

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Greek Orthodox Diocese of Pittsburgh
Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div., Director
Vol. IX, No. 1, Fall 2002

Please make copies of this Newsletter
for all staff members.

It's August! By now staff positions should be filled, registration should be underway, books should be ordered soon, & supplies should be double-checked. The first day of class will be upon us before we know it. Let us ask the Lord's blessings as we begin another years in the teaching ministry !

As of January 15, 2002 I am also DRE for Annunciation GOC in Akron, Ohio. I'm working on Christian education nearly every day! I'm also moving this month, so please note the new address & phone number at the end of the Newsletter. Your Sister in Christ,
Phyllis

2002-2003 YELLOW PAGES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Fall 2002 Packet includes the updated "*Yellow Pages*." & the *2002-2003 Planning Calendar*. It's filled with a variety of information, including where to buy or find all kinds of "stuff." Each year I add another page or two as well as update the resources available in specific areas. It can be a valuable tool. Make time to familiarize yourself with it.

FALL WORKSHOPS

- September 7 Western Region
Annunciation, Akron, OH
- September 28 Central Region
Holy Trinity, Pittsburgh, PA
- November 2 Eastern Region
Holy Trinity, Camp Hill, PA

October 10-13 Orthodox Institute for Church School & Youth Workers

Sponsored by the Antiochian Archdiocese Christian Education & Youth Ministries Departments, at Antiochian Village, Ligonier, PA. **I URGE each parish to send the Director & as many teachers as they can.** Four tracts with 5 – 6 sessions each will be offered from Friday morning through late afternoon Saturday: (1) Directors, (2) Teacher Training, (3) Orthodoxy, (4) Youth Worker Training. My session is entitled "Remarkable Resources."

Last year's sessions were led by professional educators & clergy from across the country. Some sessions were a presentation plus participant involvement; others were group discussions. I came home with a variety of ideas, made new friends, and felt renewed in my teaching ministry. For more information phone the Antiochian's Department of Christian Education at 717-747-5221 or www.antiochian.org/christianeducation/io2002.htm [Brochure enclosed for Pittsburgh parishes.]

You don't want to miss out on this Institute!

NEWS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2002 Climate Survey: Thank you to the parishes that completed the forms. The Report was distributed at the Clergy-Laity Congress in LA in July. Copies are available from the DRE. The results are used to determine the needs of the parishes, & in turn the direction of the DRE.

High School Curriculum Update

Part of the new curriculum will be piloted this Fall, with the plan to have it available for Fall 2003. The Curriculum Committee has been working diligently. To learn more about the CANA Curriculum log onto www.religiouused.goarch.org And click onto the CANA link.

Parish Church School Staff Lists

The DRE is in the process of updating its computer records. Expect to receive forms asking for the current staff list. **When you receive the form, please complete is ASAP. Before returning it to the DRE, please make me a copy and mail it to me at my new address: 174 St. Clair Dr., Akron, OH 44307.**

The 2002-2003 Catalog includes more resources to enhance the lessons of the curriculum, and a great layout that makes finding resources for specific topics very easy. Make time to check it out thoroughly!

2003 ARC, Volume V: Orthopraxia: The Life of the Orthodox Church will be available in August. Make sure that the Oratorical Festival Chairman has a copy, plus each of your staff members. Previous Climate Surveys indicated a need & desire for adult education at all levels. The ARC was developed for that purpose. Cost: \$5.00 + SH.

PRAXIS Magazine was also developed for the ongoing education of not only Religious Educators, but all Orthodox Christians. Cost: \$15.00 for 4 issues. Make sure that each Church School Staff member receives a copy. The current issue is soon to be mailed out.

Interested in contributing articles to **PRAXIS**? Details will be in the upcoming issue, as well at the PRAXIS link at www.religioused.goarch.org

INTERIM CURRICULA FOR MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

As the DRE for the Diocese, I strongly urge our parishes to utilize the following as our Interim Curriculum. I am deeply concerned with the fact that each parish is "doing its own thing." I realize that this is the consequence of not having a formal Curriculum. Until the new curriculum is available it only makes sense to use existing Orthodox materials that we really have not looked at before.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. What Would You Do? Morality & Ethics Unit (14 weeks)
2. The Earth is the Lord's (5 lessons)
3. God is Calling You (7 lessons)

HIGH SCHOOL

1. What's Love Got to Do with It? Everything! (7 lessons)
2. God is Calling You (7 lessons)
3. The Earth is the Lord's (5 lessons)
4. Reaching Out: Our Call to Minister (7 lessons)

Thanks to the work of Carole Buleza, Curriculum Chairman for the OCEC, we have an interim curriculum for the Middle School & High School classes. For a synopsis of the units (included in the Fall Packet for the churches in the Pittsburgh Diocese) & ordering/price information, check out the 2002-2003 OCEC catalog or call 717-747-5221. I believe that it will also be available on the Antiochian's website in the near future.

www.antiochian.org/christianeducation/

The HS **Basic Lesson Plans** costs \$6.50; the MS **Basic Lesson Plans** (which includes "What Would You Do" Morality & Ethics Unit) \$5.00.



INSIGHTS FROM FR. THEODORE BOBOSH

In different issues of this Newsletter I have shared brief articles written by Fr. Theodore Bobosh, former DRE for the Midwest Diocese of the OCA. The following is taken from his November 2002 publication. It reflects my own beliefs of our Teaching Ministry. I suggest that the article be discussed at your next Staff Meeting.

Does Education = Information?

Charles Melchert in his wonderful book, **WISE TEACHING: BIBLICAL WISDOM & EDUCATION MINISTRY**, challenges Christian educators to look at their ministry as more than simply passing along information. "But historically, pedagogy has long been more about forming character and piety than about gathering knowledge. ... When religion is viewed as transmitting the right answers or correct doctrine, teachers can constrain or even eliminate the spirit of open inquiry that motivates and enlivens education." Though educators indeed are passing along information to their learners, that is not the limit of their ministry. Educators also can strive to create an atmosphere in which their students want to learn. This can be done by encouraging questions, opening hearts and minds of the learners to new perspectives, by revealing the wonders of Mystery in God's revelation.

We would do well to keep in mind that the early rabbinic study of the Torah was called MIDRASH which means "inquiry." The proper way to approach the Word of God was to inquire as to what the Word meant, to seek out its every possible meaning. The approach to the Word of God is best described not as the old wooden catechisms in which you were given both the correct question and the correct answer, but rather in terms of approaching the Living God with wonder and awe to inquire of Him what are the questions we should be asking, and then to seek the evangelical life in the light of those questions.



ORATORICAL FESTIVAL 2003

“Orthopraxia: The Life of the Orthodox Church.” Topics, Speaker Tips, & Bibliography are printed in the 2003 ARC – *Annual Resource Companion*, and will be posted on the Department of Religious Education’s website Error! Bookmark not defined..

Reminder - the general dates for the Festival are:

March: Parish May: Diocesan
April: Regionals June: Archdiocesan

REASONS FOR HAVING THE ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

Irene Cassis, DRE for the Denver Diocese knows what she is talking about. Read the letter she sent to the Clergy & Church School Directors of her Diocese last February. [See Enclosures.]

MORE JOY ORATORICALS....

Holy Cross/Pittsburgh was the first to sponsor a parish “*Joy Oratorical Festival.*” **Assumption/ Erie** and **Holy Trinity/ Pittsburgh** have joined that elite group.

Holy Trinity’s November 2001 monthly newsletter read as follows: “New this year! Our JOY-aged children (8-12 year-olds) will have an exciting new opportunity to learn & share their faith through a new “entry-level” St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. Instead of the various levels (local, regional, diocese, etc.) and the judging that the older children use, the JOY version of this event is designed to be a local event which gives the children an opportunity to learn how to prepare a brief speech on their faith and deliver it in a non-competitive environment. There are four topics for the children to use: My Favorite Saint, My Favorite Bible Passage, My Favorite Prayer, and My Favorite Part of the Divine Liturgy.” A workshop was offered to help the children prepare their talks.

I truly believe that one way to get more Jr. & Sr. High involvement in the Oratorical Festival is to begin with the younger children. A *JOY Oratorical Festival* offers us just that venue. Given the amount of time we have on Sunday mornings, this might best be done within the realm of the JOY program, or as a combined activity with the Church School.

According to Communication Briefings, we forget 40% of a speaker’s message within 20 minutes. We forget 60% after half a day. And after a week, we forget 90%. So even if you get your kids to listen to you, they’ll learn little if you don’t give them opportunities to practice what you’re preaching.

What’s Working in Ministry, Fall 1996, Group Publishing.

REMARKABLE RESOURCES.....

ORTHODOX MYSTERIES: sacraments & worship of the Orthodox Church describes the Orthodox sacraments & worship, feasts & fasting, blessings & prayers, includes line drawings of the church building, vestments, & liturgical actions, & has a glossary! **It’s a great overview of the Orthodox Faith.** I see it being used as a text for the small church school, the basis for catechism for children entering the Orthodox Church along with their parents, & a great end-of-the year gift. (St. Stephen’s Press, Oxford, England, 32 pages, available from Light & Life for \$9.95; Conciliar Press, \$8.95) **ORTHODOX MYSTERIES is this year’s favorite book!**

CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN: *Communicating Our Faith* by Sister Magdalen

Sister Magdalen shares an extensive series of conversations with children for the benefit of parents, friends, catechists, priests, & professional educators interested in communicating the Orthodox Faith to children. 3 chapters - [1] Persons Divine & Human, [2] Handing Down Tradition, [3] Talks to Youth Groups. This is a wonderful companion to her first book, *Children in the Church: an Orthodox Perspective*. We have much to learn from Sister Magdalen. (St. John the Baptist Monastery, Essex, England, 377 pages, \$12.50 from Holy Cross Bookstore)

ORGANIZING & TEACHING IN A CHURCH SCHOOL: *Guide for Priests and Teacher*

has been recommended before. A 52-page booklet offers useful information, particularly for new teachers. It is divided into 6 sections: Thinking about education, Organizing a Church School, Teaching a class, Enriching the program, Remembering the Great Feasts, & Understanding the Child. Although Fr. Thomas Kazich (editor of LITTLE

FALCONS children's magazine & DRE for the Serbian Orthodox New Gracanica Metropolitanate) wrote it for the Serbian Orthodox parishes of America, it has much to offer all catechists. Cost is \$10 @; orders of 5 or more \$5.00 @. Order from Little Falcons, PO Box 371, Grayslake, IL 60030, 817-223-1300.

TEACHING OR WORKING WITH TEENS? CHECK THIS OUT!

"CROSS & QUILL" - An online Teen Magazine for teens & written by teens. Offers lesson and discussion ideas for the Jr. & Sr. High classes or GOYA, &/or be distributed to students to take home to read. Log onto www.antiochian.org, then click onto **CROSS & QUILL**.

COLLEGE STUDENT RESOURCES

The Basil Leaf is the official newsletter of the OCF [Orthodox Christian Fellowship] office, connecting the office and all Orthodox students in the country. It caters to the questions, controversial issues, and activities that college-aged Orthodox youth are exposed to in their daily lives and along their journey of faith. Orthodox Christian Fellowship is the official Campus Ministry effort of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas [SCOBA]. For more information go to www.ocf.net or write to OCF, c/o PO Box 675, Syosset, NY 11791. PASS IT ON.....

GOA's DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES

This is an FYI. Inform whoever is working with the youth groups in your parish that this Department of the Archdiocese has some great new resources. One can also be added to its listserv in order to get the latest info on youth ministry. This includes JOY, GOYA, OCF, Young Adult, & more. Early Childhood Guidelines are due out in the Spring 2003. For more information: 83 Saint Basil Rd., Garrison, NY 10524 / 646-519-6180 /email youthoffice@goarch.org / log onto www.goarch.org, click onto Archdiocese, Departments, Youth & Young Adult Ministries. Pass this website onto college students - www.ocf.net

REMINDERS

LITTLE FALCONS children's magazine continues to be **one of my favorite resources**. The latest issue **"Mary the Mother of God"** is filled with articles, activities, & songs. Each issue has a different

theme. Great resource for small church schools! Every parish should have at least 1 subscription. Subscription rates: \$15 for 4 issues! Bulk rates available. To Order or for more information: Little Falcons, PO Box 371, Grayslake, IL 60030; 847-223-4300; email: Littlefalcons@owc.net

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & FAMILY LIFE CONFERENCES

Parishes or organizations interested in sponsoring a Religious Education Workshop or sessions on Orthodox Parenting and Orthodox Family Life may contact me at the address and phone listed at the end of this Newsletter.

I NEED YOUR HELP! E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Please let me know of email address additions or changes for the **Clergy & Church School Directors of the Diocese of Pittsburgh**. If neither the Priest nor Director has email, identify a staff member with email willing to see to it that the information is disseminated. It's the fastest way to communicate!

DOES YOUR PARISH HAVE A NEW CHURCH SCHOOL DIRECTOR?

If so, please let me know ASAP by phone, mail or email. If you are the previous Director, please be sure that you give this packet to him/her.

ENCLOSURES FOR THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH PARISHES

If you are reading this Newsletter online, each title is either included in this section of the website or available by logging onto the provided link.

- 2002-2003 **YELLOW PAGES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**
- 2002-2003 Planning Calendar
- Brochure for the **ORTHODOX INSTITUTE** www.antiochian.org/christianeducation/oi2002htm
- Synopsis of the **Middle School & High School Interim Curricula 2002** from OCEC www.antiochian.org/christianeducation/
- Irene Cassis' letter about **Oratorical Festival**

NEW ADDRESS & PHONE

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