

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER**  
**Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh**  
**Vol. X, No. 1, Fall 2003**  
**Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div., Director**



**Dear Readers,**  
*Welcome back to a new Church School Year! I hope that you will find this Newsletter helpful. It includes information on selecting the best resources to fit your parish's needs, ideas to be used in the classroom, teacher training, family Lenten activities, recruiting teachers, promoting your Church School Program, how to organize resource materials, and thoughts on our role as Christian Educators. I hope and pray that you have a Spirit-filled and fun year! Phyllis*

**WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO USE THIS NEWSLETTER & INCLUDED ARTICLES?**

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 19<sup>th</sup> Newsletter/Packet I have published in the ten years I have served as the Diocesan and now Metropolitan Director of Religious Education. (Some of the back issues can be found on my Website.) 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 included in this packet.
5. Finally, please direct Staff members to my Website **www.phyllisonest.com**.

**THE PLANNING CALENDAR**, included in this Fall Packet, provides a tool for planning when each lesson will be taught, as well as listing what Sundays will be devoted to other activities such as the Procession of Icons on Orthodoxy Sunday, practice for the Christmas Program, etc. This year the Planning Calendar will be on my Website - **www.phyllisonest.com** - as a Word file so that adjustments and additions can be made at the parish level. I suggest adding the following:

Scheduled Teachers' Meetings

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

**THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL ORTHODOX INSTITUTE** sponsored by the Departments of Christian Education and Youth Ministry of the Antiochian Archdiocese is scheduled for **November 6-9** at **Antiochian Village in Ligonier, PA.**

Information will be available at **<http://www.antiochian.org/christianeducation>**. In the meantime, inform teachers of the date.

**2004 ARC  
ANNUAL RESOURCE COMPANION**

**"The Pentecostarion"** is the theme for both the **2004 ARC** and the **2004 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL**. Oratorical Festival Topics, Bibliography and



Topic Tips are included in the **2004 ARC** and on the Religious Education Department's Website: **[www.religioused.goarch.org](http://www.religioused.goarch.org)**

Order one today and be ready when the School Year begins!

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**  
**Reflection on**  
**the Purpose of Christian Education**  
by Fr. Theodore Bobosh

“If a teacher focuses too intently on teaching the lesson, he or she may forget the lesson’s connection with the student and with the rest of life. Every one lesson is a bridge between the student and the world beyond the student. This world beyond includes linking the person with God, heaven, things invisible, the soul and the heart. **True Christian Education** helps the student discover the world beyond the merely physical, as well as the world within each of us. Education is bridge building, linking together a student with the rest of creation as well as with the Creator. Sometimes the teacher may think his or her job is to take the student from ignorance to knowledge, but each spiritual lesson really takes the student from what is familiar and known to the unknown. Christian Education should take students into their own hearts, as well as into the depths of God. Strangely – these two realities (the interior heart and the depths of God) converge, and in Orthodoxy, to find one is to locate the other. Teachers should allow themselves to aim beyond the merely familiar and to understand that Christian Education is but a bridge to the world.”  
*(December 1999 Newsletter of the Department of Religious Education of the Diocese of the Midwest – OCA.)*

**NEO-CSD – North East Ohio Church School Directors – MEETINGS: June 24 & August 16**  
At the Akron Workshop last fall, I invited the Directors of NE Ohio to meet with me periodically to discuss their concerns and needs. I felt that the various sizes of the Church Schools offered a microcosm of the Metropolis. The discussion at the June 24 meeting revolved around [1] Jr. & Sr. High Curriculum, [2] Parental involvement, and [3] Budgets. Caryn Cherpas of SS. Constantine & Helen/Cleveland hosted. Doris Cougras/Campbell and Tina Hericks/Rocky River attended. Minutes were sent to the other NEO parishes. The second meeting was on Saturday, August 16 at Archangel Michael Church in Campbell, OH. Present were Karen Murdock/ St. John Youngstown, Dr. Gus Mavrigian/ St. Nicholas Youngstown, Caryn Cherpas/ SS

Constantine & Helen/Cleveland, and Host Doris Cougras. The discussion revolved around End-of-the-Year Awards (types of and criteria), the weekly schedule, the upcoming workshop with Fr. Marangos, setting up this year's "cluster" vs. Regional workshops, and input on the Orthodox Church Etiquette Guidelines I am compiling. It was suggested that I send out a survey in the Fall related to the topics of the two meetings.



**Rev. Frank Marangos,**  
Director of Religious Education,  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese

**TEACHER TRAINING  
WORKSHOP**

*"Education, Liturgical & Holy  
Traditions"*

**Saturday, September 13, 2003**

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church  
Community Center**

3223 Atlantic Street, Warren, OH 44483

To Register or for more information call:  
330-394-9021. There is no Registration  
Fee.

**Session I: *The Liturgical Tradition  
of the Orthodox Church***

*(Coffee served)*

**Session II: *Holy Tradition: The Life  
of the Holy Spirit in the Church***

*(Lunch served)*

**Session III: *Holy Tradition: The  
Divine Revelation***

## NEW RESOURCES

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

***The Purple Mantle An Historical Novel*** by Aliko Kafetzopoulou, \$12.00 Light & Life, Conciliar Press

**Icon Puzzles - *Daniel & the Lion's Den, The Old Testament Trinity, The Theotokos and Christ Child, and the Three Youths in the Furnace.*** Puzzles range from 56 to 12 pieces; prices from \$11.95 to \$13.95. Check out a Light & Life catalog.

**From OCEC:** *The Way, The Truth and The Life* Textbook for grades 8-12. (See below.)

### **From Conciliar Press:**

1. *The Monk Who Grew Prayer* by Clair Brandenburg, \$9.95
2. *Mwangi: A young African Boy's Journey of Faith* by Rene Ritsi, Illustrated by Cameron Thorpe, \$17.95
3. *Daniel and the Lion* by Claire Brandenburg, \$8.95

*The Twelve Great Feasts for Children Series* by Sister Elayne & Bonnie Gillis, \$5.95 each

4. *The Annunciation*
5. *The Nativity of the Theotokos*
6. *The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple*

**From Ellinas Multimedia: Saints Posters** with the Saint's image and details about the saint's life. St. Demetrios, St. George, St. Nicholas, Archangel Michael. \$15.95. Also check a Light & Life catalog.

### **From Pinon Press (non-Orthodox)**

***The Gospel Reloaded: Exploring Spirituality & Faith in the Matrix*** by Chris Seay & Greg Garrett. \$13.99 + SH. If you or your students are into The MATRIX films, this is the book for you. The authors point out the various religious and spiritual aspects of the film –both Christian and non-Christian. I've read the first half that deals with the first film. I want to see the *Matrix Reloaded* before I read the second part. Pinon Press, PO Box 35007, Colorado Spring, CO 80935, 800-366-7788.

**The presentations made at the 2003 Summer Institute – "Offering Orthodoxy to**

**Contemporary America"** on August 7-10 at Holy Cross Seminary will be placed online. Check <http://goarch.org/en/archdiocese/departments/religious/>



## SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD –

### **What Do The Scriptures Tell Us?**

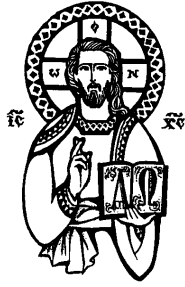
Use this Bible Study in the classroom or at home as a Family Activity. The Old Testament readings tell of the coming of the Messiah; the New Testament readings point to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

## ODDS & ENDS

1. Check out [www.phyllisonest.com](http://www.phyllisonest.com) for ***Christmas Programs***. If you have any to share, email them to me.
2. Don't forget about ***the Orthodox Prison Ministry Christmas Card Project***. The Spring 2003 Newsletter has details. Support OCPM by purchasing Icon Prayer Cards, Mounted Icons, and Icon Note Cards. Check out <http://www.antiochian.org/ocpm>.
3. ***Advent Articles & Family Activities on the Website:***
  - *Get Started Now! Make a Family Orthodox Advent Calendar*
  - *Advent, The Coming of the Lord*
  - *Families Can Enjoy an Advent Alphabet!*
  - *An Advent Activity: Decorating the Tree with a Christian Message*

## RESOURCES FOR TEACHING JR & SR HIGH CLASSES

In 2000 Dr. Nick Gerassimakos and I, along with input from the clergy and church school directors of the Detroit Metropolis, compiled "**Goals & Objectives**" for **Grade 7-12**. (See Spring 2001 Packet online.) To help teachers develop or enhance lessons on the suggested topics, I have compiled & included in this packet a 6-page list of Books, CD-ROM's and Videos that can be used.



**OCEC's - ORTHODOX  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION  
COMMISSION - FIRST  
TEXT OF THE NEW  
CURRICULUM**

***THE WAY, THE TRUTH,  
AND THE LIFE***

According to Carole Buleza, OCEC Curriculum Chairperson, "This program allows us to offer every student a firm knowledge of their Orthodox faith as well as the opportunity to further develop/explore their own spiritual awareness, maturity." ***The Way, The Truth & The Life***, originally prepared as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade review of all that our students **should have been exposed to**, is now being offered for **Grades 8-12**. I was one of the readers for the text and I recommend buying one copy to preview and hopefully use in the Jr & Sr High classes. If our Teens know the info in this book, we can say that they have the basics. Student Book \$19.95; Teacher's \$15.95.

The **2003-2004 Interim Curriculum** has new material that we all can use. I have not seen it yet, but the topics are good.

**Middle School: Four 7-week units**

Refer to the 2003-2004 OCEC Catalog for details.

1. *The First 800 Years* - \$6.00
2. *Orthodox in America* - \$6.00
3. *My Body, My Spirit* - \$6.00
4. *The Work of Salvation* - \$6.00

**2002-2003 Interim Curriculum**

Refer to the 2002-2003 OCEC Catalog for details.

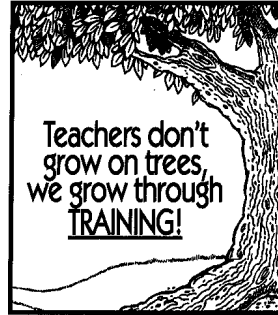
**Middle School: Four 7-week units**

1. *What Would You Do?: Making Your Way in Today's World* (Morality & Ethics Unit) [\$5.00, includes the additional work for the next 2 books]
2. *The Earth is the Lord's* [\$5.00]
3. *God is Calling You* [\$5.00]

**High School: Four 7-week units**

The Teacher's Guide for the 4 books \$6.50

1. *What's Love God to Do With It? Everything*
2. *God is Calling You*
3. *The Earth is the Lord's*
4. *Reaching Out: Our Call to Minister* [\$5.00 each]



**2003-2004  
TEACHER  
TRAINING  
WORKSHOPS**

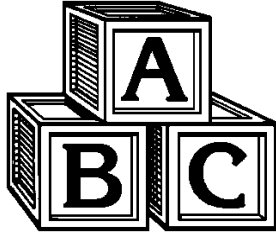
At the suggestion of several of our clergy, and as noted in the Spring 2003 Newsletter,

I will do more Workshops in smaller region this year. The plan calls for a duster of parishes to coordinate the date selection to maximize attendance. In the past one parish in each of the three Regions of the Metropolis hosted a "Regional Workshop" on the best date for that parish. Parishes outside the immediate "cluster"/"Region," but within 1.5 hours can also be invited. Also, if there is a specific topic to be addressed, let me know.

I would ask that the **Clergy and Church School Directors of each of these "Clusters"** confer about the best date for a Workshop and contact me as soon as possible. My calendar will fill up quickly with my Parish responsibilities, and invitations from the other Metropolises and Jurisdictions.

**"Suggested Clusters/Smaller Regions"**

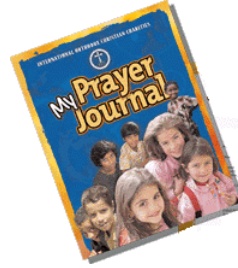
1. Akron, Massillon, Canton – Holy Trinity & St. Haralambos [invite Columbus & Mansfield]
2. Youngstown – St. Nicholas & St. John, Warren, Campbell [invite Erie, New Castle]
3. Cleveland – Annunciation & SS. Con. & Helen, Lorain, N. Royalton, Rocky River [invite Akron]
4. Steubenville, Wheeling, Weirton [invite Martins Ferry, Clarksburg, Morgantown, Canonsburg]
5. Columbus, Mansfield,
6. Charleston, Huntington
7. Canonsburg, Ambridge, Aliquippa, [invite Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Weirton, McKeesport, Clarksburg, Morgantown]
8. Bethlehem, Stroudsburg, Easton, Reading
9. York, Camp Hill, Lancaster, Reading
10. Pittsburgh – Holy Trinity, Holy Cross, St. Nicholas [invite New Kensington & other W. PA parishes]



## ABC's of Teaching Children

- A** *Always* prepare well in *advance* of your class:  
**B** *Believe* God will do a mighty work through you.  
**C** *Care* about each child you are teaching.  
**D** *Dare* to give children the opportunity to receive Christ as Savior.  
**E** *Enjoy* teaching and your pupils.  
**F** *Forget* your problems, anxieties and worries.  
**G** *Get* excited about the lesson you are teaching.  
**H** *Have a heart* for the things of God.  
**I** *Invite* children to come to your class and encourage your pupils to invite others.  
**J** *Judge* not little ones who believe in Jesus.  
**K** *Kid* around a little, in a manner pleasing to God.  
**L** *Love* all your students and tell them you love them.  
**M** *Memorize* Scripture and encourage your pupils to do the same.  
**N** *Never* make fun of a child.  
**O** *Openly* share true-life experiences and tell how God carried you through them.  
**P** *Pray* for each child daily.  
**Q** *Quit* trying to do God's work on your own merit; let God's power work in and through you.  
**R** *Remember* you are a vessel that God is using to glorify Jesus Christ.  
**S** *Sit* down and evaluate your teaching and the learning accomplishments of your pupils.  
**T** *Tell* your Bible story; don't read it.  
**U** *Understand* the backgrounds, personalities, etc., of your students.  
**V** *Visit* the homes of the children you minister to.  
**W** *Wait* on the Lord for the Holy Spirit's working in each of the children's lives.  
**X** *exercise* control of your students and yourself.  
**Y** *You* are you, don't try to be someone else; use your personality in the best way.  
**Z** *Zero* in on your lesson aim, so that the entire class period strengthens the truth of your lesson.

Check my Website for this in an 8.5"x11" size.  
 Reprinted from *the Newsletter of the Commission On Religious Education, Romanian Episcopate of America (OCA), Vol. VII, No. 2, Spring/Summer, 1984, by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div. 2003.*



## NEW FROM IOCC "My Prayer Journal"

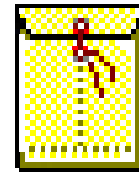
A full-color 12-month journal. Encourages children ages 7 - 12 to pray as they consider the needs of children living in countries where IOCC works. Each month features

a different country. Includes an interactive activity / service project. 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@ioc.org](mailto:relief@ioc.org) / <http://www.ioc.org>.

## 2003-2004 YELLOW PAGES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

An *Index of "My Resources" Section of My Website and Some of My Favorite Websites* are two new pages in this year's YELLOW PAGES. Take time to read through it. Your comments are welcome.

## INCLUDED IN THE FALL 2003 PACKET



- 2003-2004 Yellow Pages for Religious Education
- 2003-2004 Church School Planning Calendar –2 pages [Check Website for (1) the Julian Calendar version & (2) this as a Word document that you can edit for your Church School.]
- How Many Crafts, and Why? – 2 pages
- Church School Reference File – 1 page
- Need Additional Bulletin Board Space? – 1 page
- Postal Service – An Under-used Religious Education Tool – 1 page
- Ideas for Promoting the Church School – 1 page
- Ideas for Recruiting Staff -1 page
- Songs for Younger Students – 1 page
- Scripture Readings for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord – 1 page
- Christmas Lenten Handouts (Can be used as a Family Advent Activity.) – 7 pages

Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.  
 Director of Religious Education,  
 Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
 174 St. Clair Drive, Akron, OH 44307  
 330-376-0629 / [pmonest@neo.rr.com](mailto:pmonest@neo.rr.com)  
[www.phyllisonest.com](http://www.phyllisonest.com)