



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY ADDRESSES OPIOID ABUSE M.O.R.E. (METROPOLIS OPIOID RESPONSE EFFORT) PROGRAM PROVIDES AWARENESS AND HOPE

Westfield, NJ- His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey, unveiled a new awareness program and informational video about opioid abuse at the 2018 Metropolis Clergy Laity conference held at “**The Venetian**” in Garfield New Jersey. The awareness program is entitled the **Metropolis Opioid Response Effort (M.O.R.E)** and His Eminence created a committee from his Metropolitan Council to plan and oversee the initiative.

With the blessings of His Eminence, the committee is comprised of dedicated Clergymen and Lay Orthodox Christians under the chairmanship of Archon H. James Polos, a member of the Metropolitan Council of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey and a steward of St. George Parish in Piscataway, NJ. Concerns about opioid abuse which have affected our youth and not only, throughout the Country, even in our parishes and communities were discussed at a meeting of the Metropolitan Council and the decision was made that we must also face reality and deal with this crucial issue which has found its way into the Orthodox Christian home.

His Eminence asked Archon Polos to serve on the committee because of his involvement as a Public Safety Director and County elected official. The committee immediately began work on the program with clear direction from His Eminence who said, **“This issue must be brought into the light and our parishioners should not be afraid to talk about this disease or embarrassed to seek help from their parish or this Metropolis. Our Church needs to do MORE to help those afflicted with this disease and we need to reach beyond the borders of our church to enlist help and support for our own who are affected and as our Orthodox faith teaches us, offer help and support for others in the communities where we live and worship”**.

With that charge in hand, the committee looked beyond the creation of a standard written encyclical and instead focused on the creation of a video so that His Eminence could speak directly to the people about this very important yet very sensitive and personal issue. A very powerful video was produced which includes a message from His Eminence, true life stories from members of the Greek Orthodox Church and critical information about awareness and response offered by Dionysios Mihalopoulos, a United States DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge who was born in Greece and whom presents his views in both Greek and English. Tom and Chrystallo Trachy, share the intimate

details of their struggle with their young son who ultimately lost his struggle with addiction. “If sharing and viewing this video can even help one family become more aware of this issue and be able to intervene with their child in time to save their life, it will be well worth the time and tears we have shed to be a part of this important program. My wife and I applaud the Metropolitan for taking a leadership role to bring opioid addiction in our community into the light because it is real and exists in every parish”, said Tom Trachy. Father Kosmas Karavellas, Proistamenos of the Greek Orthodox Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen in Annapolis, Maryland added, “I have had to experience the loss of members of our parish to opioid abuse and have had to try and console and minister the loving surviving family members who have to look back each day and wonder if they could have done more. I don’t want anyone to have to live through that. The MORE program will go a long way to start the dialogue in our churches .”

“We must do all that we can to assist and guide the faithful have to deal with opioid abuse by their loved ones or friends. We must also provide information and access to resources to assist families with identification of abuse and intervention methods. MORE has begun the dialogue but now it will be up to each parish to continue the discussion, challenge the status quo and insure that local experts are brought in to drill down further on the important elements of abuse. The MORE program will better inform and prepare parents and families and most importantly send a strong message to our youngsters about the dangers of addiction to hopefully keep them on the right track before they become addicted. We can and we should all do MORE”, said His Eminence, Metropolitan Evangelos.

“This video is one of the most compelling and important works I have seen developed to address opioid abuse in our Greek Orthodox parishes because it encourages people to openly discuss the issue and seek help when necessary from the Church and the other expert resources provided”, said DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge Dionysios Mihalopoulos.

The video is posted on the Metropolis of New Jersey website (<https://www.nj.goarch.org/>) and parishes throughout the Metropolis and the Archdiocese are encouraged to show it in their parish at various organizational meetings such as GOYA, Philoptochos and PTO. The **M.O.R.E** program and video is simply the first step in what should be an ongoing dialogue at the community level. Follow up discussions and meetings organized by the Priest and parish council at the parish level are also necessary to further the dialogue and the dissemination of important information and resources in each region of the Metropolis. Please help us do **M.O.R.E**.