

19th AAC Institutional Chaplaincy Report: Archbishop Steven Voytovich, DMin., Director

This office's very function continues to be directly related to this Council's theme: "*For the Life of the World*" of the Orthodox Church. The ministry contexts where our chaplains serve are in the greater community context surrounding that of the local parish, so our chaplains are witnesses to the Orthodox Faith in the greater community. Chaplains bring the light of Christ to those who are sick, suffering, incarcerated, and in need of healing. This office supports chaplains serving in hospitals, nursing homes, correctional facilities, and other settings with endorsement and commissioning for committed laypersons. This ministry is very much within the sacramental life of the Church, connecting "Let us Depart in Peace" with "Blessed is the Kingdom". Having received the Body and Blood of Christ, we go out in the world to share the God's gifts of ministry entrusted to us. The fruits of this ministry are brought back to the next celebration of the Eucharist.

At this moment, we have CPE being offered in some form in all our OCA seminaries. Edward Thornton's seminal work, *Professional Education for Ministry: a History of Clinical Pastoral Education*, includes case studies of CPE conducted in seminary contexts. In one example, the re-opened Philadelphia Divinity School faculty member Reuel Howe's evaluation of a New Plan of Theological Education with CPE incorporated in the late 1930's included three headings: "(1) **it enhanced theological learning in the classical as well as the practical fields;** (2) **it provided professional training for pastoral functioning in ministry to persons. Training was found to be relevant to preaching, teaching, and the administration of the sacraments, as well as to pastoral care and counseling.** (3) **the New Plan stimulated the students' growth as persons.**" (Thornton, p. 216) Clinical training is an integral part of pastoral formation in preparing the next generation of clergy to ministry in the increasing complexity of parish life in our culture hurtling away from the reality of a life of faith altogether.

And in like manner, our Orthodox Faith is now represented in interfaith settings, the endorsing community, and pastoral care round tables such as COMISS, representing diverse religious traditions and many credentialing bodies. The Orthodox Faith has played a more active role in shaping this ministry in recent years through the rich tradition of pastoral care that is ours. We continue to reflect the importance of ministry being grounded in our life of faith even as segments of the chaplaincy movement seek to shed this important relatedness, toward more secular approaches. I appeal to our hierarchs to continue to call upon this office to assist in facilitating endorsing relationships of their diocesan faithful and clergy in this ministry, to advocate a course and direction for candidates amidst this rapidly changing institutional chaplaincy environment.

Metropolitan Tikhon referenced the Apostolic calling of the apostles being sent out into the world to share the Gospel, in his Four Pillars Document. He adds: "we cannot participate in this sacred work if we do not enter into the labors of purifying our hearts and preparing our entire being to receive the gifts of grace. ... to become images of Christ and vessels of the Holy Spirit. I ask your prayers for those dedicated to ministering in these contexts that they can more fully reflect the light of Christ as vessels of the Holy Spirit.