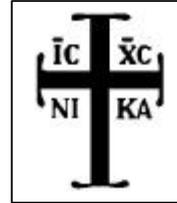


RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh

Vol. XI, No. 1, Fall 2004

Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div., Director



Dear Readers,

It's time to welcome all of you back for a new Church School Year! The Fall 2004 Newsletter and Packet includes a reformatted **YELLOW PAGES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**, the **2004-2005 Planning Calendar**, the book reviews, information about Substitute Teachers, Family Advent Activities, and information about the **Orthodox Institute** for Christian Educators.

Instead of just listing **NEW RESOURCES**, I have decided to review them. Give someone a computer and that person can publish a book. Does that mean it is a good book and that it is theologically correct? Not necessarily. After 30 years as a Catechist, and the explosion of Orthodox books, I believe that I have a responsibility to share my thoughts and point out theological concerns. I want you to make the best choice in buying books and I hope to help you steer clear of ideas that are not part of our Orthodox Tradition.

COMMENTS ABOUT WRITING ORTHODOX BOOKS I encourage writers among the laity who are without a theological education or who are not well read in the Faith and are also without a Spiritual Father to have a trusted priest or theologically educated individual read the drafts of their work for comments and suggestions. Today we write for Orthodox Christians who may be 4th generation from the motherland or may have no connection to a traditionally Orthodox country.

For example, few of today's grandmothers are characters from "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." How do we help 21st century grandparents find their role? The former model has to be modified. How can we affect the thinking of Parents so that they come to understand that coming to Liturgy as a family on time and every week possible is the norm for an Orthodox Christian, as is frequent communion and the Wednesday and Friday fast, and making the Church a priority in our lives? And all this is done not to follow the "Rules of the Church." No! It is done because we have experienced the love of God and want to live an appropriate lifestyle.

Writing "excellent, spirit-filled books" is what the Orthodox Church here in America needs today. Better to write fewer and better books. We could be deceived by the volume of books into thinking that we have come so far in such a short of time. That is true only if the books we write are within the greater Tradition of the Church, as expounded upon by the Church Fathers, as passed from generation to another without adding or subtracting from the fullness of the truth. Teaching the Faith is an awesome task.

HOW ELSE CAN WE USE ICONS? A second concern led me to an email discussion with Metropolitan Maximos, i.e. the use of icons on too many items. Let me first quote Metropolitan Maximos, "**Icons should not be used in such a manner as puzzles, T-shirts, Mouse pads, etc.**" When confronted with the questions as to why we have used icons on t-shirts ("Walk for Paradise," Camp, etc.), he said that "it was different since these were more of pencil drawings rather than formal icons."

Icons are items that Orthodox Christians use in prayer and worship. We venerate them, carry them in procession, handle them reverently whether in church or at home icon corners. Usually these are **hand-written icons** or specially mounted and blessed. During the Iconoclastic Period, Monks, Nuns, Iconographers, and devoted Laity were imprisoned cruelly punished and even put to death because they dared to have an icon or speak in the defense of icons. Icons were worth dying for!

But what about all the paper icons we get on church calendars, at funerals, on different types of cards. These not really icons, are they? Some 20 years ago at Summer Camp (Camp Nazareth, Mercer, PA), 20 paper prints – copies of the icon that had been tearing in the Chicago area – began tearing. That year, at that camp session, the lives of everyone there and at their homes were affected by that miracle.

What about the icons we use in crafts with our students? Please explain to the students that even crafts made with paper icons are special and should be handled with care and placed in their icon corner in their room. Teachers, chose crafts that will last and not be thrown out. Icons cannot be thrown out, but must be burned and the ashes buried where no one will walk on them and no animal desecrate.

There's more to teach as new situations, such as paper icon, arise that did not exist in the history of the Church. May our Lord guide us in the Ministry He shares with us. *Phyllis*

NEW FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The 2004-2006 Orthodox Christian Resource Catalog not only has new supplementary resource material, but the new layout has color-coded divisions to help us locate books. It is not on the Website at this writing.

Teenage Curriculum Update - To see the progress on the **Teenage Curriculum** go to <http://www.religoused.goarch.org> to see the 3 completed lessons for the 9th grade. Download, try them out and give feedback to one of the Co-Chairs: **Irene Cassis**, ireneccassis@agoc.org, 713-526-5377 X112 or **Nick Stellakis**, nickstellakis@aol.com, 781-762-3480.

2004 ORTHODOX INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION - November 4-7

Antiochian Village in Ligonier, PA

- ◆ Sponsored by the Departments of Christian Education of the Antiochian Archdiocese.
- ◆ Courses for Teachers, Church School Directors, and those wanting to learn more about Orthodoxy.
- ◆ Two keynote speakers: **His Grace Bishop BASIL**, Diocese of Wichita & **Sr. Magdalen of the Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, Essex, England**, author of *Children in the Church Today* and *Conversations with Children*.
- ◆ Courses & Course Schedule are included in this packet.

Information available at

<http://www.antiochian.org/christianeducation>

NEW RESOURCES

Our textbooks, together with additional resources make our ministry of teaching and our lessons more exciting and appealing to our students.

From OCEC:

The Way, The Truth and The Life

Textbook for grades 8-12; Adult Education; Home Resource book. It's the best textbook/reference book I have seen! The 9th Grade students & teachers of Annunciation GOC in Akron, OH were very excited about the book, including the Content Mastery Tests. The students

were up to the challenge. I also served as Theological Editor of the Student Text.

From Conciliar Press:

Three more books were added to the *Twelve Great Feasts for Children Series* by Sister Elayne & Bonnie Gillis: [1] *The Ascension of Our Lord*, [2] *The Feast of Pentecost* and [3] *The Transfiguration of Our Lord*. I like how the Feast Day story line is taken from the "then" to the "now," thus showing the reader that when we celebrate a Feast Day it is not history, we are in the NOW, we are affected Today. Plus the illustrations are excellent! They are definitely Orthodox books if one knows iconographic style, and yet for the non-Orthodox they would be Christian books. \$5.95 each



It's rare that an author can show us how to interphase with our patron saint and guardian angel. Claire Brandenburg does this in *DANIEL AND THE LION*. Daniel learns how to call upon St. Daniel and his Guardian Angel for the strength he needs to deal with a problem at school. \$8.95

In the Orthodox way of life, praying throughout the day is not limited to the monastic community. In *THE MONK WHO GREW PRAYER*, written & illustrated by Claire Brandenburg, the children read about how a solitary monastic prays as he does his daily chores using the Hours & the Jesus Prayer. More importantly, they learn that they, too, can pray throughout the day. \$9.95

Presbytera Renee Ritsi, Fr. Martin, and their children Stephanos and Nicole have lived abroad as Orthodox missionaries in Africa and Albania from 1987-1998. Fr. Martin now serves as the Executive Director of OCMC - Orthodox Christian Mission Center. That would be a story in itself. In *MWANGI: A YOUNG AFRICAN BOY'S JOURNEY OF FAITH*, Renee takes us to Kenya, Africa where we meet Mwangi, & his family and we learn what it is like to live in his village. As Mwangi shares his dreams with us, Fr. Stavro comes for a visit and Mwangi learns about the Orthodox Church. When his father returns from the city,.... Well, you will have to read the book to find out what happens. \$17.95

From Maria Khoury

In *Christina Goes to the Holy Land*, Christina, her brother Nicholas and Parents travel to the sites where Christianity began, where Jesus lived. At each site her parents explain its significance. The last site is the village of Taybeh, biblically Ephraim, the only all-Christian village left in Palestine. This is Maria Khoury's village. A Vocabulary List, a Colored Map, and Notes for Parents are included. The illustrations by Fotini Dedousi add to the beautiful story that Maria weaves for us. This is the 6th book in a series of 7. \$14.99 [HC]

Witness in the Holy Land: Faith & Suffering is a very different type of book. From the Fall of 2000 to the Spring of 2003 Maria Khoury emailed articles to friends and relatives abroad telling them what was happening in the West Bank/ Palestine, much of which the media did not report. *Witness in the Holy Land* contains 72 articles, which give us an inside look at faith and suffering. **How can we use this book?** Our teens, young adults and adult study groups would benefit by first reading to **raise our awareness**, then discussing how one's **faith** can be the only source of strength in very difficult and dangerous times. \$14.99 [LL]

From Deisis Press & Publishing House

At the Greek Archdiocese Clergy-Laity I met **Presbytera Diane Ellis Miles, Ed.D.**, currently of Huntsville, AL, and founder of Deisis Press & Publishing. In September 2003 she began publishing *Invitation: Bring the Faith Home*, a Journal for Christian Families. It started with 4-page, in color, filled with stories of Feast Days, saints, puzzles for children, a parents' corner, and craft activity. In May the Journal expanded to 16 color pages, allowing her to add more and longer articles, "Teen-Talk," and more children's activities. Colored icons have been used from the beginning. Presbytera Diane has integrated her love for children and professional educational background to offer the Orthodox Church a periodical that is not available elsewhere. *Invitation: Bring the Faith Home* is prepared under ecclesiastical supervision.

The price is normally \$29.95 (10 issues). **A SPECIAL CLERGY-LAITY PRICE of \$19.95** until November 1 includes both the September

and October issues. At this price it is definitely a good opportunity to subscribe. Some parishes are purchasing bulk copies of 30 or more at \$14.95 each to distribute to families.

The Kingdom of God for Little Children by Diane Ellis Miles is part of *The ABC Series for Little Christians*. A Coloring Book is due 11/21/04. Geared for the non-reader or early reader, this book uses the ABC's to teach aspects of the Church. The text is in rhyme, which helps children remember. Several pages are without picture or icon so that the child can personalize the book with a picture of his/her own priest, for example. The adult reader is given suggestions to enhance the experience. \$9.95

Prayers for Children translated and edited by Fr. John G. Maheras is the first in the series of **Prayers for Christian Families. [\$9.95]** In addition to the Trisagion Prayers, Fr. John offers prayers to add. His translations are child-friendly and sometimes in rhyme. Example from *Prayers during the day*

*Dear God,
Please help my life be different
From all of those I see,
So others who do look at me
May see, You Lord, in me*

The Orthodox Christian Pre-K Through Grade 12 Academic Curriculum guide (Book 1 of 8) is due out in late August/September. It is designed to integrate the Classical, the International and the Experiential with the intent of assisting parents with their children's education.

Joyful Gifts, LCC - Presbytera Diane also prepares specialized and personalized Baptismal Paks, Gowns and Blankets. If interested go to www.joyfulgifts.net or phone 256-489-2131.



2005 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL Theme: "The Triodion"

Topics, Tips & Bibliography:

1. **2005 ARC - Annual Resource Companion**
Cost: \$5.00. Order now and be ready early.
2. Religious Education Department's Website:
www.religioused.goarch.org

Met. Of Pittsburgh/Camp Hill is hosting the Nationals in June!



HELPING OUR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS DO THEIR BEST

Each Church School needs a few dependable, faithful and skilled Substitute Teachers. What can we do make substituting an enjoyable experience for all – the Director who is assured that the class will have a Teacher, the Teacher who cannot be there, the Students, and the Substitute who not only wants to do a good job, but wants to make an impact on the students, not just “pass time”?

Try these ideas:

- ◆ Require Substitute Teachers to receive a minimum amount of **training** so they understand your program's educational philosophy and procedures.
- ◆ Ask each teacher to prepare an **Emergency Lesson** to be kept in the Church School office.
- ◆ Keep a **File Folder of Activities for each Age Group**. Substitutes can grab the folder and use the activities to fill in any blank spaces in the lesson.
- ◆ Go with the Substitute Teacher to the class and introduce him/her to all the students—each time the substitute teaches. Have children wear **name tags**.
- ◆ Review the Church School's Discipline Policies with the Substitute Teacher and the students. Remind the students that the Substitute is there to help them learn about Christ and the Church and will enforce the discipline policy so everyone can learn as much as possible.
- ◆ Have the students tell the Substitute **how their teacher gets their attention**, such as by clapping, flashing the lights, or ringing a bell.
- ◆ **Give Substitutes extra resources** such as books and tapes to use if they finish the lesson earlier than expected.
- ◆ Have ready-to-go **Substitute Survival Kits** for those last-minute calls. Your *Survival Kit* should contain a lesson, supplies, and snacks.

Based on the article “Successful Substitute Teachers” from *CHILDREN'S MINISTERSRY* Magazine, Nov/Dec 1995.

Adapted by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div., Director of Religious Education, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO USE THE FALL 2004 PACKET?

1. **Make a copy of the Newsletter for each Teacher.**
2. Provide each teacher with **copies of articles** that pertain to him/her.
3. If you have not already done so, place the originals in a **Notebook** devoted to the Bi-Annual Newsletters/Packets. This is the 20th Newsletter/Package I have published in the 11 years I have served as the Metropolitan Director of Religious Education. If the Packets are kept in a Notebook, then whoever is the current Director has access to a wealth of information at his/her fingertips.
4. If you have a **Reference File**, place a copy of each article in the appropriate folder. See “Church School Reference File” article “*Fall 2003 Packet.*”
5. Finally, please direct Staff members to my Website **www.phyllisonest.com.**



THE 2004-2005 PLANNING CALENDAR, provides a tool for listing when each lesson will be taught, as well as what Sundays will be devoted to other activities such as the Procession of Icons on Orthodoxy Sunday, practice for the Christmas Program, etc. It is on my Website as a Word file so you can edit it for you parish. Consider adding the following:

1. Scheduled Teachers' Meetings
2. The Parish, Regional, Metropolitan, and National Oratorical Festival Dates.
3. When work on the Oratorical Festival will begin.
4. The dates of Lenten or Mission Projects.
5. The dates for the Christmas Program rehearsals.
6. The End-of-the-Year Awards Program.
7. Any social gatherings or Recognition Day for the Staff.
8. Teacher Training
9. Sessions.

<i>2004-2005 Church School Planning Calendar</i>	
<i>Sept 12</i>	_____
<i>Sept 14</i>	_____
<i>Sept 19</i>	_____
<i>Sept 26</i>	_____



"My Prayer Journal"

IOCC "s supply of 25,000 copies of **My Prayer Journal** was quickly depleted last year. If your Church School was not able to get copies, a 2nd edition of the

same book will be published this year. Pre-Order a copy at

<https://www.iocc.org/news/prayerjournal.shtml>

The journal is currently online for students who frequent the Internet. **My Prayer Journal** is a full-color 12-month booklet that encourages children ages 7 - 12 to consider the needs of children living in countries where IOCC works as they pray. Each month features a different country, which is also featured on IOCC's website <http://www.iocc.org>. It is a free resource; donations offset printing & shipping. Parishes & organizations can order bulk quantities by contacting the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Archdiocese at 800-566-1088. Shipping and handling charge for bulk orders. For additional information contact IOCC at 410-243-9820/ FAX: 410-243-9824 / Email: relief@iocc.org / <http://www.iocc.org>.



WORKSHOPS

- Harrisburg, PA / September 25**
Saint Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Spring & Union Sts, Middletown, PA
- Lancaster, PA / November 13**
Calvary Church
1051 Landis Valley Rd. Lancaster, PA
- Charleston, WV / October 16**
First Baptist Church
6th Ave. & 2nd St., St. Albans, WV
For More Information go to
<http://www.cmmag.com/cmml2004/>

ADVENT 2004

Included you will find "*The Nativity Fast/Advent For Parents & Children*" that can accompany one or both of the Family Advent Activities that you send home with the students of the Church School.



ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRISON MINISTRY - CHRISTMAS CARDS

Don't forget about *the Orthodox Prison Ministry Christmas Card Project*. The Spring 2003 Newsletter has details. Support OCPM with monetary donations and by purchasing Icon Prayer Cards, Mounted Icons, and Icon Note Cards. <http://www.antiochian.org/ocpm>

Fr. David Ogan has moved. The new address is:
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRISON MINISTRY

V. Rev. Fr. David Ogan
PO Box 822169, Vicksburg, MS 39182
Phone/FAX 601-636-8392
Email ogand@bellsouth.net



On Super Bowl Sunday in January. 2005 benefits a local charity with cans of food and IOCC with the collected dollars. . It's not yet on <http://www.iocc.org>, / <http://www.souperbowl.org/>

INCLUDED IN THE FALL 2004 PACKET



- 2004-2005 *Yellow Pages for Religious Education*
- 2004-2005 *Church School Planning Calendar*. Julian Calendar on Website.
- Little Falcons Magazine* Order Form (Please make copies & post on bulletin boards for interested parents.)
- Orthodox Institute* Course List
- Orthodox Institute* Course Schedule
- "*The Nativity Fast/Advent For Parents & Children*" by Protodeacon Rodney Torbic
- A Family Advent Calendar on a Chain* for Preschool – Grade K or 1st.
- An Advent Alphabet for Orthodox Families* for Grades 1st or 2nd – 6th or 7th.
- Two Christmas Cards that can be used for the *Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry Christmas Card Project*.
- The Assembly of the Holy Glorious & Praise Worthy Apostles* list of the Apostles, their feast days, and how they died.

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