

2019 Deanery of South Florida Report (DOS-OCA)

Summary

The past year has been one of great transition for the Deanery of South Florida. It began in the summer with the placement of Fr Joseph Lucas as the new Dean, taking the helm from Fr Philip Reese after his stepping down as rector of the Cathedral to focus on his full-time chaplaincy. Three major events have marked the Deanery during this time: Fr Reese began serving at Ss Peter & Paul Church, which has been without a rector for over a year; St Peter Mission in Jupiter was merged into St Herman Church in Lake Worth, to be pastored by Fr Philip Kontos; and the rectorate of St Nicholas Church in Fort Lauderdale became vacant with the repose of Fr Kirrill Gvosdev (memory eternal). It was determined also that two mission stations be closed: the Keys Mission, which has not been meeting since the time of Hurricane Irma, and has not shown any interest in reorganizing; and Archangel Michael Mission, which was a small and problematic group that had schismed from a local ROCOR parish. But the Deanery has also seen the opening of the new Vero Beach Mission, a satellite of St James Church in Port Saint Lucie, which shows great promise. In the year ahead, the Deanery will focus on stabilizing Ss Peter & Paul and St Nicholas Churches, and then concentrate on outreach measures for our parishes in Naples and Fort Meyers.

Parish Reports

Christ the Saviour Cathedral

City: Miami Lakes, FL Rector: Fr Joseph Lucas

The Cathedral had a prosperous year. During 2018, there were 7 adult conversions, 6 infant baptisms, and 1 marriage. There were 2 deaths, one of whom was Bishop Mark (Forsberg). Average Sunday attendance is between 85-110, year-round, with approximately 150 for Pascha. There are presently 73 pledged household (105 adults) The Cathedral offers a full liturgical cycle, including Saturday evening Vespers, Sunday morning Matins and Divine Liturgy, services for the Twelve Feastsdays and several minor feasts, and a full slate of Lenten services. Catechism runs from September until the end of Lent, and the next class presently has 8 adults enrolled to begin. Other educational opportunities include Church School for K – 12 with 20 children (September to June), Wednesday night Bible Study, and a book study every other Monday. For outreach, the Cathedral hosts an annual Autumn Lecture series; a “Trunk-or-Treat” event on Halloween; and the Cathedral Summer Daycamp for kids ages 5 – 12. The temple beautification came to a close the previous year, with the completion of the iconography project. A building

project presently underway is the expansion of the parking lot to accommodate the present growth, which should be completed in 2020. Charitable work includes partnering with “Christmas in July” (providing school supplies to local needy children), collecting for a local food pantry, and other smaller endeavors.

Holy Cross Church

City: Fort Myers, FL Rector: Fr Leonid Palceski

Holy Cross Church saw 1 infant baptism, and no adult conversions in 2018. There were 5 persons who moved away, 2 “snow birds” who transferred into the parish, and 1 funeral. The Average Sunday attendance is between 25-30, with slightly higher attendance in winter. The parish has not yet begun a pledging or membership system, but plans to transition to this in 2020. Holy Cross Church now offers a full liturgical cycle, recently instituting Saturday evening Vespers, in addition to Sunday morning Hours and Divine Liturgy, services for the Twelve Feastdays, and Lenten services. Educational opportunities include Church School (winter season), and an adult study is planned to begin this autumn. For outreach, the parish encourages the “ask-a-friend-to-church” approach, as well as manning a food table at the local Greek Food Festival. Current building and beautification projects include painting the bell tower and cupola, installing hurricane impact windows, and purchasing new chairs. Charitable work includes partnering with a local food pantry for the unemployed, and seminary appeals.

Holy Spirit Church

City: Venice, FL Priest-In-Charge: Fr Stephen Lourie

Holy Spirit Church has become entirely stable in the past few years, due to the excellent pastoral work of Fr Stephen. Average Sunday attendance is 50, with approximately 90 for Pascha. There are 50 pledged members. During 2018, there were no baptisms or adult conversions, 3 transfers in, 1 marriage, and 3 funerals. The parish offers a full liturgical cycle, including Saturday evening Vespers, Sunday morning Matins and Divine Liturgy, Wednesday morning Divine Liturgy, services for the Twelve Feastdays, and Lenten services. Educational and ministry opportunities include Church School for children, an adult group study, a leadership group, and men’s mentoring group. For outreach, Holy Spirit Church holds Christmas and Pascha bake sales. Currently, a beautification of the narthex is underway. Charitable work includes partnering with local food pantries, and collections for local charities.

St Demetrius Church

City: Naples, FL Rector: Fr Gleb McFatter

During 2018, St Demetrius Church had 2 infant baptisms, and no adult conversions, no marriages, and no funerals. Average Sunday attendance is 50. There are presently 22 pledged

households (42 members). The parish offers a full liturgical cycle, including Saturday evening Vespers, Sunday morning Hours and Divine Liturgy, services for the Twelve Feastdays, and Lenten services. Church School for children is offered every Sunday, but no adult study or catechism is offered at this time. For outreach, St Demetrius Church hosts sporadic ethnic food sales, and Fr Gleb has appeared in the local newspapers, highlighting his parish. They are currently engaged in a project to protect the windows from hurricanes. Charitable work includes volunteering at St Matthew's House (a local homeless shelter), and collecting food and personal items for the residents.

St Herman Church

City: Lake Worth, FL Rector: Fr Philip Kontos

St Herman Church is experiencing a time of transition. The merger with St Peter Church (Jupiter) did not go smoothly due to the interference of Fr Nicholas Bargoot (who was on loan to the OCA temporarily to assist at St Herman's prior to the merger). Fr Nicholas proceeded to start a ROCOR mission a few blocks from St Herman's, and actively recruited members to follow him, effectively splitting the parish in half. During the past year, Fr Philip Kontos has worked to stabilize the parish in the aftermath, with considerable success. The parish currently has 2 adult catechumens; and in 2018 had 1 infant baptism and 3 funerals. Average Sunday attendance is 38. There are presently 26 pledged households (45 members). The parish offers a full liturgical cycle, including Saturday evening Vespers, Sunday morning Hours and Divine Liturgy, services for the Twelve Feastdays, and Lenten services. Education includes catechism and a regular book study. For outreach, St Herman Church hosts quarterly ethnic food sales. Internal ministries include the Sisterhood and Brotherhood. Over the past year, a major cleaning and beautification project began, which included painting and updating the edifice, and fixing the air conditioning. Charitable work includes an Agape Fund for those in need, and collections for the African clinic organized by Fr Joseph Ciarciaglino.

St James Church

City: Port Saint Lucie Rector: Fr Maximus Urbanowicz

St James Church continues to grow under the rectorate of Fr Maximus. During 2018, there were 3 adult conversions, 5 infant baptisms, 2 marriages, 5 funerals, 10 transfers in, and 8 transfers out. Average Sunday attendance is 110, with approximately 175 for Pascha. There are presently 60 pledged household (90 adults) The parish offers a liturgical cycle that includes Saturday evening Vespers once monthly, weekly Sunday morning Divine Liturgy, Liturgy for the Twelve Feastdays, and Lenten services. Adult catechism and Bible Study are offered bi-weekly, and Church School is every Sunday with 18 children. Other ministries include a weekly one-hour prayer meeting. For outreach, St James Church hosts a Cookie Bake, Basket Party, Food Festival, and conferences; and promotes events through radio, flyers, and mailings. A long-term

iconography project continues unabated. Charitable work includes collections for Safe Space (a charity for unwed mothers).

St Nicholas Church

City: Fort Lauderdale, FL Priest-In-Charge: Serviced by Deanery Clergy

Shortly after the repose of Fr Kirrill Gvosdev on February 19, 2019, St Nicholas Church had to begin the arduous process of moving forward. During his tenure, Fr Kirrill acted not only as rector, but as warden, treasurer, and parish council. And due to his vocation as an attorney, he did not collect a salary from the parish. During the past few months, the Dean began to establish a formal parish council with officers, based on recommendations that Fr Kirrill made before his passing. It has been a learning process for them as they take responsibility for the future of St Nicholas Church. After interviewing a few candidates, a new priest has been located—able to serve and minister in both English and Russian—who is scheduled to be attached effective August 4. In order to make this possible, the Diocese of the South has agreed to implement the first-ever Parish Rehabilitation Grant: a three-year fund structured similarly to mission grants. After the arrival of the new rector, he will begin the process of stabilizing the parish and creating infrastructure, as well as focusing on outreach to the area.

Ss Peter & Paul Church

City: Miami, FL Priest-In-Charge: Fr Philip Reese

Since retiring from his position as rector of the Cathedral, Fr Philip has focused his attention on stabilizing Ss Peter & Paul Church, whose previous rector retired the year prior. Average attendance on Sundays has grown from 9 – 15 to 16 – 40. And there are a several prospective catechumens who have begun attending. With the increase of attendance, the small parish hall area has proven inadequate, and there is presently a discussion about renovating the outdoor pavilion that was damaged by previous storms. A priest from Ukraine is in process of transferring to the OCA to be attached to Ss Peter & Paul later this year. Release has already been granted, but the US visa process was only recently initiated, and may take several months.

Vero Beach Mission

City: Vero Beach, FL Priest-In-Charge: Fr Maximus Urbanowicz

In March, Fr Maximus launched this new mission outpost as a spin-off from St James Church. Vero Beach currently does not have any Orthodox parish, and is far enough away from both Port Saint Lucie (to the south) and Titusville (to the north) to warrant planting a new mission. With the blessing of Archbishop Alexander, services began to be held in a Roman Catholic chapel in March. Average attendance (on Saturdays) is 24 – 42, and there is great potential for growth (particularly when they are able to have Sunday Divine Liturgy).