

# 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.

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 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.

Paternally yours in Christ,

*+ Archbishop Stephen*

+Archbishop Stephen



## 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, and Polish descent among its membership.

At one time, the Archdiocese numbered more than 60,000 total 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 11 active communities served by one bishop and one deacon. There are three new communities in formation and 11 that are inactive. The total number of faithful claiming to be members of the Archdiocese is 1,280. However, only 230 actively participate in the life of the Church.. This means that, presently, only 18% of the faithful of the Archdiocese actively 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 than in the past ten years.



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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 28th Provincial Council held in August 2022.



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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.



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### **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 1,591. Of this amount, 319 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 1,272 members who identify themselves as “active” members of the Church, only 330 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 942 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 2.6% of the total active members (1,272) of the Church. Of the over all Church membership (1,272), 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,



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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





## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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 January 31, 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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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:



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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.



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 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



## FIVE - YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

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

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.