

Youth & Young Adult Report

Archdiocese of Canada
Orthodox Church in America

Archdiocesan Assembly

July 16-20

Annunciation Cathedral St. Paul University, Ottawa

Rev. Fr. Richard Rene, Director

Matthew Francis, Coordinator

St Barbara, Patron of Canada's Youth

Your Eminence, Rev. Fathers, and Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is our privilege to offer this report for Youth and Young Adult Ministries to the Archdiocesan Assembly. We are pleased to serve God and assist His Eminence, Archbishop SERAPHIM, through various efforts to encourage the faith of those younger Orthodox Christians across Canada.

Since the 2004 Archdiocesan Assembly in Saskatoon, much has taken place in the life of our Church in Canada. We give thanks to God that across Canada, youth are not only 'the future of the Church,' as is often recognized, but are – in the present – getting involved, and taking their places of service. Increasingly, it is apparent in our parishes that young people are taking to heart the words of the Apostle Paul to St. Timothy: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." **1 Timothy 4.12**

Let us thank God together for His faithfulness to the Church here in Canada, and especially for the new generation of servants He is raising up to serve Christ's Church here in Canada.

This report will highlight some of the many Youth and Young Adult ministries that have taken place across our great Archdiocese over the past few years.

Events & Ministries

2004

A Historic Year for Camp Ministries

While many of our parishes and deaneries have historically participated in Summer Camps for their children and youth, 2004 marked the first annual Summer Camp for the BC Deanery. Dedicated to St. Arseny of Canada, the camp offered its first season under the leadership of Fr. John Hainsworth, and a great deal of support from St. Herman of Alaska parish in Langley. The camp has continued to grow since 2004, embracing the calling of the "pilgrim people of God," by being held in a new location each year since its beginning. But this has in no way diminished the fervour of the camp leaders, or the

children in attendance. Love for the experience of camp, and the spiritual blessings that accompany it, have continued to grow in the BC Deanery. www.starsenycamp.ca
Other Deaneries, particularly Alberta and Saskatchewan, have continued to use camps as a significant ministry tool to serve the needs of children and youth.

2005

All-American Council

The 14th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America was hosted by our Archdiocese in Toronto, July 17-22, 2005. Numerous young people participated in the work of the Council, and joined in the events through various age-specific programs.

Quebec Youth Retreat

A youth retreat was held in August 2005 at the Farm of Stuart and Anouk Iversen in Hinchinbrooke, Quebec. A good number of youth gathered together for this very successful retreat on the theme “Why be Christian,” cutting to the core spiritual questions of adolescents today. The speakers for the retreat were none other than His Eminence, Archbishop SERAPHIM, and the Archpriest Fr. Cyprian Hutcheon. The retreat was well attended and a great spiritual benefit, as well as a lot of fun. A professional quality DVD was produced, documenting the retreat teachings. This is an excellent resource for other youth and young adults groups, and should not be missed.

Pan-Orthodox Young Adult Retreat

The first Annual Pan-Orthodox Young Adult Retreat for Western Canada took place in Edmonton Remembrance Day weekend 2005, hosted by our brothers and sisters of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Several of our OCA parishes from Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, joined in this event, which featured our very own Fr. John Hainsworth of All Saints Church in Victoria, BC, as the speaker. The theme of the retreat was “Marriage and Singleness in the Orthodox Christian Life.” “The Over sixty young adults representing 11 parishes took part in this excellent event. A strong spirit of Christian unity prevailed as we joined together in prayer, learning, and fellowship.

2006

Pan-Orthodox Young Adult Retreat

The second Annual Pan-Orthodox Young Adult Retreat for Western Canada took place in Edmonton Remembrance Day weekend, hosted by our brothers and sisters of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Fr. Michael Gillis of Holy Nativity Orthodox Church in Langley, BC, was the retreat speaker, and the retreat was very well attended. The theme of the retreat was “Can we be good without God?” One of the highlights of the conference was the service of the popular Akathist service “*Glory to God for All Things*,” served at midnight. We in the Archdiocese of Canada have been asked to host the retreat this Fall, and we are waiting to see whether this will be possible.

Montreal Youth visit Annunciation Cathedral

Youth from our parishes in Montreal, including the Sign of the Theotokos Church, and Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral visited Annunciation Cathedral in Ottawa, witnessed the blessing of the new Icon of the Mother of God, and spent time with Archbishop SERAPHIM.

Calgary Pan-Orthodox Youth Fellowship

Our Youth Director, Fr. Richard Rene, laid the groundwork in Calgary for a collaborative, Pan-Orthodox Youth Fellowship, called "Koinonia." It is a partnership of Antiochian Church of the Annunciation, St. Mary's Romanian Orthodox Church, St. Peter the Aleut Orthodox Church, and St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Several successful teaching and fellowship events have already taken place and more are planned, for the purposes of building friendships and Orthodox unity. This is a great model for cooperative youth ministry. Check out the website at : www.calgarykoinonia.blogspot.com

Group of Twelve

One other ministry cannot be overlooked, and that is the first annual "Group of Twelve" Orthodox Adventure which took place in Wells Grey Park in July of 2006. Under the leadership of Fr. John Hainsworth, twelve hearty souls took place in this deep immersion in Orthodox theology amidst the Cathedral of God's Creation. A feature article was written by Reader Michael Luciuk in the *Canadian Orthodox Messenger* and more information can be found on the website: www.groupoftwelve.org This year the theme is the Feast of Theophany, and "G12" is going canoeing!

2007

Various other events are taking places across Canada, in our parishes and on our university campuses, particularly in place like Montreal. Numerous Universities have launched Orthodox Christian Fellowships (OCF). It is great to hear the news of this witness for Jesus Christ.

Ongoing Communications Programs

Our ongoing communications efforts continue as usual, with consistent use of the youth and young adults' web-log www.ocacanadianyouth.orthodoxmission.org As you can see, numerous parish youth groups and networks are using the user-friendly online blog format with great effectiveness. And, best of all, it's completely free! Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with these excellent resources.

Archdiocesan Assembly

We are now gathered together in this holy gathering. Our Archdiocesan Assembly is a special opportunity for us to be together with our Archbishop as a Church family, the Body of Christ from Coast to Coast. The Assembly is perhaps the prime moment for the younger generations present to meet each other, building lasting relationships founded on Christ. It will be a unique "bridge-building" moment, and deserves focused attention to create an atmosphere that will draw young people to attend, to participate,

and to be challenged to serve. Numerous people have been involved with the planning and facilitation of the Youth and Young Adults program of the Assembly. You will see that there are many Young people taking part. Here is just some of what they are participating in:

The four aspects of this special “Youth and Young Adult Track” are:

- **Liturgical Worship:** Youth & Young Adult participation in the services of the Assembly (singing, reading, serving, etc.)
- **Orthodox Formation:** A broad range of inspiring seminars tailored to the issues and topics facing young people today, and how to deepen their faith in Christ along the way. Fr. Justin Mathews, our special musical guest, is offering teaching sessions to the teenagers in attendance on the Assembly theme of Mission in a Pluralistic Society. Fr. Lawrence Farley and Prof. Richard Schneider are delivering some of the seminars being offered to the young adults (open to all).
- **“Diakonia” / Philanthropy:** (Thursday afternoon) Acts of service in the neighbourhood surrounding Annunciation Cathedral, assisting local social service/compassionate ministry types of agencies. The concept is that youth and young adults will be arranged into groups representing different areas to carry out these service projects, allowing them to get to know each other better.
- **Fellowship & Hospitality:** One of the most important aspects of the Assembly is the simple fact that we are together. It is good to be together. We have created not only the standard types of outings that are usually part of Assemblies (we will have some of those as well), but also a sort of special venue, an “evening coffee-house” type of environment hosted by and for our youth and young adults during the Assembly (but, of course open to all). Please feel free to drop by for a cup of coffee and get to know some of the young people better.

On behalf of Fr. Richard and myself, we would like to thank Your Eminence, and the Archdiocesan Council, and the whole Church for your ongoing support, encouragement, and prayers for the younger generations of our Church in Canada. Through the prayers of St. Barbara, St. Timothy, St. Tikhon, and St. Arseny, may God be merciful to us and bless us as we work together for Him.

With love in the Lord, Your servants in Christ,
Priest Richard Rene
Reader Matthew Francis