

Rebuilding the City of God



Five-Year Strategic Plan of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2030



Office of the Archbishop

His Eminence, the Most Reverend Stephen J. Enea

Archbishop of Syracuse and Ortigia, and of All Sicily, Southern Italy, and Magna Graecia

Metropolitan of the Americas and Canada of the Italo-Greeks

Bishop of Utica

Primate of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church

July 24, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” -Matthew 28: 19-20.

The nature of the Christian life is to be on “mission”, constantly in motion, laboring to build up the Kingdom of God on earth and together walking the narrow path that leads to our salvation and the eternal Kingdom in Heaven. At the same time, we are a privileged people - a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people set apart. We are God’s Chosen people among the nations of the earth, baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity, made members of the Body of Christ by water and the Holy Spirit.

Now, more than ever, as those entrusted with the mysteries of God, and with positions of responsibility in the life, teaching and worship of the Church, we must be clear about this Mission of the Church, giving witness to Jesus among us, living His Gospel message of love, humility and charity, and inviting “all nations” to become disciples of Him. It is for the sake of this mission that we have developed and now implement “Rebuilding the City of God”, the Five Year Strategic Plan of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada.

It has been eleven years since the Strategic Plan was first envisioned. The foundation for its development was initially laid in late 2012, when a Steering Committee, comprised of two members from each of our active communities in the Archdiocese, together with Archdiocesan leadership, began to formulate ideas for the Plan. An initial working document was drafted which contained five strategic considerations for moving forward. Work on the Plan was suspended in 2014 and did not resume again until the Summer of 2016. Work was suspended again in November 2016 due to my illness and was not resumed until the Fall of 2017. The first draft of the Plan was completed in the Summer of 2018. After a period of review by the active communities of the Archdiocese and taking into consideration their recommendations and suggestions, a second draft of the Strategic Plan was

created. After another review and some minor changes, it was decided that the Plan, which covers a five-year period, should be implemented on June 29/July 12, 2020, the Feast of St. Peter and Paul, the holy founders of our beloved Church. However, due to the COVID pandemic and the subsequent cessation of normal Church life for the whole of 2020 and partially for 2021, the Plan was never implemented and was set aside. In May of 2022, the Plan was taken up again. It was reviewed and reworked, with due consideration given to the changes that have occurred in the Archdiocese and its communities since COVID. After pretty much creating a new Plan, we are pleased to say that we have developed a Plan that not only addresses the Archdiocese's present situation and circumstances, but gives us hope for growth, stability, and sustainability in the years to come.

In every era, the Church must consider the particular ways Her divine and earthly mission must be pursued. I am grateful to all of you who have contributed to these considerations over the past year. Your belief and faith in God and in our mission and future as a Church bears testimony to the fact that together, united in Christ, and with firm faith and hope in Him, we can accomplish great things and do much good work that gives glory to His Name.

The contribution of your time, talent, and treasure to the efforts of rebuilding our holy Italo-Greek Orthodox Church, can be seen as an expression of the communion articulated in our Pastoral Plan which states: "Without communion, both spiritual and physical, with Christ, the Universal Church, and with each other, there is no Orthodox Catholic faith community, no way to remember Jesus, to pass on His story and offer the mercy, forgiveness and love that is the full message of God."

Passing on the story of Jesus and sharing His life is at the heart of our mission, which He entrusts to us daily. In recent months, I have listened very carefully and weighed the thoughtful and creative recommendations that have been developed in the process of formulating our Strategic Plan. This process has identified the priorities that will focus our efforts and our resources for the coming years. Therefore, I am directing the Metropolitan's Office, the Pastoral Center, our clergy, parishes, missions, communities, and lay leadership of the Archdiocese to focus their efforts on the following: Evangelization and Faith Formation of our children, youth, young adults, adults and seniors to make Jesus known or known better and to foster a lifelong journey of discipleship.

Through baptism, we are called to be salt and light to the world. We are called to be vessels of spiritual sustenance and beacons of light and hope to all those who are lost in the darkness of the world. Christ's light, which St. John says "enlightens every man who comes into the world" takes many forms, but for those of us in the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada, that light primarily in how we live as Church. We do not keep our faith to ourselves, not do we live it exclusively within the confines of our own faith community. Like a brightly burning lamp, we carry our faith out into the world for all to see, and we live that faith in ways that give glory to God.

With Joy in our hearts, and holding the firm belief that all things find their truer fulfillment and happiness in the service of the Lord, we are committed to the work of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth and to the sanctification of the human race. We are pledged to carry the Good News to all people, not just in words, but in deeds ...deeds which give glory to God through Jesus Christ, in whose Name we are sent forth.

The Church exists for the salvation and sanctification of souls. The relationship between Christ and His Church can be likened to the relationship that exists between a man and woman in the Holy Mystery of Marriage. It is a mystical union in which Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is His

bride. Through this union, the Church becomes one with Christ. In essence, it becomes His Mystical Body.

As members of that Body, we are truly instruments of the Lord. Our eyes become His eyes, that we may seek out injustice and inequity, hatred and violence, intolerance and bigotry, and wipe them away. Our hands become His hands, that we may embrace the lost, lift up those who are bowed down, and help all those in need. Our feet become His feet, that we may bring love, compassion, comfort, and understanding to all. Our legs become His legs that we may stand firm in righteousness, holiness, and integrity, and against the oppression of His people. Our mouths become His mouth, that we may speak truth to power and call all to holiness and submission to the will of God.

Like Christ, Who is its only Founder and Head, the Church has two natures, human and divine. The Church exists in this world, but is not of this world. In other words, it operates in this world, but it also transcends this world and contains within itself everything that is of God. The Church, therefore, despite the weaknesses and sinfulness of its human members, is scared and holy and has no blemishes, as she is the pure Body of Christ. The Church is filled with the grace, goodness, and holiness of God, with His righteousness and mercy, with His love and compassion. From the Church shines forth the Light that illumines all people for all the ages, the eternal truths spoken to us by Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh Who dwelt among us.

When asked what kind of Church we would like to be, I always tell people that I want the Orthodox Catholic Church to break forth out of itself in confidence and self-possession as a bold and uncompromising witness to the Truth and Power of God—not just within the confines of our own local Italo-Greek Orthodox Church community, but in the entire Church—the Universal Church. We must shine forth in caring about the people around us, in evangelistic compassion and love, leading them to Christ by being living examples of all that is pure, holy, and good.

Our future as a Church is assured only if we are totally immersed in the life of Christ. This Strategic Plan lays out a vision of such a Church, a Church existing in this world but not being of this world, a Church intended to be the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth— holy, pure, and a living icon of the love and unity of the Holy Trinity,

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to create the Kingdom of God on earth, that foretaste of the eternal reality which awaits us all if we are faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. This Plan declares to people everywhere that there is really a Church, in and through which salvation is possible and available to all, one that is not concerned or consumed with worldly acceptance and glory but rather exclusively with the salvation of souls.

The content of this Plan endeavors to map out, over the next five years, an accumulative and conciliar way we can fulfill our dreams and desires as God's people within this unique expression of the Body of Christ we call the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church of America and Canada.

We begin our journey by lifting up the essential need for all of us to embrace the task of sharing the Ancient Apostolic Faith with the wider community in which we live, pray, worship, and work as a daily phenomenon. Here in the United States, we are witnesses to the Orthodox Christian expression of the One True Catholic Faith, the seeds of which were first planted in Alaska in 1794 and to our own Italo-Greek Orthodox tradition, which found its first expression on American soil in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1902. We Italo-Greeks, however, have not always been visible in professing or

manifesting the way we view God and what we believe about God in Christ which has helped shape our Gospel values.

With a forty year trend in numerical decline unabated in our time together, according to the way we measure our ecclesial existence through parochial reports, sustainability and growth seem to be our greatest challenges. Yet, such reports do not tell the whole truth about us. God has blessed us in many ways and many times over the past forty years. Through our own eyes, we may not see this to be the case but the reality is quite different from what we now perceive. Even though things may not be how we would like them to be, and morale may be at the lowest its been in years, I am still struck by the strong concern many of our people have for our beloved Italo-Greek Church. It raises in me the hope there is still an opportunity for us to achieve the dreams of our venerable predecessors and ancestors as well as the vision and goals we set forth in 2004, when I was made bishop for this Church.

The first thing we must do is change the way we think. We must move away from a focus on “institutional” and “administrative” development right now and see more intently and with greater passion the sacred community into which we have been placed by God, the community we call the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church. We must create a living and vibrant faith community wherein the institutional and administrative elements the Church makes her own for efficient functioning in society are seen as ministries in service to the entire Church. In other words, the institution and administration must always be the servant of the Church and not the object of our service. Our service must first and foremost be to Christ and His Church, and to one another always in Christ and for Christ.

I believe that as we bring the message of Jesus Christ through the experience of our own lives to those beyond us, we will find that God takes care of what we have been striving so hard to do— to serve Him as a joy-filled and faithful faith community united to Him and one another in our holy and sacred Archdiocese. This growth will manifest itself in the growth of our existing parishes and missions, and possibly even the creation and establishment of new ones. This will not be without cost or confusion, because we live in an age in which we are being called to be fishers of people through different methods. It may feel as we are losing a life to gain one, as we consider activities which focus on starting communities of faith that go beyond a physical brick-and-mortar church building. This Strategic Plan includes such ideas, as well as an emphasis on updating our methodology for ministry, and broadening our ways of forming leaders and engaging non-believers.

We want to celebrate the witness of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church over the past twelve decades, while also emphasizing that our generation has a challenge to be more visible in society. This involves finding a boldness to proclaim the Gospel as we have received it and understand it through the maternal care of the Church.

Orthodox Catholicism is not for the indifferent or slothful. We are the guardians of the Apostolic Faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. To many, this Faith we preach and how we live it may seem to be irrelevant and intolerant. It may seem exclusive and unaccepting. Therefore, it is critical to our mission and vision as Church that we are all properly formed in the faith, especially those who are sacramentally mandated to preach, baptize, govern, and sanctify. When it comes to evangelization and engaging non-believers, we all must be more intentional and proactive. This includes our witness to civic and governmental authorities on the local, state, and federal levels.

The Church is a community within a community, a society within a society. As the Mystical Body of

Christ and the Kingdom of God on earth, the Church is sovereign in its administration, the organization and administrative of its daily life and affairs, and the oversight and governance of its members. Nevertheless, it should peacefully co-exist with its secular counterparts and should always encourage its members to be good and honorable members of the civil and secular societies in which they live.

We are a chosen people, called to live according to higher standards and values, all of which are to be rooted firmly in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We live by God's laws and answer to Him. The challenge for us as Orthodox Christians is to always remain faithful to Him while at the same time carrying out our responsibilities and obligations in the civil societies in which we live, most of which are indifferent or even openly hostile to the Christian Faith. This is not an easy challenge to face or overcome, but we must stay firm in the Faith and loyal to Christ and His Church, regardless the cost to our personal well-being or position in society.

To properly prepare ourselves for the work of building up the Church, the Kingdom of God on earth, we must first come to understand that the Church is not subordinate to subject to any civil government or secular authority or power, that God Himself governs the Church through Jesus Christ, Who is its only Head, and that the grace of the Holy Spirit keeps it pure at all times and completes all that which is lacking in her members. While individual members of the Church, even its consecrated hierarchs and ordained clergy may sin and fall into error, the Church itself cannot, in any way, err or become impure. Christ Himself guaranteed this when He said that the gates of Hell would never prevail against the Church.

Effectively communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the eternal Truth, means we must be willing to overcome a hesitancy of availing ourselves of the new methods of communication offered to us by technology and human intelligence. We must be willing to embrace, in the most creative of ways, new social and informational media to proclaim and disseminate the Good News of Salvation, the good works of the Church, and the necessity of belonging to the Church, most especially to a vibrant Eucharist-centered faith community as the local parish level.

Based on this understanding of our mission and purpose as Church, we have endeavored to fashion a strategic plan for not only our Holy Archdiocese of America and Canada, but for the entire Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church, a plan that will guide us to our desired and stated goals. The foundation of this present Strategic Plan is based on ten critical areas of importance, which are:

1. Revitalizing, Reinvigorating, and Strengthening Existing Communities
2. Reorganizing, Reestablishing, and Rebuilding Old Congregations
3. Planting, growing, and Nurturing New Congregations
4. Forming and Nurturing Next Generations of Faith
5. Shared Ministry
6. Faithful Stewardship of Spiritual, Financial, and Material Gifts
7. Italo-Greek Orthodox Identity
8. Planting the Seeds of, Nurturing, Forming, and Sustaining New Vocations
9. Sustaining and Supporting Existing Clergy
10. Forming and Encouraging a Strong and Vibrant Monastic Presence

These ten strategic priorities are discussed in detail in this document. They demonstrate a people who seek to work together as the Body of Christ, who want a balance between the natural

hierarchical structure of the Church which is united by and in the Episcopate, and the demands of local witness and ministry, which can be met by a more decentralized sharing of resources.

The local congregations of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada are the very real manifestation and presence of the Orthodox Catholic Church in a particular place. They are, in every sense, the fullness of the Church in their particular geographic domicile. Each congregation makes up who we are as Italo-Greek Orthodox Catholic Christians and what we are as the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church.

The ten foundational priorities also send a clear message that the Church exists as well for those who are not yet its members, those who are members of other faith communities, and those who have no faith at all. As I said earlier, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a light we keep under a bushel basket or within our own church building, but a beacon of light we take outside into the darkness to lead people safely home.

The next generation of Christ's disciples is always around us, waiting for the invitation to "Follow Me!" which Christ lovingly invites everyone to do. We often think of the new disciples of Christ and the future of the Church as being our young children and young adults, but they are also the elderly, those who are middle-aged, and people who have given up thinking that God and the Church have anything of interest or value to offer them.

The most difficult topic we will most probably have to discuss and consider as we move forward with this Plan is the relevance and necessity of our own existence as a Particular Local Church. We must be humble enough to ask these questions, "What is the reason for the existence of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church?" "What do we have to offer the people of God that is different from what is currently being offered by the more than fourteen different Orthodox Archdioceses and Dioceses in America?" As we began the process of developing the Strategic Plan, these questions always remained at the forefront of our discernment and deliberations.

In a perfect canonical world, there would be only one American Orthodox Church with a single Synod of Bishops that would oversee the spiritual and ecclesiastical life of all Orthodox Catholic Christians living in the United States, regardless of their ethnic background. But the present ecclesial reality of Orthodoxy in America is one which may not change for quite some time.

Because Sicilians and Italians are most always considered to be Roman Catholics, the small Orthodox minority of this ethnic and cultural community that do identify as Orthodox Catholic Christian are oftentimes regarded with suspicion and indifference by other Orthodox Christians. Sadly, many Local Orthodox Churches are firmly entrenched in a nationalism that does not welcome outsiders. As a result, Sicilian and Italian Orthodox Catholic Christians often find themselves unwelcome as strangers. Many of the other Orthodox jurisdictions do very little to attract or encourage people of non-traditional Orthodox ethnic backgrounds to join the Church. For many of them, Orthodox Christianity is something that only belongs to the Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians, Serbians, Syrians, etc. They simply cannot conceive of the idea that Orthodoxy belongs just as much to the Sicilians and Italians as it does to them.

So, why is it that we exist? What is our purpose for being? Well, the answer is simple, We exist because until there is a single unified autocephalous Orthodox Church of America, with one Synod of Bishops who work together in charity and fellowship to ensure a unified witness of the Orthodox

Catholic Faith on the American continent, we are forced to accept and work with a situation that is abnormal, confusing, and frustrating.

If there were a truly autocephalous Orthodox Church of America, to which all Orthodox Christians, regardless of national or ethnic background belonged, and which had dioceses that were organized on a geographical basis rather than ethnic, then I would be the first to instruct our congregations to join those territorial dioceses and become part of that Autocephalous Orthodox Church of America. On the other hand, it may be that the only “canonical” reality for the American situation is the continued presence of multiple Orthodox jurisdictions, each with its own Synod of Bishops, and each tending to its own flock. Until the situation is resolved one way or another, the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Canada fulfills the role of preaching and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing the Orthodox Catholic Faith primarily among people of Sicilian and Southern Italian heritage, especially the unchurched and those who have become disenfranchised with their present ecclesial and religious affiliation.

Though our name may be understood by some to indicate a specific ethnic make-up (Italian and Greek), our bishops over the years, especially since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, have been very careful in saying that the Italo-Greek Church is a Particular Local Orthodox Church made up of Orthodox Catholic Christians of Sicilian and Southern Italian descent. While it is true that historically, the Orthodox Catholic Christians in the Island of Sicily and the regions of Southern Italy, the areas once collectively known as “Magna Graecia” or “Greater Greece” were people of Greek ethnic descent, since the fall of Constantinople the venerable Fathers of our Italo-Greek Orthodox Church had the foresight to turn the Church’s attention to the native Sicilians and Southern Italians living in these areas, inviting them to remain faithful to the Orthodox Catholic Faith as an organized ecclesial community. Sadly, their efforts were not always met with success and the Italo-Greek Church virtually disappeared.

Since the foundation and establishment of the first Italo-Greek Orthodox community in Philadelphia in 1902, we have struggled to continue the work of joining together the Sicilian and Southern Italian into organized religious communities that maintain the Orthodox Catholic Faith in the Byzantine religious, spiritual, patristic, and liturgical tradition that for centuries was the driving and unifying force in Sicily and Southern Italy. While our missionary work is still heavily centered in the Sicilian and Italian communities of the United States and Canada, we also work with other ethnic groups who have no historical ties to or relationships with Orthodoxy.

These are the days when we have to restate the uniqueness of our Italo-Greek heritage and traditions and to evaluate as well its relevance in light of the overall changing landscape of Orthodoxy in the United States. For example, our liturgies are celebrated mostly in English with the use of Sicilian, Italian, and Greek. But it may now be time to translate the texts of our liturgies into Vietnamese, Burmese, Karen, and other languages so that we can identify and establish successful missions among these communities.

There is something to be said about total immersion in Christ, and I believe that this will be the defining characteristic of what the Italo-Greek Orthodox ethos is and how people outside our Church will perceive us, if we remain faithful to Christ and His covenant. In all that we do, we must be the Church first and foremost, the sacramental expression of God’s real and personal interaction with His people, and the visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth.

We must be, at all times, the Church in the world but not of the world, This will require a tremendous amount of inner strength and fortitude because we must engage the world whiloe standing apart from it. We cannot hope to sanctify the world if we give in to its temptations. As the Church, we must be a holy nation, a people set apart to love and serve the Lord in all things. By living our lives in Christ and being salt and light to those who are lost in this troubled and fearful world, we will bring about its sanctification, its release from the powers of darkness, and its return to harmonious communion with God that created it.

Each parish, mission, and community will provide or be provided with the necessary resources to be effective in this effort. Governance and Leadership with clarity, accountabilities and clear and concise communication. Clergy Formation that strengthens and enables our priests and deacons in their ministry of service to those entrusted to them by the Lord: to minister, serve, preach the Gospel message, celebrate the Eucharist, and provide the faithful with an enriching sacramental life while remaining faithful to their vocations. Stewardship and Finance accountabilities that are focused on the new priorities of the Archdiocese aligned with our Mission.

Rebuilding the City of God is not just another program but is about clear priorities, the first and foremost of which is to be truly the Church and not some mere non-profit or NGO organization. This means that we will need to make other decisions and changes in how we use our human and fiscal resources, and this will require thoughtful discernment, to be sure. But such decisions must always be made in the light of Faith and the Lord who calls us forth each day.

In order to ensure the fullest degree of success for our Strategic Plan, the biggest change that we will have to make is in regard to culture. We must change the way we see and think about ourselves as a Church and community of faith and how we relate to others outside our Church. We must develop and cultivate a culture of being truly a servant Church. Following the example of Christ, we must wash the feet of those we encounter in our daily lives . We must especially embrace, with unreserved love and compassion, those of our brothers and sisters who are not welcomed in other Churches or ecclesial bodies because of the color of their skin, economic status, race, creed, etc. Special attention must be placed on the homeless, the ex-offender, the abused, drug addicts, etc. We must never close our doors or restrict our love, care, and hospitality to anyone, for to do so would be to close our doors to Christ Himself.

Having been sent as the Shepherd of our local Church, I know that I do not make these decisions in isolation but together with all of you as we travel the road to eternity together in our journeys of life and faith. In order to live to the greatest extent at this providential time where the Lord has placed us together, I implore all of the Faithful of Christ - priests, deacons, and lay faithful, especially all of those involved in the apostolic works of our local Church - to bring to new life, within our local faith communities, an ardent zeal as experienced at Pentecost, to grow in faith, knowledge and holiness, and a deep contagious love of God.

Let us pray to be "set on fire" in a world that is so much in need, especially to those who are homeless, poor, and marginalized and calling out to find the love of God around them. Ultimately the goal of all which is set forth in these pages and which will be lived out in the months and years to come can be summed up in the one statement that I have continually spoken throughout my priesthood and episcopate: "The supreme law of the Church is the salvation of souls. It is the salvation of souls that must be our prime focus and it is the salvation of souls that is to be kept before our eyes always."

Thank all of you for your involvement in the years and months of this planning process, and for your ministry, leadership, and care for the Lord's people, whom in His providential care He sends our way and entrusts to us.

I pray that this document sets forth a realistic and reasonable plan for the revitalization, renewal, and growth of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Canada and that of our Holy Archdiocese. As I promulgate this Five-Year Strategic Plan, I am confident that it embodies the perennial mission of the Church and is in accord with the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Most Holy Theotokos, our Mother and Queen, smile kindly upon our efforts, and by her prayers and through the intercession of all the saints, may our efforts bring forth rich and abundant spiritual fruit for the greater glory of God.

Paternally yours in Christ,

+ Archbishop Stephen

+Archbishop Stephen



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Church in the Americas and Canada

The history of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Church in the Americas and Canada begins with the arrival of the first Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians in the United States on December 19, 1882. Travelling from Palermo, Sicily aboard the SS Darlington, these immigrants settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and New Orleans, Louisiana, bringing with them not only their hopes and dreams for a better life in America, but their Orthodox Christian Faith as well.

Within a matter of a few months after their arrival in both Philadelphia and New Orleans, the Sicilian Orthodox Christians established for themselves religious communities that were intended to be the focal point of their communal life in America.

The establishment of the first community of Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania occurred in 1882, shortly after their arrival from Palermo. Immediately upon their arrival in Philadelphia, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians credited their safe arrival in America to St. Nicholas of Myra, for they arrived in America on the Saint's feast day (Old Style). In gratitude to St. Nicholas for his protection during their voyage from Palermo to America, the Italo-Greek Orthodox immigrants pledged to establish a shrine in his honor.

The first community of Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians was established on the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord, January 7, 1883 (Old Style). The original name was "Congregazione di S. Pancratio e S. Gennaro degli Italo-Greci" (Congregation of Sts. Pancrazio and Gennaro of the Italo-Greeks). Under the leadership of Antonio Richichi, a small chapel was erected adjoining the house and shop owned by Mr. Richichi. Located in the French Quarter of New Orleans known as "Little Palermo", the chapel also included a shrine to St. Nicholas of Myra. By the time the community was formally established as a parish on January 19, 1887, it numbered over 700 faithful.

In New Orleans, a group of Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians led by Giuseppe Marsala and Vincenzo Radosti founded the Society of St. Nicodemus of Palermo, on March 4, 1883. The Society eventually became the parish of St. Nicodemus of Palermo Italo-Greek Orthodox Church. By the time it was formally organized as a parish on January 7, 1887, the community had over 1,200 members.

The first Italo-Greek Orthodox clergy arrived in New Orleans from Palermo on November 4, 1886. His Grace, Bishop Gaccono of Palermo made a pastoral visit to the fledging communities at the joint invitation of both the New Orleans and Philadelphia communities. His Grace was accompanied by the priest Michael Calina and his family.



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Bishop Gaccono was charged by His Beatitude, Archbishop Antonio, and the Holy Synod of Bishops, to assess the current state of affairs of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians in New Orleans and Philadelphia and to report back to them his findings and recommendations.

During his stay in America, Bishop Gaccono not only visited the New Orleans and Philadelphia communities; he also visited the Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians living in New York City. During his pastoral visit, he elevated the New Orleans and Philadelphia communities to the status of parishes. He remained in the United States until May 1888, at which time he returned to Palermo.

Fr. Michael assisted Bishop Gaccono in his ministrations to the faithful, but, sadly, Fr. Michael's experience in America was not a happy one. This was primarily due to the hostility he faced from outside the Italo-Greek community for being married. The stress on him and his family proved to be too much and he returned to Sicily in the summer of 1887.

Between 1889 and 1891, the New Orleans and Philadelphia communities were served by visiting clergy sent from various parts of Sicily. However, due to Father Calina's experience in America, Church authorities in Sicily sent only monastic or unmarried clergy to serve. This proved to be a providential decision.

In 1891, the Sicilian community in New Orleans was forced to write the worst chapter of its history in America. On March 14, 1891, eleven Sicilian men were lynched in New Orleans by a mob for the murder of New Orleans Police Chief David Hennessey. Even though many of the men had been found not guilty in court, the hatred, anger, and hostility toward the Sicilians was incendiary. Thousands of citizens stormed the prison where the men were being held, broke down the door, and dragged the prisoners to their death. Some survived lynching by hiding in the prison. Three of the men who were lynched—Antonio Bagnetto, Antonio Marchesi, and Rocco Geraci—were Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians and members of the parish of St. Nicodemus of Palermo.

After the lynchings, Church authorities in Sicily were hesitant to send clergy to America, especially New Orleans, where anti-Italian sentiment was still very high. It was at seven years before a priest was sent directly to the Italo-Greek community in New Orleans. Prior to this time, clergy were sent only to Philadelphia and from there travelled occasionally to New Orleans to serve. But no resident priest was appointed to serve New Orleans until many years later.



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The well-being and care of the Italo-Greek Christians living in America became a focal point of concern on the part of Church authorities in Sicily. It was decided that another episcopal visitation should be made for the purpose of ascertaining the condition and status of the two original communities, especially the state of affairs in New Orleans. This task was entrusted to His Grace, Bishop Ambrogio of Caltanissetta. At 53 years of age, Bishop Ambrogio had the energy and charisma to undertake and carry out the task given to him by the elders of the Church. His strong monastic foundation and formation, coupled with his knowledge of current affairs, made him the perfect choice to undertake such a very important mission.

Bishop Ambrogio arrived in New York from Palermo on October 24, 1903. Met by representatives from the Philadelphia, New Orleans, and New York communities, he immediately set out his vision for the Italo-Greek Orthodox community in America.

The history of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Church in America under Bishop Ambrogio was filled with a wide range of successes and failures, but even the failures ultimately gave rise to abundant blessings from God.

Bishop Ambrogio was a man of great zeal and love for the Orthodox Catholic Faith and the Church. His dedication and perseverance unified a people who struggled to find their place in a strange new land. He was keenly aware of the discrimination and prejudice the Sicilian people faced not only from their American neighbors, but from their own countrymen. Sicilians and Southern Italians were looked down upon by Italians from middle and northern Italy. This was especially true in the case of the Sicilians. Bishop Ambrogio knew the psychological and cultural differences that existed between the Sicilians and Italians, of the disdain the Italians had for the Sicilians and he sought, with even greater vigor, to unite them into one homogenous community with a common vision and a common goal. On this matter, however, he was not entirely successful. The Italians continued to distance themselves from the Sicilians, a pattern of estrangement that advanced with even greater intensity after the lynchings of 1891. While many Northern Italians did openly receive the pastoral and spiritual ministrations of the Bishop, developing congregations remained either entirely Sicilian (Orthodox or Roman Catholic) or Italian (Roman Catholic) in their composition.

Through Bishop Ambrogio's tireless efforts, Italo-Greek Orthodox congregations sprang up in several American cities, particularly in the Northeast. By 1919, there were fourteen Italo-Greek Orthodox congregations in the United States. These congregations were known not only for their deep abiding faith in God but for their hospitality and their concern for the poor. Even in the midst of their own



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poverty, they joyfully shared their meager material resources with those less fortunate than themselves. Without a doubt, they took care of their own, but they also took care of those who were not Sicilian or Italian, or even Orthodox for that matter. This tradition of hospitality continues in our Italo-Greek communities even to this day.

Bishop Ambrogio dedicated himself to ministering to the needs of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians wherever they were. Using Philadelphia as his base, he regularly visited the small Italo-Greek congregations throughout the United States celebrating Divine Liturgy, preaching, and administering the Holy Mysteries everywhere he went and whenever he was called upon.

Bishop Ambrogio's well-known inspirational and eloquent speech, given on Easter Sunday, April 10, 1904, has been the driving force behind every effort which has been undertaken over the years to create a strong and vibrant Italo-Greek Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada. In that speech, the Bishop told of his vision and dream for an organized Italo-Greek Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada.

The Bishop's vision and dream became a reality when, on April 22, 1918, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Eparchy of the Madonna of Consolation (Our Lady of Consolation) was established. The new eparchy (diocese) consisted of 26,000 members organized in fifteen congregations served by one bishop, nine, priests, and three deacons.

On August 28, 1952, the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos (Old Style), the Eparchy was raised to the dignity of Archeparchy by decree of His Beatitude, Archbishop Sebastian. The name by which the Archdiocese was known at that time was "The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archeparchy of the United States of America. The Archeparchy was placed under the patronage of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in the title of "Our Lady of Consolation and Hope", a title that remains even to this present day.

From the time of Bishop Ambrogio's arrival in America in 1903 until the death of its last bishop in 1982, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archeparchy of North America had a continuous succession of bishops which provided spiritual and pastoral care to the faithful, yet none of them were resident (diocesan) bishops. At the time of the death of its last bishop, there were eighteen congregations with a total of 60,000 faithful.

Between the death of the last eparchial bishop and the election and enthronement of Archimandrite



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Stephen Enea as Metropolitan-Bishop in 2004, the Archdiocese had no episcopal leadership and no resident diocesan clergy. AS a result, members began to drift away from the Church, either seeking out other Churches and faith communities or leaving the Faith altogether.

By 1997, the year in which the Archdiocese received its first resident priest in the person of the current Archbishop, the number of faithful in the Archdiocese was less than 3,000 and the number of active congregations was five.

Today, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada is comprised of less than 900 faithful organized into eleven congregations shepherded by one bishop and served by one deacon. Many of the congregations are today inactive, due principally to the fact that there has been no sustaining and regular pastoral, liturgical, and sacramental ministries to any of the congregations since 1982.

Speech
of
His Grace, Bishop Ambrogio

Given on Pascha, April 10, 1904

Letter of Bishop Ambrogio

(Translated from the Sicilian)

Since the arrival of the first Italo-Greek Orthodox Christians in 1886, we have walked together in faith, passionately believing that Christ is with us and guiding us toward our destiny.

As we settle into our new home, we need to align our priorities with those of God. It is essential to place the Lord at the center of our lives, become more prayerful, and carefully heed His guidance. By doing this, we will not be seen as outcasts or strangers but as Americans committed to making valuable contributions that benefit everyone, not just ourselves or our smaller community. We must strive to be part of a larger society where all citizens have equal and fair opportunities for prosperity, happiness, and a fulfilling life.

As we establish our homes in the cities, towns, and villages of this great country and begin to write new chapters in our lives, let us always remember that we are like the children of Israel, embarking on a journey to find the Promised Land—a land flowing with milk and honey. This journey will not be an easy one; it will be filled with challenges, difficulties, and disappointments. However, just like the children of Israel, we can trust that God will provide everything we need to find peace and contentment in this new land.

As your bishop, I am dedicated to establishing a strong and organized Italo-Greek Church in America, focused on the worship of God. Our Church will prioritize loving and caring for our members and neighbors in need. We will emphasize spiritual growth over material possessions. Imagine how our faith in God and our Orthodox Christian witness can transform our neighbors and the communities we live in. Envision the positive changes and contributions we could achieve by making God and His divine principles our top priority.

Since my arrival in America, I have been inspired by your determination to overcome the struggles and hardships you have faced. Throughout these challenges, especially during the tragic events of 1899, you have remained steadfast in your faith and have continuously invested yourselves in making Christ known within your communities.

I hope that the result of our time together will be a clear articulation of a shared vision—one that proclaims Christ crucified and risen. This vision should reveal and demonstrate God's everlasting presence and love, always and forever.

Together, we will accomplish many remarkable things in Christ for the glory of God. Our journey is one of service to others, dedicated to uplifting those around us, meeting their spiritual and material needs, and leading them to a fulfilled life in Christ. We believe in the power of love and compassion, encouraging acts of kindness and generosity that transcend political and cultural prejudices.

By focusing on service to others, we create a nurturing environment where everyone feels valued and supported. Our mission is to spread hope and positivity, fostering connections that strengthen our bonds as a community. We strive to be a beacon of light, demonstrating what it means to live out our faith through selflessness and dedication to the welfare of others, completely bound to the mandate of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this spirit, we shall engage in meaningful initiatives that address the challenges faced by those in need, without engaging in political activism. We seek to inspire others to join us in this commitment to serve, cultivating a culture of care and empathy that reflects the heart of Christ. Through our collective efforts, we can truly make a difference in the lives of many and bring glory to God.

We give thanks to God the Father for the gift of life He has given to us all, and Our Lord Jesus Christ for the gift of salvation which is made possible through Him and Him alone. We offer up our prayers to the Holy Trinity to strengthen and guide us and to protect us in this new land we now call home.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to go before us and guide us on our way. Let us ask Him to strengthen our faith so that we may be known as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and not merely His followers. Let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and give glory to God who is in Heaven.

Your lives here have not been easy. We have faced discrimination, hatred, and violence from our American neighbors. Even today, we are often viewed as outcasts and criminals. Many of our fellow Italians also see us as inferior and turn away from us. Nonetheless, we remain proud Sicilians and Southern Italians, the guardians and stewards of a unique and rich spiritual, religious, and cultural heritage and patrimony.

It is my sincere prayer that through our efforts, our fellow countrymen will develop a deeper devotion to God our Father and His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, aided by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Although we may feel like strangers in a new land, I am confident that our faith in Jesus Christ will help us gain acceptance among our fellow Americans,

allowing us to live, work, and worship in peace and harmony.

We cannot hope to find peace and harmony in our country if we forget that Christ is the beginning and end of everything we do. It is important to remember that the Church, Christ's Mystical Body and our Mother, sustains us in our daily lives and provides the guidance and strength we need to overcome life's challenges and trials. From her bosom, life and salvation flow. It is from her heart that the love of God compels us to love our neighbors as ourselves. With a mother's strength and conviction, she encourages us to go out and "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." She also inspires us to prepare the peoples of the earth for the coming of the Bridegroom. The Church takes us by the hand and walks with us into the world, guiding us and showing us the way to true happiness and eternal life.

We are invited to listen to the voice of our Master, who calls us to leave behind all worldly possessions and follow Him. Our greatest temptation, now that we are here in America, is to ignore the Lord's invitation and instead pursue material possessions and financial wealth. While there is nothing inherently wrong with having wealth, it becomes an issue if it jeopardizes your salvation. Will material wealth save you on the Day of Judgment? Therefore, remember God always in everything that you do. Seek first the things of God, and everything else will come to you in due time.

Seek and find your wealth and riches in Jesus Christ. Set yourselves on a higher path. Look to the Church for guidance and counsel on how to obtain the riches and wealth that endure forever. God always provides what we need. Let us move forward confident in the knowledge that God always provides for us.

Beloved in the Lord, Christ is truly in our midst. He calls us to be His workers in this vineyard called America. We must now roll up our sleeves and labor diligently and faithfully for Him, sowing the seeds of the Orthodox Catholic Faith in the cities, towns, and villages in which we live, nurturing them by our example of obedience, devotion, and faithfulness. Then, in due season, let us reap a bountiful and fruitful harvest to the glory of God, and the growth, strengthening, and prosperity of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church here in America.

To the glory of God always, now, and ever, and unto the ages of ages!



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Introduction

The information provided in this section is intended to acquaint the reader with the canonical and juridical constructs that govern the creation, organization, division, dismemberment, union, and suppression of dioceses/archdioceses and how those constructs relate to the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada in light of both its present situation and its future as an ongoing sustainable entity.

In developing this Strategic Plan, the question of whether the Archdiocese as an organic entity should continue was discussed as a possible option along with all the others put forth for discussion, deliberation, and decision.

To help the faithful better understand how and why a diocese/archdiocese comes into being and its purpose for being, we present this section as an informational and educational tool so that the faithful can have a full understanding of why the Church has administrative structures such as dioceses and archdioceses.

Definition of Terms

A diocese/archdiocese is the local Orthodox Catholic Church, a miniature of the Universal Church, and full expression of Orthodox Catholic Christianity in a given area. Though sometimes seen only in its administrative sense, the authentic Orthodox Catholic understanding of a diocese/archdiocese is pastoral. It is the people who comprise the Orthodox Catholic Church in a particular geographic area. Also called the Particular Church, a diocese/archdiocese is defined in canon law as "a portion of the People of God, which is entrusted to a bishop to be nurtured by him, with the cooperation of the presbyterium [clergy] in such a way that, remaining close to its archpastor and gathered by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular Church. In this Church, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ truly exists and functions."



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Administratively, dioceses/archdioceses usually follow local boundaries such as counties, and they generally center on a prominent city within that territory. A diocese/archdiocese also is sometimes called a See, a term linked with the official seat of the bishop and referring to his territory or charge.

The background of dioceses/archdioceses is in the New Testament, where the apostles founded particular local churches, such as the Church at Ephesus, the Church at Rome, the Church at Corinth, and so on. Where once each Church was headed by a bishop, the growth of Christianity led to the practice of one bishop heading a number of Churches, such as village churches linked with the bishop of the nearby city.

Gradually, as the Church grew even more, the bishop's area of leadership became known as a diocese, a term then used for the administrative county-like districts of the Roman empire. Today, the terms diocese/archdiocese are used not only in the Orthodox Catholic Churches, but in the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Catholic Churches, the Old Catholic Church, and the Polish National Catholic Churches.

Within the Orthodox Catholic Church, a diocese is an autonomous Church headed by a bishop. The Diocesan Bishop is responsible for maintaining communion and unity with his brother bishops. In the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Canada, the Metropolis of Utica is a diocesan ecclesial entity headed by a bishop.

Dioceses may also group together as Provinces. IN the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Canada, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada is the Metropolitan Province. The Province is headed by a Metropolitan-Bishop whose title is "Metropolitan of the Americas and Canada of the Italo-Greeks." The Metropolitan-Bishop has a position of honor and some limited appellate authority within the Province.

In the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Canada, the Metropolitan See of the Archdiocese is in the City of Utica in the State of New York. Utica is also the See for the Metropolis of Utica so that the Bishop of Utica is also the Metropolitan-Bishop of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada.

In the United States, the first diocese was established in 1789, with its See at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



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The Origin of the Terms

Originally, the term *diocese* (Greek “dioikesis”) signified management of a household, thus meaning administration or government in general. This term was soon used in Roman law to designate the territory dependent for its administration upon a city (*civitas*). What in Latin was called *ager* or *territorium*, namely a district subject to a city, was habitually known in the Roman East as a *diocesis*. Inasmuch as the Christian bishop resided in a *civitas*, the territory administered by him, being usually coterminous with the juridical territory of the city, came to be known ecclesiastically by its usual civil term, *diocese*. This name was also given to the administrative subdivision of some provinces ruled by legates (*legati*) under the authority of the governor of the province. The Emperor Diocletian designated by the term diocese the twelve great divisions which he established in the Empire, and over each of which he placed a vicar (*vicarius*).

The original term for local groups of the faithful subject to a bishop was “*ekklesia*” (*church*), and at a later date, “*paroikoa*”, (i.e., the neighborhood, in Latin: *paroecia*, *parochial*). Canons 14 and 15 of the Apostolic Canons and Canon 16 of the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) applied the term “*paroilia*” to the territory subject to a bishop. This term was retained in the East, where the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) reserved the word “*diocese*” for the territory subject to a patriarch (Canon 2). In the West, “*parochial*” was also long used to designate an episcopal see. Pope Leo IV (850 A.D.) and Pope Urban II (1095 A.D.), still employed the term “*parochial*” to denote the territory subject to the jurisdiction of a bishop. Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) designated the term “*parochiani*” to describe the subjects under the jurisdiction of a bishop. In the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church today, the word “*parrochiani*” (Italian form) is still used to describe the subjects of a bishop. Eventually, the term “*parochial*” (“*parrochia*” in Italian) came to mean individual parishes within a diocese (“*diocese*” in Italian), now understood the term), now understood to mean a specific ecclesiastical administrative area based on geographical boundaries.

In their current usages “*diocese*” means a specific ecclesiastical administrative area and “*archdiocese*” means a larger ecclesiastical province. In most cases, though not always, an archdiocese may have one or more dioceses (“*suffragan*” dioceses or sees) within it, each headed by a bishop who is sovereign in the administration of his diocese but who is subject and accountable to the Metropolitan of the province.



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Historical Origins of Diocese/Archdiocese (Eparchy/Archeparchy)

It is impossible to determine what rules or criteria were followed in the early Church in creating a diocese or in limiting the territory over which each bishop exercised his authority. Universality of ecclesiastical jurisdiction was a personal prerogative of the Apostles; their successors, the Bishops, enjoyed only a jurisdiction limited to a certain territory; thus, as an example, St. Ignatius was the Bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna.

The first Christian communities, much like the Jewish, were established in towns and villages. The converts who lived in the neighborhood naturally joined with the community of the town for the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries. Exact limitations of episcopal territory could not have attracted or raised much attention at the beginning of Christianity; it would have been quite impracticable. As a matter of Fact, the extent of the diocese was determined by the geographic area over which the bishop exercised his influence. It seems certain, on the mother hand, that, in the East at any rate, by the middle of third century, each Christian community of any importance had become the residence of a bishop and constituted a diocese.

The increase of the faithful in small towns and country districts soon made it necessary to determine exactly the limits of the territory of each church. The cities of the Empire, with their clearly defined suburban districts, offered limits that were easily acceptable. From the fourth century on, it was generally admitted that every city ought to have its own bishop, and that his territory was bounded by that of the neighboring city. This rule was stringently applied in the East. Although Pope Innocent I declared in 415 A.D. that the Church was not bound to conform itself to all the civil divisions which the Imperial government chose to introduce, the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) decreed that if a *civitas* were dismembered by Imperial authority, the ecclesiastical organization should also be modified (Canon 17).

In the West, the Council of Sardica (344 A.D.) forbade in its sixth canon the establishment of dioceses in towns not populous enough to render desirable that their elevation to the dignity of episcopal residences. At the same time, many Western sees included the territories of several cities and/or towns and villages. This is the case today in the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church. For example, the Metropolis (Eparchy/Diocese) of Utica encompasses the cities of the Utica and Rome, New York as well as the surrounding areas of New Hartford, New York Mills, Clinton, Oriskany, Whitesboro, Herkimer, Little Falls, Boonville, Old Forge, Forestport, Sylvan Brach, Camden, Oneonta,



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Cooperstown, and all the towns and villages in between.

The Metropolis is a part of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada and its bishop bears the title "Bishop of Utica." Utica is also the Metropolitan See of the Archdiocese, which is comprised of the entire United States and Canada, and its bishop is also the Metropolitan and Primate of the Archdiocese. There are currently no other eparchies/dioceses within the Archdiocese.

The Italo-Greek Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada is an ecclesiastical and canonical province of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church created to serve and govern the Italo-Greek Orthodox faithful living in the Americas and Canada and is comprised of parishes, missions, congregations, churches, convents, monasteries, schools, hospitals, and other institutions that are under the jurisdiction and spiritual care of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church.

Creation of Dioceses/Archdioceses

From the fourth century on, we have documentary evidence of the manner in which dioceses were created. According to Canon 6 of the Council of Sardica, the right to establish a diocese belongs to the provincial synod. In the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church, this is also the case. However, since there is presently no sitting Provincial Eparchial Holy Synod of Bishops, the right to create dioceses within the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada is a prerogative of the Archbishop and Primate of the Church. At the time a Provincial Eparchial Synod of Bishops is assembled and established, the right of creation of dioceses/eparchies within the Archdiocese will revert to the Provincial Eparchial Holy Synod of Bishops.

It should be noted that, according to canon law, no diocese may have its Episcopal See in a city in which another Orthodox bishop is already resident. It was for this reason that when Archbishop Stephen was first consecrated a bishop in 2004, he made the decision to move the Episcopal See of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Utica, New York, as there was already an Orthodox bishop seated in Philadelphia. (OCA Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania). While the decision to move the Episcopal See from Philadelphia to Utica did not sit well with many in the original community, it was a move that was necessary in order to maintain canonical order within the wider Church, the integrity of our Archdiocese, and to avoid any confrontation or conflict with another Orthodox jurisdiction.



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Since the Italo-Greek Church was part of the Patriarchate of Rome since its founding until the late 8th Century, when canonical jurisdiction was transferred to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, we frequently reflect on the impact the Church of Rome has had on our ecclesial and administrative life, principally in the areas of administration and canonical jurisprudence.

Since the eleventh century in the Western Church, particularly in the Church of Rome, the rule has been that the establishment of new dioceses is the exclusive right of the Apostolic See. The papal decretals consider the erection and creation of a new diocese as one of the "*causae majores*", i.e. matters of special importance, reserved to the Pope alone. However, prior to the eleventh century, this was not the case. Further, it was never the case in the Eastern Church.

A word of mention must be made here of the missionary or regional bishops known as "*Episcopi gentium*" and "*episcopi (archepiscopi) in gentibus*." These bishops had no fixed territory or diocese, but were sent into a country or district for the purpose of evangelizing it. Examples of such bishops were St. Boniface in Germany, St. Augustine in England, and St. Willebrord in the Netherlands. These bishops themselves were the organizers of the diocese, after their apostolic labors had produced happy results. A more recent example from the life and history of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church would be that of Bishop Ambrogio, who came from Sicily to America to organize the Italo-Greeks living here. Though he himself did not organize the diocese for the Italo-Greeks in America, the fruits of his labors resulted in the creation of a diocese for them.

Before becoming a diocese, the territory in question must, for a period of time, be a successful mission. Since 2004, it has been the rule in the Italo-Greek Church, that a territory must be a successful mission for a period of five years before it can be made a diocese. In addition, it must have at least ten (10) fully functioning parishes, each with membership of 25 people or more, a full-time priest, and at least one men's and one women's monastery. During this five year period, the territory is referred to as an *exarchate*. The *exarchate* is overseen and governed by the Holy Synod of Bishops, who vigorously provides for its pastoral, spiritual, liturgical, and sacramental needs.

In considering the creation and erection of a new diocese, a commission is appointed by the Provincial Eparchial Holy Synod of Bishops or the Great and Holy Synod of Bishops to thoroughly study and consider the matter. The commission makes a preliminary study of the question and passes judgment on the propriety and opportuneness of the creation of the diocese in question. The commission considers principally whether the number of Italo-Greek Orthodox Catholic Christians, priests, deacons, and religious establishments (i.e., churches, chapels, monasteries, etc.) is sufficiently large



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enough to justify the establishment of the proposed diocese. Also taken into consider is the ability of the proposed new diocese to financially support itself. These matters form the subject of the report of the report to the Holy Synod of Bishops, to which must be added the number of towns, villages, and settlements included in the territory. The report also includes the total number of people living within the territorial boundaries of the proposed new diocese. Also included are the financial resources that will be at the disposal of the diocesan bishop for the works of religion and the maintenance and support of the diocese. There is added, finally, a sketch, if possible accompanied by a map, indicating the territory of the future diocese. Moreover, the general considerations for the creation of a new diocese are the same as those for dividing or “dismembering” diocese.

In order for a new diocese to be created, sufficient reason must exist (“*just cause*”). The necessity, or at least the utility, of the need for a new diocese must be demonstrated. There is sufficient reason for the creation of a diocese if the missionary territory is too extensive geographically, or the number of faithful is too great, or the means of communication too difficult for the bishop to properly carry out the duties and responsibilities of his office. The benefit which would result to religion (*incremento al culto divino*) may also be brought forward as a reason for the creation of a new diocese. In the main, these reasons are summed up in the one: the hope of forwarding the interests and the expansion of the Orthodox Catholic Christian Faith.

The second condition is suitability of place (*indoneita del luogo*). There should exist in the diocese to be created a city or town suitable for the episcopal residence; the ancient disciple which rules that Episcopal Sees should be established only in important localities should be adhered to. In addition, the ancient canonical proscription that there may not be two Orthodox bishops resident in the same city is to be scrupulously observed.

Third, a proper endowment (*dote fondazione ecclesiastica*) is requisite. The bishop of every diocese should have at this disposal the financial and material resources for his own maintenance and that of the ecclesiastics who minister in the diocese as his assistants; for the general administration of the diocese; for the establishment of a cathedral church; for expenses related to the conduct of Divine worship; for the formation and education of clergy; and for the undertaking of apostolic works of charity. Formerly, it was necessary that in part, at least, this endowment would consist of lands; at present, this is not always possible. It suffices if there is a prospect that the new bishop will be able to meet the necessary expenses of the diocese. In the matter of support of the diocese, the bishop must rely and depend on the liberality and generosity of the faithful and on a contribution from the parishes of the diocese, known as the cathedraticum.



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At the present time in the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church, the creation of a diocese is effect by an archiepiscopal decree (*decreto di erezione canonica*) upon recommendation and with the consent of the Provincial Eparchial Holy Synod of Bishops. Inasmuch as the Provincial Eparchial Holy Synod of Bishops is presently not in existence, the creation of a diocese in the Italo-Greek Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada is reserved to the Archbishop and Primate of the Church.

Division or Dismemberment of a Diocese

In the Italo-Greek Orthodox tradition, the division and dismemberment of a diocese is normally reserved solely to the Great and Holy Synod of Bishops. At present, however, the right to divide or dismember a diocese is reserved exclusively and solely to the Archbishop. The following rules are those generally observed in the division or dismemberment of a diocese.

First, to divide a diocese, sufficient reason must exist ("*guista causa*" or "*just cause*"). The necessity, or at least the utility, of the division must be demonstrated. There is sufficient reason for the subdivision of a diocese if it is too extensive geographically, or the number of faithful is too great, or the means of communication too difficult, the ability to properly provide ministerial services is a burden, or it is difficult for the bishop to administer the diocese properly. The benefit which would result to religion (*incremento al culto divino*) may also be brought forward as a reason for the change. In the main, these reasons are summed up in the one: the hope of forwarding the interests and the expansion of the Orthodox Catholic Christian Faith.

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worship; for the formation and education of clergy; and for the undertaking of apostolic works of charity. Formerly, it was necessary that in part, at least, this endowment would consist of lands; at present, this is not always possible. It suffices if there is a prospect that the new bishop will be able to meet the necessary expenses of the diocese. In the matter of support of the diocese, the bishop must rely and depend on the liberality and generosity of the faithful and on a contribution from the parishes of the diocese, known as the cathedraticum.

Fourth, generally for the division of a diocese, the consent of the actual incumbent of the benefice is requisite. As a matter of conciliarity, the Archbishop asks the advice of the metropolitan and of all the bishops of the ecclesiastical province in which the diocese to be divided is situated. Often, indeed, the division takes place at the request of the bishop himself.

In the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church, the division or dismemberment of a diocese is effected by an archiepiscopal decree upon recommendation and with the consent of the Great and Holy Synod of Bishops.

Union of Dioceses

As in the case of the creation or division of a diocese, the union of one or more dioceses out to be justified by motives of public utility, e.g. the small number of faithful; the loss of resources, whether clerical, financial, or a vacancy in the episcopal see which would result in another bishop not being appointed.

The union of dioceses may only be effected by a decree of the Archbishop, issued after consultation with and the approval of the Great and Holy Synod of Bishops. Currently, in the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church, in the absence of a sitting Great and Holy Synod of Bishops, the union of dioceses is effected solely by the Archbishop and Primate.

It is a generally recognized principle in the union of diocese that such union takes effect only after the death of the actual occupant of the See which is to be united to another; at least when he has not given his consent to this union.

The union of dioceses takes place in one of several ways. First, there is the "*unione in amministrazione pari a due*" (equal union in dual administration), when the two dioceses are entrusted for the purpose of



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administration to a single bishop, though they remain in all other respects distinct. Each of them has its own diocesan administration, revenues, rights and privileges; however, the bishop must still be canonically elected and enthroned in the other diocese. In such a case, he cannot resign from one diocese without *ipso facto* resigning from the other. In such a case, he cannot resign from one diocese without *ipso facto* resigning from the other. He assumes the title of being bishop of both cities and is canonically required to reside in both cities a portion of the time each year. In this type of union between dioceses, the clergy of the one diocese are inscribed on the clergy lists of the other diocese and are free to move between the dioceses and serve in the parishes of the other. They may also be canonically transferred from assignment in a parish of one diocese to a parish of the other diocese as necessity or needs require, either on a permanent or temporary basis.

Dioceses may be united on a temporary basis such as in the case of the death or incapacity of a bishop. In this instance, the bishop of one diocese becomes the *Locum Tenens* or administrator of the other diocese. In this case, there is no union between the two sees. The bishop who takes charge of the vacant diocese. The bishop who takes charge of the vacant diocese is not canonically elected to the vacant episcopal see as its diocesan bishop. The *Locum Tenens*, once appointed will appoint a diocesan administrator from among the members of the clergy of the vacant diocese to administer its day-to-day affairs.

Suppression of a Diocese

Suppression of a diocese, properly so-called, in a manner other than by union, takes place only in the most extreme of circumstances. Examples would be where the faithful and clergy have been dispersed by persecutions; or where the entire Local Church (bishop, clergy, and faithful) has renounced the faith and left the Church, thus leaving the diocese abandoned, or where the Local Church has diminished to such a degree that the life of the Church is no longer sustainable by any viable means, Only the Archbishop has the right to suppress a diocese. Even under the most extreme of circumstances, he is not under any obligation to do so nor shall he be compelled to do so. Under such circumstances, the Archbishop himself will become the *Locum Tenens* of the vacant diocese and appoint an administrator.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Diocese & Archdiocese - Ecclesiastical and Canonical Definitions

Change of Boundaries

The geographical boundaries of a diocese may be changed when sufficient documented evidence is submitted to the proper ecclesiastical authority (the Archbishop and/or the Great and Holy Synod of Bishops). Among the sufficient reasons for this measure are difficulties of communication, disputes between the inhabitants of one part of the diocese, or the merger or union of dioceses. Changes in boundaries of a diocese may only be made by the Archbishop and Primate of the Church in consultation with and the approval of the Great and Holy Synod of Bishops.

Conclusion

In the case of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada, due consideration was given to the several possible courses of action which could be taken in relation to the life of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox catholic Church in the Americas and Canada. These included uniting the Archdiocese to another Local Church. In this regard, thought was given to the possibility of joining the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America either as an ethnic diocese of the OCA or by suppressing the Archdiocese and instructing each congregation to join the appropriate territorial diocese of the OCA. A decision was made to pursue this option in 2013 but it did not produce any positive results. There was no response from the OCA.

Consideration was given to suppress the Archdiocese altogether and dissolve it, dispersing whatever monetary and material resources it had to another Orthodox jurisdiction or monastery of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. The matter was debated and a vote to dissolve or continue the Archdiocese was taken at a special convocation of the Provincial Council held in Scranton, Pennsylvania on January 7, 2018. The vote to continue the Archdiocese was 68 in favor and nine against.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Description

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada was canonically created and established by Archiepiscopal Tomos issued on April 22, 1918 (Holy Pascha) as an Eparchy. IT was raised to the dignity of Archeparchy (Archdiocese) in 1952.

The Archdiocese is an ecclesiastical entity under canon law, the head of which is the Metropolitan-Bishop. The Archdiocese is an ecclesiastical province constituting the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in the Americas and Canada. It is also one two archdioceses comprising the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox catholic Church, the other being the Holy Archdiocese of Siracusa and Ortigia and of all Southern Italy and Magna Graecia. The Metropolitan-Bishop is president of the Provincial Eparchial Holy Synod of Bishops and is also a member of the Great and Holy Synod of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church.

Legal Corporate Title

The legal corporate title of the Archdiocese is: The Italo-Greek Orthodox Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada". The designations "Italo-Greek Orthodox Archeparchy of North America", "Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America", Italo-Greek Orthodox Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese of North America", and the "Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese", may also be used, at any time and without restriction, is referring to the Archdiocese and its ecclesiastical, canonical, and administrative jurisdiction over all Italo-Greek Orthodox Catholic Christians and institutions residing or existing within its territorial boundaries.

The designations asnd titles identified and contained in this section are the property of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church and are used by it to identify itself corporately under civil law and to safeguard and protect the integrity, wholeness, and unity of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church and its faithful as well as the general public from any unauthorized use by a parallel organization unlawfully claiming to be the canonical and historic Italo-Greek Orthodox Church.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Purpose

The primary function of the Archdiocese is to ensure all entities and persons within, and subject to, its canonical jurisdiction exist in conformity with the doctrinal beliefs, practices, rites, canon law, and discipline of the Orthodox Catholic Church as they are experienced and lived in the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church.

Aims & Objectives

The objectives and aims of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada are:

- a) To preserve and propagate the Orthodox Catholic Christian Faith in its purity and fullness in accordance with the teachings of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as it has been transmitted to us by the Holy Apostles and fathers of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church.
- b) To educate and form, both in religion and morals, the faithful of the Church; teaching them by word and example to be good Orthodox Catholic Christians.
- c) To proclaim the Good News of the Gospel to all people and make disciples of them, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit .
- d) To perform religious ceremonies and rites in the worship of the Holy Trinity; to instruct the faithful of the Church in Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Holy fathers of the Church by religious addresses, letters and sermons; sermons and homilies; to operate Sunday Schools for the teaching and study of the Orthodox Catholic Faith, Sacred Scriptures, and the Sacred Sciences.
- e) To see to it that every parish, mission, and congregation of the Archdiocese has a resident priest and deacon, as well as readers, chanters, and singers, for the worship of God and the regular and proper celebration of the Divine Liturgy and the ministrations of the Holy Mysteries.
- f) To see to the training and formation of future clergy, readers, chanters and singers; of catechists and parish leaders for the parishes, missions, congregations, and ministries of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in the Americas and Canada.
- g) To cultivate, facilitate, and ensure the observance of good order and religious dignity in all parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese and their related and affiliated organizations and entities.
- h) To develop, implement, and encourage Gospel-based philanthropic and other charitable activities and works



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

- i) To foster, support, encourage, and maintain the arts, sciences, cultural, and other noble activities and works for the enlightenment and edification of humanity.

Ministerial, Religious, and Ecclesiastical Services

The Archdiocese shall ensure that all members of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church living within its territorial boundaries of the Archdiocese are provided with adequate and proper ministerial, sacramental, pastoral, and liturgical services. The Archdiocese shall carry out its responsibility for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the souls entrusted to its care by ensuring opportunities for worship, religious education, apostolic service, and fellowship in accordance with the rites, faith, doctrine, ritual, discipline, canon law, traditions, and usages of the universal and holy Orthodox Catholic Faith as they are lived and experienced in the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church.

Boundaries

The Archdiocese is comprised territorially of the United States, Canada, Mexico, South America, and the United States Protectorates. The territorial boundaries of the Archdiocese may only be changed by decree of the Archbishop and Primate of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in consultation with and the approval of the Great and Holy Synod of Bishops of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church.

Jurisdiction

The canonical, ecclesiastical, temporal, spiritual, religious, and legal jurisdiction of the Archdiocese extends territorially throughout all of the United States, Canada, Mexico, South America, and the United States Protectorates. The Archdiocese consists of all churches, cathedrals, chapels, congregations,, communities, fellowships, societies, parishes, missions, committees, seminaries, monasteries, convents, and other religious organizations made up of persons who are communicant members of the Orthodox Catholic Christian Faith and who are of Sicilian and Southern Italian descent: 1) who immigrated to regions within the territorial boundaries of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada from Sicily and Southern Italy; 2) who descend from such



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

persons; 3) women who are members of other Orthodox Churches or the Roman Catholic Church married to men referable to 1 and 2, who changed their jurisdiction; 4) converts to the Orthodox Catholic Faith who have been received into the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church; and 5) all other Italo-Greek Orthodox Catholic Christians living within the territorial boundaries of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada.

Authority & Relativity

The Archdiocese is the only canonical and legal certifying entity for the establishment of churches, cathedrals, chapels, congregations, communities, fellowships, societies, parishes, missions, committees, seminaries, monasteries, convents, and other religious, cultural, and educational organizations within its territorial boundaries which are comprised of members of the Orthodox Catholic Faith claiming affiliation or association with the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church.

All persons, or groups of persons, of Italo-Greek Orthodox heritage must submit a petition to the Metropolitan of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada for permission to establish a churches, cathedrals, chapels, congregations,, communities, fellowships, societies, parishes, missions, committees, seminaries, monasteries, convents, and other religious organizations of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Catholic tradition within the territorial boundaries of the Archdiocese. The Consistory of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in the Americas and Canada shall communicate the decision of the Metropolitan regarding the petition and shall effect the civil establishment of the entity in accordance with the provisions of the appropriate civil laws and statutes in effect in the jurisdiction of incorporation.

Ecclesiastical, Canonical, and Temporal Responsibilities

In addition to the spiritual supervision of persons and places under its jurisdiction, the Archdiocese shall also provides for the training of priests and other clergy for service to the churches, cathedrals, chapels, congregations,, communities, fellowships, societies, parishes, missions, committees, seminaries, monasteries, convents, and other religious organizations of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in the Americas and Canada.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

The Archdiocese shall carry out its divine mandate of apostolic service and corporals works of mercy, including the care of the sick and homeless; to the dying and dead, to the sick and inform; to the forgotten, the abandoned, and the neglected; to the abused and mistreated; and to the poor and all those in need through various centralized programs and institutions

It is the responsibility of the Archdiocese to safeguard and administer the spiritual and temporal resources and assets of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church within the territorial boundaries of the Archdiocese in strict conformance with tradition Orthodox Catholic Christians beliefs, practices, and disciplines.

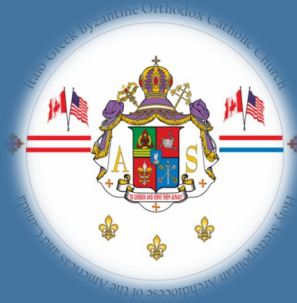
Administration

The Chancellor of the Archdiocese, together with the Vicar-General, each acting with delegated authority from the diocesan bishop and within the applicable provisions of canon law, the Constitution of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in the Americas and Canada, and the Judicial and Administrative Code of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada, oversee the day-to-day religious, spiritual, pastoral, ministerial, and ecclesiastical affairs and activities of the Archdiocese. The Chancellor is appointed by the Metropolitan and may be taken from among the laity or the clergy. The Vicar-General is appointed by the Metropolitan and must be a male in Holy Orders with a degree in Canon Law.

At the sole discretion of the Metropolitan-Bishop, a Chief Operating Officer (COO) may be appointed by him to assist him in his administration and oversight of the temporal affairs of the Archdiocese.

REBUILDING THE CITY OF GOD

Five-Year Strategic Plan of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada



Rebuilding Old Congregations

Revitalizing, Invigorating, and Strengthening
Existing Congregations

Planting, Growing, and Nurturing New Congregations



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing and Rebuilding Old Congregations

Introduction

Church revitalization is a special calling with particular gift and skill sets. Honoring the past, while disrupting the present, in order to create a better future, is not an easy thing to do for and of us, clergy or laity. Taking criticism personally, having the need to be constantly appreciated, validated, and affirmed, using a cookie-cutter approach to how we get things done, and being set in our ways and not open to change is not going to work in our efforts to revitalize and rebuild our parishes and congregations. In many ways, we will have to reinvent ourselves and the way we do things if we are going to have any realistic hope at all of rebuilding the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church and the communities that comprise it.

Calling people to action and convincing them that the future moving forward is bright and filled with opportunity by honoring the past and not by living in the past is never easy. Additionally, calling and challenging people to recognize their shortcomings and focus on the call of God is essential for church revitalization. Our communities are not dying because our people do not love the Lord or each other (a few are, but...) or because we do not have sufficient clergy or other ministers to serve them. Our communities are dying because they have lost the deep desire and conviction to live the transforming life-style offered by Gospel and have chosen instead to follow the world. In other words, they are more concerned with this world than with the world to come.

The communities of our Archdiocese experienced their new birth in Christ when they were first established. They were inspired beyond measure in their formative years and for many years thereafter, but at some point, most, if not all, abandoned the challenge put to them by Bishop Ambrogio and his call to become and live as disciples of Christ and not just His followers. Many members of our Church have become comfortable and complacent with being church people rather than Christ's people. If you took a poll in any mainline church on Sunday and asked the question "How many people here in this congregation have introduced one person to Jesus Christ in the last thirty days?" what do you think the answer would be?

When we live a life that is consistently being transformed by the Word of God then we develop a burning desire to lead others into a fuller and more rewarding relationship with Christ. When we experience God's grace, we want to share His grace with others. When we experience God's love, we want to share His love with others. When the "church building or location" is more important than the "living for and in Christ", then we have a problem.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing and Rebuilding Old Congregations

Parishes, missions, and congregations that are totally immersed in Christ, where members are true disciples of the Lord and not mere followers, can transform the world and do great things in the wider communities in which they live. Living as disciples of Christ means that we speak truth to power, that we speak that truth in love, addressing relational dysfunctions, calling out social intolerances that mask or even openly manifest racism, sexism, homophobic attitudes, and all other attitudes and behaviors inconsistent with the Gospel.

In order for our parishes, missions, and congregations to flourish, we must throw open wide our doors and step out into the wider community and speak the truth to our neighbors, showing them a better way of living, one that brings enrichment and fulfillment in ways the world in ways the world cannot give or comprehend.

What we must do to be successful in rebuilding our Church, especially in the revitalization and rebirth of our present communities is to connect the ancient rituals, ceremonies, and traditions that give glory to God and transform the world by His sanctifying Grace with the basic human needs of God's people everywhere. We must give meaning to the lives of a people who are worldly driven and not religion driven, who do not believe in firm moral absolutes but who, rather, adhere to a moral relativism that creates chaos and confusion.

To revitalize our Church, our focus must be on revitalizing people's lives with the Gospel. This includes not only the members of our Church, but also those who are not members. The Church exists not just to serve its own, but all of God's people. To successfully do this, we must love like Jesus, serve like Jesus, forgive like Jesus, be merciful and compassionate like Jesus, and be hospitable like Jesus. We have, like every other Church, preached this Sunday after Sunday, but now we have to take it to the next level.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing and Rebuilding Old Congregations

Old Behaviors in Dying Congregations

vs.

New Behaviors in Revitalizing Congregations

Old Behaviors in Dying Congregations

Dying congregations usually have the following characteristics:

1. They have carefully guarded centers of control. One or more members or families aggressively put forward their likes and agendas, often not even considering the feelings of other members of the community.
2. Old traditions are prized so much that new traditions or newer expressions of old traditions have no fertile ground for planting or formation.
3. Leaders, whether clergy or lay, are prized for their ability to maintain order and ensure conformity.
4. Only a few are invited to take on public roles and important functions within the parish community.
5. The community's best stories are decades old and their best days are behind them.
6. Strangers are treated like, well, strangers.
7. There are really no behavior norms - just assumptions about what is "acceptable behavior."
8. Members are valued based on their perceived contribution to preserving what is, or has been.
9. Most of the faith community's efforts are spent on internal concerns.
10. A strong "us/them" mentality.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing and Rebuilding Old Congregations

Old Behaviors in Dying Congregations

vs.

New Behaviors in Revitalizing Congregations

11. There may be difficult experiences of conflict in the life of the community which have not been addressed in helpful or healthy ways.
12. A donor's financial strength determines the vision, works, activities, and/or plans of the community.

New Behaviors in Revitalizing Congregations

1. The nature of the stories that the community tells about itself starts to shift. The number of old stories is eclipsed by stories less than a year old.
2. Emergence of startling and arresting experiences of God's presence within the community and related testimony of recent encounters with "God with Us."
3. Demonstrated "unconditional positive regard" for those present in the original community.
4. Strangers are welcomed as guests and potential parish family members.
5. Renewed commitment to manifesting the Gospel message as the normal standard of community and personal living.
6. The "doors" of the community are opened wide to welcome all.
7. The frequency with which the stranger is "welcomed" as guests starts to grow and becomes recognizable in the wider community.
8. Ration of total time spent on internal matters versus total time spent on outward ministries starts



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing and Rebuilding Old Congregations

Old Behaviors in Dying Congregations

vs.

New Behaviors in Revitalizing Congregations

to shift in measurable ways.

9. The focus of the community on external evidences of God's presence/activity and transforming Grace starts to match/exceed interior evidence.
10. High ratio of positive experiences to negative experiences in the community's life together starts to show.
11. A core group of "elders" starts to develop whose zeal inspires and leads other members to conversion and action.
12. Fresh norms for community and parishioner behaviors and attitudes begin emerging.
13. Lessons learned from failures are valued as much as those from successes.
14. A growing courage to discuss all difficult and uncomfortable situations in health-promoting ways begins to manifest itself over time.
15. The community's vision and ministries determine the budget.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing, Invigorating, and Strengthening Existing Congregations

The Relative Challenges of Congregation Revitalization

1. *Dead churches are dead for a reason - there will be opposition*

There is usually a good reason why a congregation (church) needs to be revitalized. Churches and congregations often dwindle in size and effectiveness for various reasons. Most likely, this will happen because of some traumatic event, i.e., lack of resources (human, financial, and material), or years of poor leadership. As a result, the spiritual state of the community begins to deteriorate and ultimately ends up in ruins. In these cases, there will be much to overcome and tear down in order to move the community (church) forward. This process is often very painful. If a church was already inclined to do the things that healthy churches do, it probably wouldn't be dying. Finding a struggling community in our Archdiocese has never been a problem. Finding struggling communities that want to change and grow is much more difficult.

2. *The Church is Irrelevant and Unnecessary – "I don't need the Church to believe in God"*

Many people are increasingly convincing themselves of the false belief that they do not need the Church. They say with all conviction that they do not need to go to church on Sunday; that they can pray privately to God on their own terms and when it is convenient for them and that is sufficient for their needs and salvation. The problem with this line of thinking is that they are deceiving themselves. Additionally, and even more sad, is the fact that the Church itself has given them cause to believe this.

People have lost faith and confidence in the Church; many feel betrayed by the Church. They see it as aloof and distant, as hypocritical and out of touch with their needs. They see it as an institution that stands far above them and not with them in their times of trouble and hardship. And they see it as an oppressive and repressive institution. While their feelings may be justified in most cases, they are mistaken in their belief that the Church has betrayed them or let them down.

It is not the Church that has betrayed the trust of the people of God but the many bishops and priests who have failed to uphold the dignity of their office and the reputation and image of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ; it is they who have done all the damage. It will take a lot of work and a lot of time to change this false perception the people have of the Church and repair the



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing, Invigorating, and Strengthening Existing Congregations

damage that has been done.

3. *Clergy are no longer seen as spiritual leaders but over-glorified social workers*

Many priests, the front line warriors, no longer have an image of themselves as sacred and consecrated ministers of the Lord. In an effort to be one with the people from which they have been selected, many have diminished the sacred office they hold. Many priests today play down the sacred truth of their power to bind and loose sins; of confecting Holy Mysteries that have the power to transform and transfigure lives and souls and which are the means by which God conveys His Grace and works actively in our lives.. The sacred and holy is gone from the lives of many priests, who see themselves more as “social workers” and “spiritual counselors” (in the secular understanding of that word) than men chosen and mandated by God to minister in unique ways to His people. In order for churches to grow, priests must die to, themselves, reject the material things of this world and focus entirely on doing the work of the Lord, whose ministers they are, in whose Name they serve, and in whose priesthood they share.

4. *Old ways die hard*

People are set in their ways and are often resistant to change. In order for our churches to grow, we (clergy and laity) must change the way we think and act. To successfully revitalize our churches, it is not always necessary to change our way of thinking to a more “progressive” point of view or attitude but instead find new ways to rediscover what was “handed down once and for all to the saints” and then share that message, without changing it, with others who are seeking a more stable stronghold within which to find shelter. In this, it is important to remember that the message does not change but the way we share and spread the message may find new ways of faithful expression.

The Relative Advantages of Congregation Revitalization

1. *Revitalization provides a kingdom two-for-one*

Revitalization efforts establish a new Gospel presence in a town, but they also remove a bad witness. If healthy churches make a positive statement about the Gospel to the sur-



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reorganizing, Invigorating, and Strengthening Existing Congregations

rounding community, inactive or complacent congregations send out the message that “Jesus and His people are irrelevant...keep looking.” When an inactive or dying community comes back to life, the watching world sees a vibrant and dynamic witness for Christ where formerly there was lethargy and even anti-witness. In short, they see the Holy Spirit actively at work and this draws their curiosity and attention. This creates opportunities for evangelization that cannot be passed up.

2. *Revitalization encourages members in the dying congregation.*

Many of the members of struggling congregations are faithful believers who are deeply committed to their congregation. They have hung on through the lean times. They have professed their commitment even though very little was happening. Jesus loves these sheep even though they do not have a pastor to care for them or tend to their spiritual needs. When a church is revitalized, these members are often encouraged and shepherded in a new way. Their faith is refreshed and renewed as they serve the growing body.

3. *Revitalization encourages us to harness resources for the Gospel.*

Many struggling or dying communities are sitting on a treasure trove of resources (people, land, money, etc.) that can be used for the spread of the Gospel. Those resources are just sitting around idle, doing almost nothing for the building up of the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God. As a matter of good stewardship, we are charge by God to use the gifts He has given us for the good of others and His Church.



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of California

Sts Zacharia & Elizabeth Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

San Diego, CA

Founded: May 13, 1979, as Sts. Zacharia & Elizabeth
 Reconstituted/Re-Established: July 18, 2005 as Sts. Zacharia & Elizabeth
 Administrative Status: Inactive as of September 30, 2016
 Parochial Status: Congregation
 Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Zacharia & Elizabeth)
 Patronal Feast Day: July 8/15
 Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese
 Last Census Report: January 3, 2015

Family Units: 8 (22)
 Individuals: 11
Total Faithful: 33

Sts. Perpetua & Felicity Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

San Francisco, CA

Founded: March 29, 1914 as Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 Reconstituted/Re-Established: August 10, 2009 as Sts. Perpetua & Felicity
 Administrative Status: Inactive as of September 30, 2016
 Parochial Status: Congregation
 Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Perpetua & Felicity)
 Patronal Feast Day: February 1/14
 Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese
 Last Census Report: January 10, 2017

Family Units: 15 (42)
 Individuals: 20
Total Faithful: 62



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

District of Columbia

Sts. Bartholomew & Barnabas Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Washington, DC

Founded: June 14, 1991 as Holy Family
Reconstituted/Re-Established: November 1, 2004 as Sts. Bartholomew & Barnabas
Administrative Status: Inactive as of September 30, 2016
Parochial Status: Congregation
Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Bartholomew & Barnabas)
Patronal Feats Day: June 11/24
Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese
Last Census Report: January 20, 2015

Family Units: 5 (17)
Individuals: 11
Total Faithful: 28



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Illinois

St. Agatha of Sicily Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Chicago, IL

Founded: September 22, 1918 as St. Agatha of Catania
Reconstituted/Re-Established: January 28, 1980 as St. Agatha of Sicily
Administrative Status: Active
Parochial Status: Mission
Canonical Status: Mission (St. Agatha of Sicily Italo-Greek Orthodox Mission)
Patronal Feast Day: July 9/22
Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese
Last Census Report: January 12, 2024

Family Units: 15 (52)
Individuals: 28
Total Faithful: 80



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Louisiana

St. Nicodemus of Palermo Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

New Orleans, LA

Founded: January 4, 1883 as the Society of St. Nicodemus of Palermo

Reconstituted/Re-Established: May 7, 2005

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Nicodemus of Palermo)

Patronal Feast Day: January 14/27

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 3, 2015

Family Units: 5 (16)

Individuals: 16

Total Faithful: 36



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Maryland

St. Elias the Younger Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Baltimore, MD

Founded:

May 26, 1907 as Santo Spirito

Reconstituted/Re-Established:

March 1, 1995, as St. George the Great Martyr;
renamed St. Elias the Younger on March 29, 2005

Administrative Status:

Inactive as of September 30, 2016

Parochial Status:

Congregation

Canonical Status:

Congregation (Congregation of St. Elias the Younger)

Patronal Feast Day:

February 5/18

Diocese:

Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report:

January 9, 2015

Family Units: 2 (7)

Individuals: 3

Total Faithful: 10



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Massachusetts

St. Raphael the Archangel Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Boston, MA

Founded: April 6, 1907 as St. Michael the Archangel
 Reconstituted/Re-Established: September 22, 1922 as St. Raphael the Archangel
 Administrative Status: Active
 Parochial Status: Mission
 Canonical Status: Mission (St. Raphael the Archangel Mission)
 Patronal Feast Day: September 29/October 12
 Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese
 Last Census Report: January 20, 2024

Family Units: 16 (42)
 Individuals: 10
Total Faithful: 52

Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Lawrence, MA

Founded: June 5, 2006, as Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles
 Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016
 Administrative Status: Inactive
 Parochial Status: Congregation
 Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles)
 Patronal Feast Day: May 15/28
 Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese
 Last Census Report: January 21, 2015

Family Units: 3 (16)
 Individuals: 9
Total Faithful: 24



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Massachusetts, cont'd.

St. Dymphna Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Worcester, MA

Founded: May 5, 1928 as St. Dymphna

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Dymphna)

Patronal Feast Day: May 5/18

Diocese; Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 18, 2015

Family Units: 3 (7)

Individuals: 8

Total Faithful: 15



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Michigan

St. Luke the Evangelist Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Detroit, MI

Founded: April 11, 1915 as St. Luke the Evangelist

Reconstituted/Re-Established: July 18, 1970, as St. Luke the Evangelist

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Luke the Evangelist)

Patronal Feast Day: October 18/31

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 20, 2015

Family Units: 2 (6)

Individuals: 7

Total Faithful: 13



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of New Jersey

St. Mark of Ephesus Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Belleville, NJ

Founded: May 17, 2011 as St. Mark of Ephesus

Closed as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Closed

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Mark of Ephesus)

Patronal Feast Day: January 19/February 1

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 8, 2015

Family Units: 0

Individuals: 0

Total Faithful: 0

St. Marcellus of Sicily Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Trenton, NJ

Founded: October 6, 1918 as St. Marcellus of Sicily

Reconstituted/Re-Established: February 28, 2011, as St. Marcellus of Sicily

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Marcellus of Sicily)

Patronal Feast Day: February 9/22

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 17, 2015

Family Units: 3 (11)

Individuals: 8

Total Faithful: 19



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of New York

Sts. Symeon & Anna Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Albany, NY

Founded: 9/13/2009, as Sts. Symeon & Anna Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Placed on Inactive Status on September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Symeon & Anna)

Patronal Feast Day: February 2/15

Diocese: Metropolis of Utica

Last Census Report: January 8, 2015

Family Units: 3 (15)

Individuals: 2

Total Faithful: 17

St. Gregory of Agrigento Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Binghamton, NY

Founded: November 3, 1984 as St. Gregory of Agrigento

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Mission

Canonical Status: Mission (Congregation of St. Gregory of Agrigento)

Patronal Feast Day: November 23/December 6

Diocese: Metropolis of Utica

Last Census Report: January 8, 2024

Family Units: 18 (70)

Individuals: 10

Total Faithful: 80



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of New York, cont'd.

St. Rosalia of Palermo Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Brooklyn, NY

Founded: March 27, 1911, as St. Rosalia of Palermo
Administrative Status: Active
Parochial Status: Mission
Canonical Status: Mission (Congregation of St. Rosalia of Palermo)
Patronal Feast Day: September 4/17
Diocese: Metropolis of Utica
Last Census Report: January 8, 2024

Family Units: 20 (55)
Individuals: 16
Total Faithful: 71

St. Euthalia of Sicily Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Buffalo NY

Founded: May 7, 1911, as St. Euthalia of Sicily
Reconstituted/Re-established: February 28, 2011, as St. Euthalia of Sicily
Administrative Status: Active
Parochial Status: Congregation
Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Euthalia of Sicily)
Patronal Feast Day: March 2/15
Diocese: Metropolis of Utica
Last Census Report: January 10, 2024

Family Units: 4 (9)
Individuals: 10
Total Faithful: 19



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of New York, cont'd.

St. Celestine of Rome Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Rochester, NY

Founded: September 13, 2019 as the Community of St. Celestine of Rome

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Celestine of Rome)

Patronal Feast Day: April 25/May 8

Diocese: Metropolis of Utica

Last Census Report: January 20, 2015

Family Units: 3 (18)

Individuals: 4

Total Faithful: 22

Sts. Martha & Mary Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Syracuse, NY

Founded: October 6, 2019 as Sts. Mary & Mary Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Mary & Mary)

Patronal Feast Day: June 4/17

Diocese: Metropolis of Utica

Last Census Report: January 8, 2024

Family Units: 3 (11)

Individuals: 6

Total Faithful: 17



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of New York, cont'd.

Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace

Utica, NY

Founded: May 14, 1911 as "Italo-Greek Orthodox Congregation of the Mother of God, Fountain of Grace"

Reconstituted/Re-Established: April 10, 1978

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Parish

Canonical Status: Parish (Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace)

Patronal Feast Day: June 22/July 5

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese/Metropolis of Utica

Last Census Report: January 5, 2024

Family Units: 42 (131)
Individuals: 40
Total Faithful: 171



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Ohio

Pope St. Leo the Great Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Cleveland, OH

Founded: February 19, 1916 as Pope St. Leo the Great Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Reconstituted/Re-established: February 8, 2005, as Pope St. Leo the Great

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Mission

Canonical Status: Mission (Pope St. Leo the Great Mission)

Patronal Feast Day: February 18/March 3

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 18, 2024

Family Units: 13 (33)
Individuals: 29
Total Faithful: 72

St. Mark the Evangelist Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Columbus, OH

Founded: May 5, 2011 as St. Mark the Evangelist Italo-Greek Orthodox Community)

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Mark the Evangelist)

Patronal Feast Day: April 25/May 8

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 20, 2015



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Ohio, cont'd.

Family Units: 4 (16)
Individuals: 5
Total Faithful: 21

St. Mary Magdalene Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Youngstown, OH

Founded: May 21, 1978 as St. Mary Magdalene Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Mary Magdalene)

Patronal Feast Day: July 22/August 4

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 6, 2015

Family Units: 5 (12)
Individuals: 8
Total Faithful: 20



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Pennsylvania

Sts. Simon & Jude Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Allentown, PA

Founded: August 14, 2019 as Sts. Simon & Jude Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Reconstituted/Re-established: N/A

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Simon & Jude)

Patronal Feast Day: June 19/July 2

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 9, 2024

Family Units: 4 (10)
Individuals: 3
Total Faithful: 13

St. Burillus of Catania Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Erie, PA

Founded: October 10 2010 as St. Burillus of Catania Italo-Greek Orthodox Community)

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Burillus of Catania)

Patronal Feast day: March 21/April 3

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 18, 2015

Family Units: 2 (7)
Individuals: 3
Total Faithful: 10



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Pennsylvania

St. Leo of Catania Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Harrisburg, PA

Founded: August 1, 1985 as St. Leo of Catania Italo-Greek Orthodox Community)

Reconstituted/Re-established: February 8, 2005

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Leo of Catania)

Patronal Feast Day: February 20/March 5

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 15, 2024

Family Units: 7 (22)
 Individuals: 17
Total Faithful: 39

Sts. Pancratios & Gennaro Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Philadelphia PA

Founded: January 7, 1883 as The Congregation of Sts. Pancratios & Gennaro of the Italo-Greeks (raised to parish status on January 19, 1887.)

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Mission

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Pancratios & Gennaro)

Patronal Feast Day: July 9 & September 19

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 10, 2024

Family Units: 134 (411)
 Individuals: 77
Total Faithful: 488



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Pennsylvania

Sts. Cosmas & Damian Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Pittsburgh, PA

Founded: November 30, 1921 as Sts. Cosmas & Damian Italo-Greek Orthodox Community)

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Cosmas & Damian)

Patronal Feast Day: November 1/14

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 11, 2024

Family Units: 10 (34)

Individuals: 12

Total Faithful: 46

St. Matthew the Evangelist Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Reading PA

Founded: September 2, 2011

Administrative Status: Inactive as of September 30, 2016

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Matthew the Evangelist)

Patronal Feast Day: November 16/29

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 20, 2015

Family Units: 2 (7)

Individuals: 6

Total Faithful: 13



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Pennsylvania, cont'd.

St. John the Evangelist Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Scranton, PA

Founded: January 16, 1952 as St. John the Evangelist Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Administrative Status: Active

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. John the Evangelist)

Patronal Feast Day: May 8/21

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 4, 2024

Family Units: 9 (38)

Individuals: 13

Total Faithful: 51



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

State of Wisconsin

St. Veronica Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Milwaukee, WI

Founded: August 28, 1913 as St. Veronica Italo-Greek Orthodox Community)

Reconstituted/Re-established: March 1, 2005

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of St. Veronica)

Patronal Feast Day: July 12/25

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 17, 2015

Family Units: 5 (17)

Individuals: 4

Total Faithful: 21



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations

Canada

Sts. Joachim & Anna Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Montreal, Canada

Founded: September 10, 2008 as Sts. Joachim & Anna Italo-Greek Orthodox Community)

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Sts. Joachim & Anna)

Patronal Feast Day: September 9/22

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 10, 2015

Family Units: 18 (52)

Individuals: 16

Total Faithful: 68

Pope St. Gregory the Great Italo-Greek Orthodox Community

Toronto, CA

Founded: May 15, 2008 as Pope St. Gregory the Great Italo-Greek Orthodox Community)

Placed on Inactive Status as of September 30, 2016

Administrative Status: Inactive as of September 30, 2016

Parochial Status: Congregation

Canonical Status: Congregation (Congregation of Pope St. Gregory the Great)

Patronal Feast Day: March 12/25

Diocese: Metropolitan Archdiocese

Last Census Report: January 10, 2017

Family Units: 5 (17)

Individuals: 4

Total Faithful: 21



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada 2024 Census Statistics

2024 Census Statistics

Total Active Parishes:	1
Total Actives Missions:	6
Total Active Congregations:	6
Total Inactive Parishes:	0
Total Inactive Missions:	0
Total Inactive Congregations:	17
Total Suppressed/Closed Parishes:	0
Total Suppressed/Closed Missions:	0
Total Suppressed/Closed Congregations:	1
Total Registered Faithful:	1,652
Total Active Members:	1,199
Total Inactive Members:	453
Total Baptisms:	0
Total Chrismations (Receptions):	0
Total Other Receptions:	0
Total Funerals:	0
Total Marriages:	0



Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

Reflection on Current Ecclesial Status

The Directory of Parishes, Missions, and Congregations lists 26 communities that presently comprise the Italo-Greek Orthodox Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada.

As of the date of this Plan, most of the Archdiocese's communities can be said to be inactive. This unfortunate situation stems primarily from a shortage of available clergy to serve and support these communities. Without the necessary clergy, these communities will continue to remain inactive, leaving their future in question. If this shortage continues, the long-term sustainability and vitality of the Archdiocese could be at serious risk. The ability to minister, provide spiritual care, and maintain the Archdiocese's mission of service depends entirely on the availability of clergy. If the clergy shortage is not addressed, the future of the Archdiocese remains uncertain, and it may become advisable to dissolve the Archdiocese.

The Archdiocese must not only have sufficient clergy to serve its parishes, missions, and congregations, but there must also be aggressive efforts to reinvigorate all existing communities and bring new members into the fold. This is a crucial step to ensure the vitality and growth of the Archdiocese in the years to come. At this point, it is clear that the Archdiocese is essentially starting from scratch, rebuilding its foundations and engaging in a process of renewal. Revitalizing communities and attracting new members will require a comprehensive approach, alongside the necessary clergy resources, to ensure a sustainable and thriving future for the Archdiocese.



ITALO-GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF THE AMERICAS AND CANADA

Five Year Strategic Plan

2025 - 2030

VISION

To become a more faith-filled, united and vibrant Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church by fostering Holy Disciples, Holy Families, and Holy Vocations.

MISSION

We, the faithful of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church, are called by Jesus Christ to proclaim the Gospel, celebrate the Holy Mysteries and serve our brothers in sisters, especially those in need, revealing the merciful face of the Father. Through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we, the members of our parishes, missions, and congregations, strive with the help of the Holy Spirit, the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos, and the fidelity to the Church, to be joyful witnesses to the love of God and neighbor.

CRITICAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- ◆ Parish, Mission, and Congregation Reconstitution, Revitalization, Growth & Stability
 - ◆ Clergy Recruitment
 - ◆ Clergy Formation
 - ◆ Evangelization and Faith Formation
 - ◆ Archdiocesan Governance and Leadership
- ◆ Stewardship and Finance (Archdiocesan and Parish Levels)
 - ◆ Vocations



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

CORE VALUES

CHRIST AT THE CENTER

We seek, in all that we do, to imitate Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served.

DEEPENING COMMUNION

We strive to deepen the bonds of faith and charity with God, the Church, and one another

INVITATION AND OUTREACH

We will reach out to share the Good News of Jesus and His love and mercy for all people of every culture, age, and need

OPEN AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

We will communicate dynamically in a responsible, respectful, and transparent way

EXCELLENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We will act with integrity at all times and strive to be competent, efficient, and passionate in all we do pastorally and operationally

“Let us go to the neighboring towns and cities, that I may preach there also, for to this purpose I am come.”

Mark 1:38



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC PILLARS

Supporting the Health of Communities and Clergy

Vibrant Evangelization and Faith Formation

Enhancing Lay Leadership

Growing Charitable Outreach & Advocacy

Developing Sound Financial Resources for Sustainability



STRATEGIC PILLAR GOALS

Empower parishes, missions, and communities through continuing formation, intentional planning, sharing best practices, and providing for the care and well-being of our clergy

Share the Gospel through intentional discipleship, deepening our faith, and growing in relationship with God and one another

Form excellent lay leaders through education, training, and skill development

Increase outreach and advocacy efforts throughout the Archdiocese to provide life-transforming opportunities for the homeless, poor, marginalized, and all those in need.

Promote generous giving, and responsible stewardship to ensure sustainable mission and ministry



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- ↓

 - ◆ Establish best practices among parishes, missions, and communities to ensure stable and transparent operations.
 - ◆ Establish and maintain daily cycle of liturgical services (i.e., Matins and Vespers)
 - ◆ **Ministry to Clergy Program:** Establish and ensure care for our active and retired priests and deacons in a holistic and practical way.
 - ◆ Implement an Archdiocesan-wide effort to renew apostolic zeal and encourage clergy development.
 - ◆ Assist parishes, missions, and communities in intentional planning for the future.
 - ◆ Nurture healthy priestly vocations.
- ↓

 - ◆ Create an Archdiocesan-wide knowledge-based evangelization program focused on invigorating the active, connecting the inactive, welcoming home the fallen away, and receiving those of no or other faiths.
 - ◆ Revive and equip parish, mission, and community staffs to proclaim and advance the Gospel and carry out apostolic service.
 - ◆ Foster intentional discipleship of the Domestic Church through parish-wide religious education and ministries.
 - ◆ Evaluate, identify, and implement impactful youth ministry.
 - ◆ Nurture missionary disciples through faith formation of parish catechists and formators.
- ↓

 - ◆ Recruit, train, and support parish lay leaders.
 - ◆ Facilitate the development of performance management and employee and volunteer succession plans for the Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center (Chancery Office), parishes, missions, communities, and other Archdiocesan institutions, and agencies.
- ↓

 - ◆ Evaluate and enhance resources that provide social services to broaden Orthodox Catholic Charities footprint throughout the Archdiocese.
 - ◆ Collaborate with parishes, missions, and communities in identifying particular needs in local areas of the Archdiocese.
 - ◆ Build and foster a culture of evangelization and social justice in all of our outreach and advocacy efforts.
- ↓

 - ◆ Develop and execute an Archdiocesan-wide capital campaign to fund the critical infrastructure projects of the Archdiocese and to sustain Archdiocesan ministries as well as parishes, missions, and communities of the Archdiocese.
 - ◆ Ensure that the Office of Planned Giving and Development is fully operative to carry out a formalized program of long-term fundraising for the Archdiocese, its parishes, missions, and communities, and all its institutions, agencies, and organizations.
 - ◆ Cultivate and foster a culture of responsible stewardship throughout the Archdiocese.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC PLAN NARRATIVE

Introduction

The Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada is one of approximately 17 Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States and Canada. Like most of the other Orthodox jurisdictions, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada is organized primarily along ethnic lines; the majority of the membership of the Church are of Sicilian and Italian descent. While still primarily composed of Sicilians and Italians, the Archdiocese's membership is increasingly becoming more ethnically diverse in its composition, with the Church now seeing faithful of Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, Welsh, Irish, Cuban, and Polish descent among its membership.

At one time, the Archdiocese numbered more than 60,000 faithful living in cities such as Philadelphia, Allentown, Pittsburg, Harrisburg, Erie, and Scranton, Pennsylvania; Brooklyn, Utica, and Buffalo, New York; Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts; New Orleans, Louisiana, Washington, District of Columbia; Baltimore, Maryland; San Francisco, California; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Montreal and Toronto, Canada. served by one bishop and seven immigrant clergy.

Today, the Archdiocese is comprised of 12 active communities served by one bishop and one deacon. There are 17 communities that are inactive. The total number of registered faithful claiming to be members of the Archdiocese is 1,652. There are currently 1,199 faithful who are members of 12 active communities, missions, and parishes. However, only 230 actively participate in the life of the Church. This means that, presently, only 7.2% of the total registered faithful of the Archdiocese actively participate in the life and work of the Church and 5.2% of the total number of faithful in the active congregations, missions, and parishes of the Archdiocese participate in the life and work of the Church. Many factors contribute to this including, but not limited to, the lack of adequate clergy and the absence of a well thought out and defined plan of pastoral and evangelical action.

The stability, future, and sustainability of our Archdiocese has long been of concern to us all. We have always lived under difficult circumstances, but we have always been aware of the possibilities and opportunities for the growth of the Archdiocese and of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in general. At no time in our history have those opportunities been made more clear to us



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

than in the past ten years.

The present state of the Archdiocese, as well as the opportunities and possibilities for growth that stand before it, has necessitated the collaborative preparation of a thoughtful, prayerful and thorough Strategic Plan to help guide the Archdiocese now and into the future.

We can survive but surviving is not enough. As a Church, we are nothing unless we can witness and live our faith, share it with others, and bring them into the Body of Christ. We must do the work of the salvation of souls. To that end, we must have the resources necessary to do such a work. If we are to be successful in our work in making disciples and building up the Body of Christ, then we must have every available tool at our disposal to do the work and do it right.

Background

In late 2012, Archbishop Stephen called for the development of a Strategic Plan that would assist and enable the Archdiocese to implement a disciplined program of revitalization, renewal, and growth, the fruits of which would be a strong and vibrant servant Church well-equipped to serve the People of God for generations to come.

Based on the reports of extensive interviews and surveys with the Church membership, Archbishop Stephen in 2013 convened and chartered a Strategic Plan Strategy Task Force, made up of key stakeholders from across the Archdiocese. This Task Force was asked to make planning recommendations that took into account both the Mission and Vision of the Archdiocese. The Task Force met multiple times over the course of five months, conducted additional interviews and outside research and prepared reports of their findings and recommendations. The reports were to be submitted to a Strategic Plan Steering Committee for additional input and counsel and then to the Metropolitan Council and the Archbishop for their review, consideration and action. The recommendations, however, were never submitted to the Metropolitan Council and the Archbishop due to the legal issues faced by the Archbishop at the time. As a result of the Archbishop's incarceration in March of 2014, work on the Strategic Plan was stopped and work on it did not resume until 2016. Work on the Plan was again discontinued in November 2016 due to the Archbishop almost dying after colon surgery. In the fall of 2017, work on the Plan resumed and the first draft of the Strategic Plan was completed. The First Draft of the Strategic Plan was presented to the 27th Provincial Council for review, consideration, and discussion. Having received the recommendations of the Council, the Strategic Plan was accordingly revised and a Second Draft was submitted to the



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

28th Provincial Council held in August 2022.

The final set of recommendations, resulting from hundreds of interviews, along with a compendium of documents gathered as part of the Strategic Planning journey, were incorporated into the final version of the Strategic Plan. The result of this effort has been to provide the Archbishop the necessary framework to establish and prioritize the organizational systems, structures and resources (both near and long-term) that will be needed to achieve the goals and objectives stated in the Plan

This final draft of the Five-Year Strategic Plan of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada, which the Archbishop has approved and now submits to the Church for its review and consideration, contains clear goals and objectives, as well as structures that are aligned to facilitate the vibrant transformation, renewal, and stewardship of the Archdiocese for generations to come.

This first ever Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada Strategic Plan is intended to support the best possible Orthodox Catholic experience for the faithful as part of the on-going 121-year history of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Community in the United States and Canada.

Mission and Vision

The Mission and Vision of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada are important and essential in describing the purpose of the Archdiocese, what it is striving to move towards in the future and the culture that it seeks to promote among its people.

There can be no ambiguity about our responsibilities to the faithful, young and old alike, with an absolute focus on our faith in God and the enduring power of the Holy Spirit to complete what is lacking in us and move us forward in our work of evangelization and the salvation of souls. Our Mission and Vision, taken together, provide an overall framework for the Archdiocese and its current and future actions. It is through a prayer-filled discernment process, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that priorities are set, difficult decisions are made, and the go-forward accountabilities are made clear.

We are compelled to ask, “By saying yes to this course of action, are we helping to achieve our Mission and Vision, while remaining true to the Gospels?” This question finds a reflection in the apostolic exhortations, encyclicals, and writings of the holy fathers of the Church who led the Body of Christ in the twenty centuries before us.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

The Mission of the Archdiocese describes its core purpose as to why it exists. It acts as both an anchor and a guide for the Archdiocese. Archbishop Stephen has chosen, as the Mission Statement of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada, the words of Jesus. Before His Ascension, Jesus proclaimed to His apostles, a mandate to spread the Gospel message: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:19-20.*

Jesus is sending His apostles forth to make other disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to follow the call of God by allowing their lives to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. This Mission clearly establishes a priority for Evangelization and Faith Formation and reflects the Archbishop’s call that all members of the Church become missionary disciples filled with the love of God and the love of neighbor.

Vision of the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada

“Inspired by the Holy Spirit, in faithfulness to our lay or religious vocations, we will go forth giving living witness and example to the Gospel message of love, humility and charity. We will seek a prayer-filled and sacramental life of faith lived in community with respect for all human life and especially for those who find themselves on the margins. We are called to be God’s instruments of love, compassion, and mercy in a weary and wanting world. Thus, we seek to bring peace, comfort, hope, and joy to all we meet, with the enduring message that God loves each and all of us unconditionally but with the expectation that we sin not and follow His will in all things. Such is the way of holiness, to sanctity of life, and eternal happiness with Him in Heaven.”



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

Evangelization and
Faith Formation

Governance and
Leadership

Clergy Formation

Parish & Mission
Renewal,
Revitalization, and
Growth

Archdiocesan
Spiritual Health &
Wellness

Stewardship and
Finance



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Evangelization and Faith Formation

The number of Orthodox Catholics actively participating in the life of the Church in the Archdiocese has not increased in the past 25 years, even though the number of nominal Orthodox Catholics has increased in the same period by 33%. While the number of Orthodox Catholics in the Archdiocese who attend Divine Liturgy when it is available increases per occasion, those numbers do not translate into members actively participating in the life of the Church (apostolic service, regular stewardship, evangelization, etc.) Further, the average age of members of the Archdiocese is now 74 years.

The total number of faithful in the Archdiocese is 1,652. Of this amount, 453 are identified as inactive. This means that they do not participate in the life of the Church in any way but still identify themselves as members of the Church. Of the 1,199 members who identify themselves as “active” members of the Church, only 230 actually actively participate in the life of the Church (apostolic service; evangelization and witness; support of Archdiocesan ministries, programs and projects; support of the Archdiocesan Cathedral; payment of the annual Archdiocesan Assessment; and payment of the Cathedraticum, etc.) The remaining 969 attend Divine Liturgy and other Divine Services when they are available. They also avail themselves of the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) of Baptism and Marriage when needed or request a Church funeral service when the need arises. Apart from these occasions, they do not actively participate in the life of the Church (apostolic service, stewardship, evangelization and witness, etc.) In essence, these individuals can be termed “nominal” Orthodox Catholic Christians.

There are currently only eight people in RCIA throughout the Archdiocese. The number of inquirers over the past ten years has been steadily increasing but our ability to embrace and retain them has been negligible. This has been due entirely to the lack of qualified clergy and staff necessary to carry out proper and long-lasting catechesis in the communities in which the inquiries are received. Long-distance catechesis and faith formation has proven to be clumsy, ineffective, and lack-luster. Nothing can replace face-to-face personal attention and care.



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The total number of youth and young adults in the Archdiocese is 69. Of this 69, only 33 are active in the life of the Church. This represents 0.06% of the total active members (1,199) of the Church. Of the over all Church membership (1,652), these youth and young adult members are between the ages of one year and 25 years of age. Our ability to keep our youth and young adults actively engaged in the life of the Church is weak. While several of our young adults have expressed a desire to take leadership roles in their respective communities, we have not been able to adequately prepare them for the work they seek to do simply because it has been difficult to do so logistically both from the standpoint of formators and material resources.

Most parishes and missions, and the Archdiocese, have inadequate staffing and financial resources for effective evangelization and faith formation. The faithful do not rate their parishes or the Chancery Office well in faith formation or evangelization, especially for young adults.

Clergy recruitment and faith formation needs to be more formal and disciplined. In the past, the Archbishop received clergy into the Archdiocese or ordained men to the diaconate and/or priesthood whose interests and agendas did not ultimately conform to the mission and vision of the Archdiocese. In essence, these individuals used the Archbishop merely to receive Holy Orders and then, after a while, went off to do their own thing. The practice of receiving or ordaining clergy with minimal criteria was discontinued by the Archbishop in 2008. At that time, more formal requirements and standards were implemented. These included a formal application process; more intense scrutiny of applicants (completion of a Confidential Comprehensive Personal Background and Criminal Investigation; extensive reference check; psychological evaluations, personal interviews, etc.); formal training (seminary attendance, online theological studies, etc.), and defined periods of service before ordination. The more formal admission requirements have resulted in the prevention of spurious and otherwise unqualified candidates for admission to the Archdiocese and Holy Orders.

There is an ongoing situation in most Orthodox jurisdictions that priests (pastors) are called upon, and even required, to be both spiritual leaders and business managers; this leads to competing and conflicting pastoral priorities. We want to avoid this problem. In planning for the temporal administration of the Archdiocese and its parishes, missions, and congregations, we envision that all temporal affairs and their attendant administrative responsibilities and duties are carried out by qualified lay people.

While many of the faithful of the Archdiocese have basic knowledge of the path to holiness and know how to pray, their spiritual life is still not fully developed. As a result, there is a lackluster participation in the life of the Church. The absence of a regular schedule of divine services in each



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parish, mission, and congregation has not only impeded active evangelization and growth, but the spiritual development of the faithful. There is no question that the individual and communal sacramental, spiritual, and liturgical needs of the faithful have not been met.

Governance and Leadership

There is a need for a clearly communicated Mission and Vision for the Archdiocese that is “owned” by the Pastoral and Administrative Center departments in service to the parishes, missions, and congregations. There is a lack of a unified direction and sense of mission in the Archdiocese. While responsibility, authority and accountability have been clearly spelled out for personnel at the Chancery Office, the protocols, policies, and procedures that were put into place to enable the Archdiocese to function and grow responsibly with the greatest degree efficiency and transparency have not been adequately communicated to the parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese. This has resulted in a lack of accountability and inadequate decision-making.

The sole function of the Chancery Office is to serve the parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese as well as the faithful of the Church. We do not want to fall into the same hole where the clergy and faithful fear the Chancery Office and its officials. The Chancery and its staff must guide, counsel, and advise the parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese and assist them in every possible way to carry out the Mission and achieve the Vision of the Archdiocese.

We have been fortunate in that our boards, committees, and commissions have always had a clear understanding of their advisory responsibilities, accountabilities, and delegated authorities. The Strategic Plan envisions a greater role in the administration and governance of the Archdiocese by these entities, especially in regard to oversight and management of the temporal affairs of the Church. It is the Archbishop’s desire that all the Archdiocese’s temporal affairs, obligations, needs, and responsibilities be overseen and managed by qualified lay people with proven experience in business administration, accounting, and finance.

Communication between the Archdiocesan authorities and the faithful has always been fluid and transparent. However, as we move forward to the implementation of the Strategic Plan, it is imperative that communication between all parties remains fluid, clear, and distinct. It is important, at this time in the Archdiocese’s existence, that there is a clear and well communicated vision and set of priorities for the Archdiocese, which all parishes, missions, and congregations can understand and act



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upon.

Adequate financial support must flow from the Chancery Office to all parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese and to any new initiatives put forth by the Archdiocese so that they are sustainable and enduring for the long-term. Financial planning must also take into consideration the expansion and growth of existing ministries, programs, and services both at the Archdiocese level and at the parish, mission, and congregation level.

Stewardship and Finance

Stewardship giving needs to be reinvigorated throughout the Archdiocese. The Italo-Greek Heritage Foundation and the Archbishop Gennadios Foundation can be instrumental in helping to create a culture of philanthropy in support of the Mission, Vision and priorities of the Archdiocese.

Full fiscal transparency, with clear, up-to-date fiscal policies and procedures, needs to be invigorated and communicated throughout the Archdiocese. To ensure consistent fiscal management, the finance staffing throughout the Archdiocese must manifest the highest standards of professionalization with updated position descriptions and required competencies.

Archdiocesan, Italo-Greek Heritage Foundation, and Archbishop Gennadios Foundation subsidization funding for financial shortfalls throughout the Archdiocese needs a full review. Plans are needed, by site, for fiscal improvements, stewardship initiatives, and alignment with the priorities of the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan.

Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center Planning

The Strategic Plan envisions the development and construction of an Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center comprised of the following:

- ◆ the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace
- ◆ Cathedral Parish Center
- ◆ the Chancery Office
- ◆ Melchizedek House (residence for retired priests and deacons)
- ◆ Three Hierarchs Orthodox Catholic Seminary



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◆ St. Cecilia Academy of Music

The Mission of the Archdiocese in evangelization and faith formation must take primacy in the planning of the campus.

A book store/gift shop is needed for the Pastoral and Administrative Center complex. A properly run gift store is an important opportunity for Evangelization and Faith Formation of the faithful of the Archdiocese, visitors and pilgrims. The religious goods, books and educational materials will help to generate important revenues.

Hospitality and food services will be needed on the campus for all visitors and pilgrims. When the campus opens, adequate signage (way-finding) will be needed to assist visitors and to help them park and navigate around the campus.

Security must be in place for the campus, for events and for the buildings of the campus.

It is a critical priority that each element of the Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center be fiscally self-sustaining and able to manage all obligations and debts.

Vocations

Since 2005, the spiritual, pastoral, sacramental, and liturgical needs of the parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese have been met from time to time by supply priests. These priests, mainly retired from other Orthodox jurisdictions, have blessed the Archdiocese with their priestly ministry and paternal care. However, the services of these priests were not provided on a regular basis. In many cases, supply priests served occasionally for Divine Liturgy, but mostly they served for occasional services such as baptism, weddings, and funerals, at the invitation of the families concerned and with the blessing of the Archbishop. Even with supply priests, however, the spiritual, pastoral, sacramental, and liturgical life of the Archdiocesan Church never reached its full and desired complement.

Needless to say, vocations in the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada have been non-existent. The obvious reason for this is that the Archdiocese does not have any young men to whom it can direct a vocational message or invitation. The average age of members of the Archdiocese has been steadily increasing over the past eleven years. Presently, the average age of the



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Archdiocese's members is 74. Before a formal vocations program can be developed and implemented, we must first concentrate on evangelization, of bringing more people into the Church, especially younger members.

The future of the Archdiocese and of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in America rests solely upon our ability to attract, engage, embrace, and retain younger members. While the Archbishop has taken great pains to cultivate a culture of vocations throughout the Archdiocese, the call to priestly and diaconal vocations has not reached its intended targets simply because the Archdiocese does not have many young adults and millennials among its membership.

As of the most recent census, the Archdiocese has only 69 young adult members between the ages of 10 and 25. While this is still a verdant field in which to plant the seeds of a vocation, the work needs priests to ensure a good and fruitful vocations harvest.

There is no question that the parish priest is the single greatest influence on young men in discerning and forming a vocation to the priesthood or diaconate. It is in the sanctuary where the seeds of vocations are planted. Service at the altar is the most fertile ground in which to plant the seeds of a priestly or diaconal vocation, but without priests and deacons to plant and nurture those seeds, vocations cannot and will not develop and bear fruit.

Parish priests are mentors for young men who are discerning a vocation to the priesthood or diaconate. For most young men, the call of the priesthood comes before or at age 18. This is when they begin to spiritually mature and their hearts seek something rewarding and fulfilling. They may sing in the choir, work as sacristans, or serve as readers. But this is all done under the mentorship, supervision, counsel, and guidance of holy priests and deacons.

In looking forward, it is important to think seriously about the present situation of the Church, not in a spirit of hopelessness, but rather with a determined spirit and desire to overcome the challenges we face in the areas of evangelization, vocations, and continued stability, sustainability, and growth.

In the meantime, there are ways that we can foster vocations in and for the Archdiocese. These include:

- ◆ Pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and monastic life.
- ◆ Teach young people to pray.
- ◆ Invite active and non-active young adults and teens to consider a vocation to the priesthood,



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diaconate, or monastic life.

- ◆ Make a priestly, diaconal, and monastic vocation attractive. Show them for what they truly are - movers and shakers, trend setters, warriors for good.
- ◆ Talk about vocations. If a “vocation culture” is to take root in parishes and homes in the Archdiocese, then there must be regular and thoughtful conversations about vocations throughout the Archdiocese.
- ◆ Increase the number of inquiries to the Vocations Office.



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ARCHDIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS SUMMARY

Evangelization and Faith Formation

Goal:

- The Archdiocese, together with its parishes, missions, and congregations, will act to fulfill its Mission and Vision by promoting a personal relationship with Jesus and the celebration of the Sacraments resulting in increased participation at Divine Services, expanding the number of Orthodox Catholics actively participating in faith formation, and increasing the number of Orthodox Catholic youth and young adults active in the Church.

Governance and Leadership

Goal:

- The Archdiocese, in order to achieve its Mission and Vision, will have in place governance and leadership structures and processes that help ensure responsible, transparent, effective and efficient administration and management of all archdiocesan operations, including its parishes, missions, and congregations as well as its affiliated institutions and organizations.

Clergy Formation

Goal:

- Clergy will be provided access to spiritual formation education and training as well as access to trained spiritual directors and opportunities for annual priest retreats and/or private retreats.
- The Archdiocese will emphasize to all clergy (pastors, parochial vicars, administrators, and deacons) the place of prayer in their lives and the importance of the Holy Mystery of



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Confession, Penance, and Reconciliation.

Stewardship and Finance

Goal:

- The Archdiocese, its pastoral center departments, ministries, parishes, missions, communities, and governance structures, will appropriately manage resources to achieve its Mission and Vision, to ensure ongoing sustainability and to maximize ministry outcomes.
- The Chancery Office will collaboratively work with the parishes, missions, and congregations to assist them in enhancing operating effectiveness and increasing ordinary sustaining income.

Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center Planning

Goal:

- The Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center will be established as the preeminent center for evangelization and faith formation in the Archdiocese.
- Visitors to the campus will be given a welcome, hospitable experience that affirms the Orthodox Catholic faith.
- Campus operations will become financially self-sustaining with revenue derived from events, retail operations and appropriate land uses.

Vocations:

Goal:

- Gather together a faithful cadre of priests and deacons (retired or active) who share the Mission and Vision of the Archdiocese, who support its work, and are willing to help the



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Archdiocese grow, entrusting them not only with the pastoral and spiritual care of our communities and their growth, but with the work of fostering vocations to the priesthood and diaconate as well.

- Develop, implement, and adequately fund an aggressive and high profile vocations program, directed to young men not only in the Archdiocese but also to young men in the wider communities in which the Archdiocese has an ecclesial presence. Special emphasis will be placed on reaching out to, engaging, and recruiting young men from the unlikeliest of places, - the marginalized, abandoned, lost, homeless, gang members, etc. *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him” (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).* As Archbishop Stephen has consistently said, *“The Church needs more splendid sinners, lovable losers, miserable misfits, and fantastic failures, because when you get them all together in one place, amazing things happen. The Red Sea parts, the walls come tumbling down, the enemy is defeated, the Church grows and strengthens, the Gospel is not just preached but lived, and God is glorified by their faithfulness.”*
- We need to think outside the box for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and monastic life. We need sinners in order to make saints.
- Replicate and adapt within the Archdiocese the successful “Men in Black” vocations recruitment and enrichment program presently in use by several Roman Catholic Dioceses and Archdioceses in the United States.



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IMMEDIATE GOALS (1 - 24 Months)

Evangelization and Faith Formation:

- ◆ Archbishop Stephen to author an Archpastoral Letter, at the implementation of the Strategic Plan in January 2025, on the topic of Evangelization and Faith Formation announcing a “Year of Renewal and Prayer” for the Archdiocese. The letter will emphasize the essential roles of the parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese in implementing the Mission and Vision of our local Church.
- ◆ Reactivate and seed all inactive communities by January 31, 2026, utilizing the financial and material resources of the Archdiocese.
- ◆ Recruit and bring into the Archdiocese at least eight priests and eight deacons from other Orthodox jurisdictions (those listed in the Diptychs of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church) by September 14, 2026, who support the Mission and Vision of the Archdiocese and who would be willing to assist the Archbishop in his work to build up and grow the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Canada.
- ◆ Establish St. Neilos of Rossano Italo-Greek Orthodox Monastery as the first male monastery of the Archdiocese.
- ◆ Evaluate existing communities and determine actual status (congregation, mission, parish). Work closely with existing faith community leadership to develop a viable action and strategic plan for each community according to defined status and the Mission and Vision of the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan.
- ◆ Double the number of members in each faith community annually (by December 31, 2025, and December 31, 2026 respectively).
- ◆ Design and implement a five-year plan for formation in evangelization in the Archdiocese, including enhancing liturgical life and the Sunday experience at all parishes, missions, and congregations.
- ◆ Appoint an Advisory Committee to help evaluate and plan for resources dedicated to parish faith



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IMMEDIATE GOALS (1 - 24 Months)

formation programs throughout the Archdiocese.

- ◆ Establish and implement leadership training, team building, and coaching for parishes, missions, and congregations to help promote evangelization to the faithful, seeking to foster effective evangelization of young adults.
- ◆ Triple, annually, the number of young adult members in the Church.
- ◆ Triple, annually, the number of young adults attending and participating in young adult and youth ministries.
- ◆ The Archdiocese will seek to assist its parishes, missions, and congregations in funding and supporting programs to engage youth and young adults.
- ◆ The Archdiocese will establish and assist in funding regional teams of young adult coordinators and missionaries.
- ◆ The Archdiocese will oversee funding of youth ministers in parishes, missions, and congregations with financial constraints.
- ◆ The Archdiocese will provide formation for pastors and parish leaders on the best practices of engaging and evangelizing youth and young adults.
- ◆ As a complement to the above, the Archdiocese will continue to strengthen liturgical; and sacramental life in our parishes, missions, and congregations. This will provide a means for growth in holiness and relationship with the Lord for all, and for a strengthening and increase in those responding to the call for priestly and diaconal vocations and consecrated life.
- ◆ The Cathedral Parish of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace will seek to become the model parish in evangelization and faith formation.



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IMMEDIATE GOALS (1 - 24 Months)

Governance and Leadership:

- ◆ Develop standard and consistent governance definitions and provide Canon Law educational opportunities to appropriate staff, leaders, boards and committees.
- ◆ As part of implementing the Strategic Plan, review all Pastoral Center departments. Make changes as necessary to their purpose, activities, processes, staffing, and job descriptions to align with the plan priorities.
- ◆ Re-evaluate all Archdiocesan boards, councils, commissions, task forces and committees. Review and revise, as necessary, current charters, governance documents and guidelines. Sunset any unnecessary governance structures or duplicated efforts.
- ◆ Schedule and facilitate periodic interaction between the chairs of the various boards and councils. Distribute the current Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center organizational chart that shows reporting structures and areas of responsibility (a current phone list to be kept up-to-date for all Archdiocesan sites).
- ◆ Develop standardized operational resources and tools for all human resource activities and financial reporting for all Archdiocesan sites.
- ◆ Define and communicate processes and procedures for decision-making between the parishes, missions, and congregations and the Archdiocese.
- ◆ Archdiocesan leaders to adopt standards of excellence for all archdiocesan and parish, mission, and congregation governance systems and structures. Develop systems of responsibility and accountability for maintaining and achieving these standards.
- ◆ Prepare a comprehensive manual of all policies and procedures, guidelines and decrees that address how decisions are made and who has the delegated authority to make them.
- ◆ The Archdiocesan Communications Department to develop and manage a Archdiocesan Master Calendar of all major Archdiocesan happenings and distribute it to all parishes, missions, and



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IMMEDIATE GOALS (1 - 24 Months)

congregations. This will help ensure better coordination of events and avoid conflicts with parish life.

- ◆ The Archdiocesan Communications Department will utilize the Archdiocesan website as the primary means of communication with and dissemination of information to the parishes, missions, congregations, clergy, faithful and the entire Church.

Clergy Formation:

- ◆ The Archdiocese will provide assistance and resources for clergy training in evangelization and faith formation programs for parishes, missions, and congregations..
- ◆ Clergy to be provided access to spiritual formation education and training as well as access to trained spiritual directors and opportunities for annual priest retreats and private retreats. Emphasize to all clergy the place of prayer in their daily lives.
- ◆ The Archdiocese will provide homiletic training, clergy study days and convocations on spiritual topics specific to pastors, parochial vicars and deacons.
- ◆ Training will be given to the clergy and support will be provided to the parishes to assist them in hiring qualified administrative personnel and/or parish business managers. This will allow the clergy to focus on the spiritual welfare of the parish, parishioners and parish affiliated organizations.
- ◆ Arrange for regional and/or deanery approaches to evangelization and faith formation initiatives. Engage with the clergy and deans to find solutions that work for local faith communities.
- ◆ Archbishop Stephen, assisted as appropriate, will undertake pastoral visits to the deans, deaneries, pastors and parishes to align them with archdiocesan priorities, expectations and canonical accountabilities.



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IMMEDIATE GOALS (1 - 24 Months)

Stewardship and Finance:

- ◆ Align archdiocesan budgets with the Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan priorities as approved by Archbishop Stephen.
- ◆ Ensure financial sustainability of all Cathedral Parish and campus operations by increasing sources of revenue and controlling operating expenses to generate free cash flow to pay off any remaining debt.
- ◆ Invigorate stewardship giving throughout the Archdiocese in coordination with the Archdiocesan Stewardship Office.
- ◆ Establish an Archdiocesan Stewardship Office, headed by a member of the laity skilled in fundraising and funds management, to assist in the oversight of the annual Metropolitan's Appeal.
- ◆ Align the special collections and financial asks of the parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese with the Strategic Plan. Act to reduce the number of these special collections.
- ◆ The Italo-Greek Heritage Foundation and the Archbishop Gennadios Foundation to assist in raising and growing funds, with specific goals and objectives, to provide for the fiscal wellbeing of the Archdiocese, its ministries, programs, services, facilities and schools. Align all archdiocesan philanthropy with the Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan priorities as approved by Archbishop Stephen.
- ◆ The Archdiocese, the Italo-Greek Heritage Foundation, and the Archbishop Gennadios Foundation to provide fundraising and stewardship education resources to assist pastors, parishes, missions, and congregations in raising funds and reducing the need for ongoing subsidizations.
- ◆ Implement a archdiocesan-wide standardized information technology platform, including financial systems, to improve and simplify business practices, cash management, and all accounting systems and structures. Ensure full fiscal transparency at all Archdiocesan sites.



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IMMEDIATE GOALS (1 - 24 Months)

- ◆ Provide Archdiocesan funded education and training in the ‘professionalization’ of the staff responsible for the financial management at all parishes, missions, congregations, schools, seminary, and other archdiocesan sites.
- ◆ The Archdiocesan Chief Financial Officer to assist in the oversight of hiring and training of all staff responsible for the temporal financial administration and management of the Archdiocese and the implementation of all policies, procedures, protocols, and approval processes related to financial management.
- ◆ The Archdiocesan Human Resources Department to assist in establishing standardized job descriptions, including competencies and skills, for all those charged with financial management

Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center Plan

- ◆ Search for and secure a temporary home for the Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace. Research the feasibility of purchasing back the former Cathedral property for this purpose. (once the new cathedral is built, the temporary Cathedral will be renamed “Church of the Madonna of Mercy and Comfort of the Afflicted” and serve as the local parish church.
- ◆ Search for and acquire land (at least 10 acres) in Utica or surrounding area (New Hartford, Deerfield, Frankfort, or Clinton) for new Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center.
- ◆ Ensure that the Cathedral strongly models evangelization, faith formation, apostolic service and hospitality for the benefit of the entire Archdiocese.
- ◆ Ensure and enhance both the temporary cathedral and the permanent Cathedral visitor, guest, and pilgrim experience by reopening the St. Raphael Gift Shop, the Cathedral Café, Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, and St. Catherine’s Thrift Shop.
- ◆ Ensure and maintain adequate security both at the temporary Cathedral site and the new Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center.



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IMMEDIATE GOALS (1 - 24 Months)

- ◆ If the old Cathedral property is to be repurchased, ensure that overall parking, signage, and green space is improved and enhanced.
- ◆ Develop plans for the long-term viability and sustainability of the Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center operation, finances, and debt.

Vocations

- ◆ Implement a comprehensive plan presenting an awareness of the priesthood and the diaconate as a positive vocation resulting in an increase in the number of inquiries in the Vocations Office by 25% by December 31, 2025, and 50% by December 31, 2026.
- ◆ Create a resource and support needs assessment for supply priests serving the Archdiocese by December 31, 2025, resulting in a three-year formational plan, to increase the continued fostering of priestly and diaconal vocations in order to pass the joy of the vocation onto future priests and deacons of the Archdiocese.
- ◆ Develop an Archdiocesan-wide dedicated prayer campaign for vocations and priestly and diaconal ministry by March 3, 2025, with 80% parish, mission, and congregation collaborative participation by December 31, 2025.
- ◆ Have at least three (3) seminarians in formation as of September 1, 2026.



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MID-TERM GOALS (25 - 48 Months)

Evangelization and Faith Formation

- ◆ Establish a second monastery of men and a monastery of women in the Archdiocese, ensuring that they, together with the Holy Monastery of St. Neilos of Rossano, shine forth with the charism of intercessory prayer in support of evangelization efforts, the spiritual and pastoral life of the Archdiocese, and vocations.
- ◆ Establish a 'Center for Orthodox Christian Evangelization and Faith Formation' through a media and communication plan with the produced content aligned with the Strategic Plan. Develop a content library available to parishes, missions, and congregations as well as schools and other ministries.
- ◆ Establish the Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace as the preeminent center for the creation and dissemination of excellent action-based programs focused on evangelization and faith formation.
- ◆ Develop and implement an intensive diaconate preparation program offered through Three Hierarch's Orthodox Catholic Seminary and the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada.
- ◆ Offer ongoing formation for priests and deacons.

Governance and Leadership

- ◆ Provide education and reflection on Canon Law to inform and instruct governance leaders and to provide context in both Theology and Ecclesiology.
- ◆ For those governance structures not required by Canon Law, conduct a review every 24 - 36 months to include:



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MID-TERM GOALS (25 - 48 Months)

- How groups are chartered, established and approved.
- Board or Committee Chair training.
- Clarity about the sponsorship of groups and delegated authorities.
- Criteria for how groups are regularly reviewed.

Clergy Formation

- ◆ Continue to refine regional or deanery approaches to Evangelization and Faith Formation.
- ◆ Clergy will be encouraged to make use of ongoing access to spiritual formation education and training as well as access to trained spiritual directors and opportunities for annual priest retreats and/or private retreats. Continue to emphasize to all clergy the place of prayer in their lives.
- ◆ Consistent administrative training will continue, as necessary, for pastors, parochial vicars and deacons.
- ◆ Archbishop Stephen, assisted as appropriate, will continue pastoral visits to the deans, deaneries, pastors, and parishes, missions, and congregations to ensure alignment with archdiocesan priorities, expectations and canonical accountabilities.

Stewardship and Finance

- ◆ Take necessary action to ensure financial sustainability of all archdiocesan operations, ministries, programs, and services.
- ◆ Take necessary action to ensure financial sustainability of the Archdiocesan Cathedral and the



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

MID-TERM GOALS (25 - 48 Months)

Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center campus operations. This to include generating adequate free cash flow to pay off debt and build archdiocesan reserves.

- ◆ Plan and develop the Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Campus and the Archdiocesan Cathedral in such a way that they become a global destination for Orthodox Catholics, other Christians, and pilgrims from throughout the world. Use appropriate media tools to enhance outreach, evangelization and faith formation.
- ◆ Develop and implement an archdiocesan-wide capital campaign to fund and endow the Archdiocese ministries, programs, and services, and institutions.

Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center

- ◆ Campus operations, under the direction of the Episcopal Vicar and Director of Operations, shall be responsible to ensure the following:
 1. Campus operations are self-sustaining with revenue derived from events, retail operations and appropriate land uses.
 2. Review the MOU between the Archdiocese and the Board of Trustees of the Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace to ensure ongoing collaboration, oversight, and accountabilities for operations, revenues and expenses.
 3. Continued planning for appropriate campus development and land uses.

Vocations

- ◆ Increase the number of inquiries in the Vocations Office by 50% over the previous year for each year of the Mid-Term.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

MID-TERM GOALS (25 - 48 Months)

- ◆ Continue to enhance the Men in Black Vocations Program and implement fully in all parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese.
- ◆ Have at least five (5) incardinated priests and five (5) incardinated deacons serving in the Archdiocese by December 31, 2028.
- ◆ Have at least ten (10) seminarians in seminary formation and training beginning in September of 2027 (Priestly formation).
- ◆ Have at least five (5) men enrolled in the Archdiocesan Permanent Deacon Formation Program.

Orthodox Catholic Education and School Sustainability:

- ◆ Announce plans for the establishment of Archdiocese's first grammar school (Grades K-5), Junior High School (6-8), High School (9-12), St. Cecilia's Choir School (Grades 7 - 12), St. Romanos Conservatory of Music, and the St. Leo the Great Theological Academy.
- ◆ Develop and implement a plan to 1) fund the construction of Archdiocesan schools and academies system, and 2) and endow each school and academy with a minimum of \$10 million dollars.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

LONG TERM GOALS (49 - 60 Months)

Evangelization and Faith Formation

- ◆ Achieve a minimum Archdiocesan membership of 10,000 faithful by December 31, 2030, with an age demographic as follows:

• 0 - 10 years of age:	700	7%
• 11 - 18 years of age:	700	7%
• 19 - 25 years of age:	1,100	11%
• 26 - 35 years of age:	1,325	13.25%
• 36 - 46 years of age:	2,150	21.50%
• 47 - 67 years of age:	1,775	17.75%
• 68+ years of age:	2,250	22.50%
- ◆ Achieve a minimum parish roster of 24 parishes; a minimum mission roster of 10 missions, and a minimum congregation roster of 12 congregations.
- ◆ Ensure ongoing engagement of the Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center (Chancery Office) in service to the parishes, missions, and congregations and the faithful of the Archdiocese in support of evangelization and faith formation.
- ◆ All pastors to be fully supported in having the necessary resources to ensure effective parish, mission, and congregation programs in evangelization and faith formation.

Governance and Leadership

- ◆ Provide education and reflection on Canon Law to inform governance leaders and to provide context in both Theology and Ecclesiology.
- ◆ Ongoing annual assessments of all governance structures to ensure effective leadership and decision-making.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

LONG TERM GOALS (49 - 60 Months)

- ◆ Sunset any governance structures that do not contribute or align with the Mission, Vision or priorities of the Archdiocese.

Clergy Formation

- ◆ Regional and or Deanery approaches to Evangelization and Faith Formation will be modified as needed to help ensure best practices and outcomes among the parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese.
- ◆ Clergy will continue to be provided access to spiritual formation education and training as well as access to trained spiritual directors and opportunities for annual priest retreats and/or private retreats. Continued emphasis will be made to all clergy the place of prayer in their lives and the importance of the sacrament of penance.
- ◆ Archbishop Stephen, assisted as appropriate, will continue pastoral visits to the deans, deaneries, pastors and parishes, missions, and congregations to ensure alignment with archdiocesan priorities, expectations and canonical accountabilities. Clergy will be provided assistance as determined by the visits.

Stewardship and Finance:

- ◆ Continue to focus fiscal resources on evangelization and faith formation.
- ◆ Continued philanthropy to help support Archdiocesan ministries, programs, and services; Orthodox Catholic education; monastic institutions; and the Archdiocesan Cathedral.
- ◆ Archdiocesan operating budgets will be balanced and aligned with the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan priorities.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

LONG TERM GOALS (49 - 60 Months)

- ◆ Continue planning for long-term Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center campus funding, upkeep, operations and land uses.
- ◆ Ensure cash reserves of the Archdiocese are replenished to ensure fiscal stability and capital funds for parish, mission, and congregation, and school growth.

Orthodox Catholic Education and School Sustainability:

- ◆ Establish the Archdiocese's first grammar school (Grades K-5), Junior High School (6-8), High School (9-12), St. Cecilia's Choir School (Grades 7 - 12), St. Romanos Conservatory of Music, and the St. Leo the Great Theological Academy.
- ◆ Update the plan for the on-going support for the system of Archdiocesan schools and academies. Adjust as necessary.
- ◆ Evaluate feasibility and launch a archdiocesan-wide capital campaign to grow the schools' endowment funds.

Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center

- ◆ Provide ongoing revenue growth and expense management to ensure a self-sustaining campus that does not require subsidization.
- ◆ Continue to seek best uses for the facilities and land.
- ◆ Continually evaluate the role of the Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center, especially the Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos - Our Lady of Grace as a place of pilgrimage.



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LONG TERM GOALS (49 - 60 Months)

Vocations

- ◆ Increase the number of inquiries in the Vocations Office by 50% over the previous year for each year of the Long-Term.
- ◆ Evaluate the Men in Black Vocations Program and adjust and modify the program as necessary to ensure the highest standards of excellence and productivity.
- ◆ Have at least twenty-five (25) incardinated priests and twenty-five (25) incardinated deacons serving in the Archdiocese by December 31, 2030.
- ◆ Have at least twenty (20) seminarians in seminary formation and training beginning in September of 2029 (Priestly formation).
- ◆ Have at least ten (10) men enrolled in the Archdiocesan Permanent Deacon Formation Program.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Implementing the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030

A Strategic Plan is not meant to be static, but is a living document that must be adapted and changed. Implementation is the most important - and often the most difficult - step in Strategic Planning. Planning is a journey; it will have its ups and downs, never moving in a straight line. Implementation invariably runs into resistance, sometimes active and other times passive. In the best of circumstances change is difficult, and there is the tendency to resist it, often regardless of the need for change.

When the culture of the organization has been in place for a long time, as it has been for the Italo-Greek orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada, change can be even more difficult. However, as Jesus reminds us, even a mustard seed can move a mountain. Jesus wants His Church to grow and to thrive through the Holy Spirit. Continued prayer and discernment will be a vital part of putting this diocesan Strategic Plan into action.

Next steps by Archbishop Stephen will include the following:

- ◆ Proclaim a “Year of Prayer” in 2025 for the Archdiocese and all Archdiocese parishes, missions, and congregations, recognizing that without the guidance of the Holy Spirit and help of the Lord, “we labor in vain who build.”
- ◆ Appoint the Strategic Planning Implementation Work Groups. Work groups to prepare and implement tactics for goal achievement.
- ◆ Align all Chancery Office (Archdiocesan Pastoral and Administrative Center) dicasteries, secretariats, vicariates, offices, and departments’ staffing and budgets with the priorities of the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan.
- ◆ Communicate to all pastors, clergy, deans and deaneries the goals and priorities of the Strategic Plan. Ensure that the priorities of their responsibilities are aligned with the priorities of the Plan.



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Implementing the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030

- ◆ Work, in collaboration, to foster transparency of all archdiocesan governance and leadership bodies.
- ◆ Ensure ongoing, transparent communication throughout the Archdiocese concerning the Strategic Plan.
- ◆ Establish a reporting and performance update process to measure achievement progress for each Strategic Plan goal. Monitor ongoing progress and make tactical adjustments as necessary.

A sincere thanks to all those who have participated in the creation of this first ever Italo-Greek orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada Strategic Plan. May the Holy Spirit continue to inspire us and may God continue to bless us with His grace.



FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Importance of the Domestic Church in the Life of the Church and the Strategic Plan

The Domestic Church

One of the themes brought forward during discussions for developing the Strategic Plan was the importance of the Domestic Church in the life of the Church the faith formation of the faithful, and the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan itself. The foundation stone of this discussion was the vocation and mission of the family in general, both in the Church and in the modern world.

A Trinitarian Origin

The Church has her origin in the Holy Trinity. From the very beginning, the Church was part of the Father's plan for salvation. Salvation, we recall, comes from the root word "salve" which means "to heal, to make whole." So the Church has always been a part of the Father's plan of communion, or for sharing His divine life with all people.

Jesus came to fulfill the plan of communion that was the Father's from the beginning. Jesus, as the heart of this communion, became the "salve" for humanity so that all may be one in God. Apart from His announcing the kingdom of God in both word and deed, Jesus also established the visible structure of the Church through the selection of his Twelve Apostles and His naming of Peter as the focal point of unity for both the Apostolic College and the Church herself.

The Church was revealed as a visible community empowered to proclaim the Good News of salvation by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This same Spirit continues to maintain the stability, durability, and continuity of the Church both in favorable and unfavorable historical circumstances.

The Sacrament of Salvation

We know that Christ lives and acts in and with His Church through the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments), which communicate and convey His grace. As the actions of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church, sacraments manifest and communicate to humanity the mystery of communion with the God who is



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love.

At the same time, the Church herself is the Sacrament of Salvation – a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all.” This salvation is communicated to us by the Spirit through the Church and her seven sacraments.

For her part, the Church and her members are called to love God, others, and self, and so to be a communal witness of the love by which Christ saved the world. In other words, because the Church participates in the Trinitarian communion that is God, she is also called to be a source of unity for all people.

A More Fundamental Community

There is, however, a more fundamental community. To be sure, the family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which the man and the woman give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society...Family life is an initiation into life in society.

In much the same way, though, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada expresses the profound truth that the Christian family forms the “fundamental cell” of the Archdiocese’s parishes, missions, and congregations; and, as well, the Archdiocese itself, and the universal Church. It also manifests the Church, for it is in this Domestic Church, the Archdiocese asserts, that a person begins a Church experience of communion among persons, which reflects, through grace, the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Indeed, the family is a microcosm of the universal Church. Like the Church, the family is called to be holy, not because it is perfect, but because of God’s grace at work in it. When it answers this call, the family, or Domestic Church, becomes, like the Church herself, an icon of the loving communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



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Like the Church, the Christian home is the place where children receive the proclamation of the faith – for the first time! Like the Church, the Christian home is to be a school of virtue and a community of love. In addition, Christ has called all family members, as He has called all the members of the Body of Christ, to union with God through Baptism and the other Holy Mysteries (Sacraments).

The family also shares in the Church’s mission. It carries out this mission primarily by fostering love in the home. When family members pray together, engage in lifelong learning, forgive one another, serve each other, welcome others, affirm and celebrate life, and bring justice and mercy to the community, they help each other live the faith and grow in faith. It is through this familial love that the community of the Church and society more generally are built up.

Because of the importance of the Domestic Church to her very life, the Church is called upon to support families in every way possible. The Church needs to be a welcoming community, offering support to parents, in both complex situations and everyday life, in their work of raising children, accompanying children, adolescents and young people in their development through personalized pastoral programs, capable of introducing them to the full meaning of life and encouraging them in their choices and responsibilities, lived in the light of the Gospel.

The Fathers of the Church spoke frequently of the family as a ‘domestic church,’ a ‘little church.’ The Domestic Church is believing that how you live your faith in your families, parishes, missions, congregations, and community has a ripple effect that changes the world.

It is the Archdiocese, and the families, parishes, missions, and congregations that comprise it, that know that everything they do must be based in surrendering prayer and faithful adherence to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



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In speaking of the Domestic Church, Archbishop Stephen, Primate of the Italo-Greek Byzantine Orthodox Catholic Church, tells us that “it is the imperfect family, and the imperfect parishes, missions, and congregations of the Archdiocese who deliberately choose to live contrary to what is fast becoming a Godless world and who say, ‘In our home, and our parish, mission, or congregation, we choose to live our faith boldly and without fear.’”

It is the family and the whole Archdiocesan Church who prays together, goes to Divine Liturgy weekly, frequents the Sacrament of Confession and (because they realize they are powerless without God), deliberately avoids that which pollutes their minds and hearts. It is the imperfect, humble and joy-filled family and Archdiocesan Church that rarely preaches the faith because they are too busy living it.

Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish, Mission, and Congregation Initiative

The Archdiocese seeks to strengthen family life through its Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish, Mission, and Congregation Initiative. Through this initiative, the Italo-Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas and Canada endeavors to support Christian family life and encourages families to more fully integrate with the sacramental, liturgical, and social life of their parish, mission, or congregation. We thereby hope to not only help each family participate in the Church’s mission of evangelization and faith formation, but to also strengthen our members and revitalize our parishes, missions, and congregations.

Faith in Action

The Building the Domestic Church Initiative is the inspiration and foundation of the new Faith in Action program model, which greatly emphasizes faith and spirituality. The Archbishop’s mandate that every Domestic Church, and every parish, mission, and congregation of the Archdiocese embark on a path of spiritual renewal and growth, has not fallen on deaf ears. Those families that thoroughly



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implement Faith in Action will be living and exemplifying the Domestic Church. And increasing their spiritual life.

The Archdiocese's commitment of supporting, building up, and strengthening families and Domestic Churches is important to the success of its Strategic Plan. These "Little Churches" are an extension of the parish, mission, and congregation faith communities. As such, the Archdiocese's Strategic Plan will not be successful unless every Domestic Church in the Archdiocese plays its part and makes a tangible contribution in the way of faith, spirituality, action, and witness.

Living as the Domestic Church is extremely effective. Throughout all of Judeo-Christian history, there has been nothing more effective at evangelizing the culture than regular, everyday people choosing to live their faith at home and in the public square. Salvation history was changed forever by a family.

Food for Thought

Given the importance of the Domestic Church for the life of the Church and society as a whole, and the Strategic Plan, families would do well to consider and answer consider the following questions:

1. How important is it to you for your spouse to be Orthodox Christian?
2. How often do you and your spouse discuss religion and faith?
3. How often do you pray (other than at Divine Liturgy) with your spouse?
4. How often do you read the Bible or other religious or spiritual materials with your spouse?
5. How often does your spouse attend Divine Liturgy with you?
6. How often do you participate in parish activities, other than Divine Liturgy?

The vitality of any parish, mission, and congregation depends upon how well its pastor guards and affirms its central position in the life of the Church. But although the pastor is the dominant authority, his power is not exclusive. True growth in faith also depends on how deeply each family in the parish, mission, and congregation on its own initiative, cultivates a life of love and worship within their respective domiciles.



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Let us pray that a culture of Domestic Churches may flourish within our Holy Archdiocese so that the Mission and Vision of the Archdiocese, as enunciated in the Archdiocese's Five-Year Strategic Plan, will bear much fruit for the growth of the Archdiocese and to the greater glory of God.