

Volume 54 No. 7

SEPTEMBER 2010

الكلمة

# The Word



May 26, 2010

## The Episcopal Assembly

"Today the Grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together."



## Announces Local Feeding Ministries

Recently established local centers established by the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve – FOCUS Orange County (California), FOCUS Gateway City (St. Louis) and FOCUS Minnesota – have begun serving the poor and needy in their communities.

A highlight of these recent activities was the feeding and care of 61 newly arrived refugees from Nepal, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, Senegal and other West African nations. Twenty-one Orthodox volunteers led by Eric Shanburn, local director of FOCUS Gateway City, dedicated over 75 man-hours to prepare, deliver, serve and clean-up the meal. Volunteers also coordinated transportation, using a fleet of 5 mini-van vehicles to shuttle guests to and from the sit-down meal that featured table service and games for the children. School supplies were distributed to children as hospitality gifts at the end of the evening. Similar events are being planned in the Twin Cities (Minnesota) and Orange County (California).

FOCUS Gateway City has also launched a Women's Employment Assistance Center with a specific outreach to clients of Thrive St. Louis, adding to the latter's crisis pregnancy program occupational assistance, counseling, job placement and a professional clothing closet. Orthodox Christian women from the surrounding parishes offer personal wardrobe selection in preparation for secured job interviews to the guests.

A special feature of the FOCUS ministry in Orange County will be the Mother Maria (Skobtsova) Hospitality Van. This work is in keeping with the traditional Orthodox emphasis on serving the poor through hospitality, specifically in the provision of healthy, home-cooked food. A hot, nutritious meal is prepared in the kitchen of one of the volunteer parishes each week and then distributed to identified areas of need by the FOCUS hospitality van and ministry team. Orthodox volunteers gather to serve the food and distribute material aid onsite to those in need, while Kevin Allen, local director of FOCUS Orange County, social work professionals and trained volunteers offer companionship and other life-recovery ministries to those in need.

"The establishment of these operational FOCUS Centers is a momentous occasion in the history of Orthodoxy in America," commented Fr. Justin Mathews, Executive Director and CEO. "Together we offer an Orthodox Christian witness in North America through intentional social outreach ministry to our most needy neighbors. These three FOCUS Centers are the first fruits of the resources that the faithful have entrusted to FOCUS North America."

The first operational FOCUS Centers in North America are modeled in part on Reconciliation Services – FOCUS KC (Kansas City), the first FOCUS Center located downstairs from the FOCUS North America headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri. Additional FOCUS Centers are actively being developed in central Florida, the Appalachian region, San Diego, California, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. More information about the FOCUS Centers can be found online at [www.FOCUS-NorthAmerica.org](http://www.FOCUS-NorthAmerica.org).

FOCUS North America, with a commitment to the poor, the needy and the disadvantaged in our own communities, continues to expand its mission and vision of serving God, through the cultivating of resources, development of parish ministries and the launch of FOCUS Centers across North America. Working with the Churches and offering a place for the faithful of all ages to serve regularly, FOCUS Centers provide meals, life-recovery ministries and hope for the hopeless.

FOCUS North America and its programs are committed to serve those in need, support Orthodox Christian social action ministries and supply parishes and others with the education, resources and training to initiate social action ministries in their own communities. In all of this, it continues in the work of Restoring Living Icons. FOCUS North America is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization. Donations can be made online at [www.FOCUSNorthAmerica.org](http://www.FOCUSNorthAmerica.org) or checks can be made out to "FOCUS North America" and sent to: PO BOX 30117, Kansas City, MO 64112.



First Meal FOCUS Gateway City Center (St. L.