



March 26, 2025

### INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH

*Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

Dear to God,

Christ is in our midst! This year we will be ministering to approximately 150 children at the St. Tikhon's Camp Program. Through the program, our youth not only learn about their faith, and have fellowship with other Orthodox youth, but have the opportunity to develop lifelong relationships. These relationships and their experience help solidify their relationship to Christ and the Church.

Our Diocesan Council wants to ensure that all children of the Diocese are able to attend. The past two years the Diocese, together with our parishes and camp tuition from outside the Diocese covered the cost for all children of the Diocese. The previous cost of \$375 for the first child and \$350 for any siblings, made it quite difficult for families with more than one child. Parents previously decided that if they could not send all of their children who were age appropriate, they would not send any of them. Thanks be to God, we had numerous children there for the first time! Last year Diocesan Campers outnumbered those coming from outside the Diocese for the first time. This year, 110 of the 150 are from our own Diocese.

As a Church, we should never want any child unable to attend because of the cost. Secondly, we do not want to embarrass or humiliate parents by having to ask for assistance from their parish or the Diocese, whether it is for one child or more. We as Orthodox Christians need to invest in our youth by supporting all youth ministry fully. In some Orthodox jurisdictions parishes or organizations within the parish make sure every child can go to camp and even cover airfare.

Statistically, 70% of our youth once going away to college or entering the workforce fall away from the Church and 2/3 of those never return. We as a Church must do a better job of caring for our youth and providing opportunities for learning, fellowship and growth in their faith. Our Camp program is an important part of addressing the problem and has also contributed to young men and women making decisions to serve the Church in various ways. They want to give back.

In order to make our camp available and accessible to all our youth within the Diocese we are asking our faithful to consider sponsoring a camper with a contribution of \$375. We also ask our parishes to consider covering the cost of their own campers. If the parish has none, to consider helping to underwrite the cost of caring for our youth with a contribution of \$500. If we can get a commitment of \$42,000 a year through various contributions, we can offer the camp free of charge for all our children. We are also setting up a donation button on our website. You may send contributions to the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, 325 N Walnut St., Bath, PA 18014 and earmark it for St Tikhon's Camp. Thank you for your generosity and concern for our youth.

While we make this appeal to our parishes and faithful, please be aware the Diocese also covers the cost of the fall and Winter Retreats for our youth at a cost of approximately \$30,000. Likewise, we cover all clergy, clergy wives, men's and women's retreats.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

+ Mark

+ MARK (Maymon), Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

*Please post on every parish website and in every parish bulletin.*



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"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine