

A Message from the Archdiocese Director

Dr. Tony Vrame's message from September 9, 2009, came out after the publication of the 2009 Newsletter. He wrote to remind us what we need to do as we begin the new Church School Year. It all applies to this year, too. Take ten minutes to read and reflect on his letter.



Dear Religious Educator:

Another Sunday Church school year is upon us. Getting the year off to a good start is always important, but requires organization and planning.

1. **Organize your classroom space.** Hang the pictures, posters, and other décor to make your classroom space as inviting as possible to the class. The space should say to the class, "This is a good place to be."
2. **Organize your teaching supplies.** Whether you store them in a closet, cupboard, or just a cardboard box, be ready for the first few months with the various supplies you will need.
3. **Pray for each one of your students by name.** This means receiving a class list from the supervisor, learning their names and trying to learn something about each one of them. If appropriate, create an email group to contact the students and their parents, welcoming them to your class.
4. **Map out the year.** Look at the calendar, both for the Church year and for your parish's life and map out the various Sundays, themes for certain times of the year, and the extra programs that your Church school program sponsors, such as a Christmas Pageant, Teacher's Retreats, or Service projects. *Be sure to note that Great Lent begins March 7, 2011 and Easter is April 24. All Christians celebrate it on the same day.*
5. **If you are Facebook user, join the group "Orthodox Christian Religious Educators"** (www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=108487055285&ref=ts) While this listserv is a great tool, it is a one-way conversation. This new group on the social networking site Facebook provides a space where teachers and other interested people can network to share ideas for handing forward the faith. If you not a Facebook member, it's easy to join (and free) and can be a lot of fun to connect with friends and family, share news and photos, and more.
6. **Study.** This year make a commitment learning more about the Orthodox Faith and growing as a teacher. Share that commitment with another teacher and work together. The following books are available from the Department of Religious Education.

For the new teacher:

- ✘ ***Sowing Seeds for Christ*** by Elaine Michaels and Mary Hallick is a great starter book, with straightforward suggestions about classroom management, lesson planning, and methods for the classroom.
- ✘ ***The Sign of the Cross*** by Andreas Andreopoulos explains how making the sign of the cross came about as a gesture of blessing and its meaning to Christians over the centuries.
- ✘ ***Reflections on the Lord's Prayer*** by Daniel Sahas is a "verse by verse" reflection on the prayer given to us by the Lord himself.

For the more advanced teacher:

- ✘ ***Sweeter than Honey: Orthodox Thinking on Dogma and Truth*** by Peter Bouteneff wrestles with the questions on how Orthodox Christians can speak credibly about truth in an age where relativism holds sway.
- ✘ ***The Educating Icon: Teaching Wisdom and Holiness in the Orthodox Way*** by Anton Vrame is a theological exploration of the ministry of education within the life of the Church.
- ✘ ***The Year of Grace of the Lord*** by A Monk of the Eastern Church (Fr Lev Gillet) has become a classic exploration of the liturgical year.

Anton Vrame, Ph.D.