - I truly appreciate your prayers, cooperation, and kind words of encouragement. I thank His Eminence for his guidance as our hierarch and pray the Lord continues to bless his episcopacy to "...rightly define the word of His truth!"

Yours in Christ,



Archpriest William J. Evansky  
Chancellor  
Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania  
Orthodox Church in America