

RUSSIAN PARISH TRAINS MORE THAN 70 PEOPLE TO WORK WITH DEAF PARISHIONERS



Over the past year, a parish in Rostov-on-Don has been busy training more than 70 people to work with deaf and hearing-impaired parishioners in the area.

The Church of the Reigning Icon of the Mother of God ran its “Grace Orthodox Center for Supporting the Families of the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired” project from March last year to February of this year, aimed at drawing attention to the problem of parishioners with hearing disorders and training clergy and social workers to interact with them, reports the Rostov Diocese.

The parish has been spiritually attending to deaf people since 2017. For many of them, it was their first step in Church life and their communion with God in the Church Sacraments.

The program was implemented with the grant won in the 2019-2020 Orthodox Initiative competition and with the support of the Diocesan Department for Church Charity and Social Services and the Rostov branch of the All-Russian Society for the Deaf.

Services with translation into Russian sign language and practice-oriented seminars

were held in eight deaneries of the Don Metropolia as part of the program. Seminars were conducted by Fr. Anthony Osyak, rector of the Church of the Reigning Icon, head of the Grace Center, and the confessor of the city's deaf community, and his assistants who interpret Church sign language.

The project provided many with the chance to pray and “hear” the Word of God in their native sign language, to see the beauty of Orthodox worship, to confess and commune of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, and to receive answers to their spiritual questions.

More than 70 clergymen, parish social workers, and volunteers took part in the practice-orient seminars, learning the ethics of communication with the hearing-impaired and a basic beginning sign language vocabulary. There was also a course that especially focused on preparing priests to confess the hearing-impaired.

The program ended on February 27 with a service in Russian sign language in the Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Iveron Convent.

In 2018, the first several chapters of the Gospel of Mark were published in Russian sign language videos.

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