

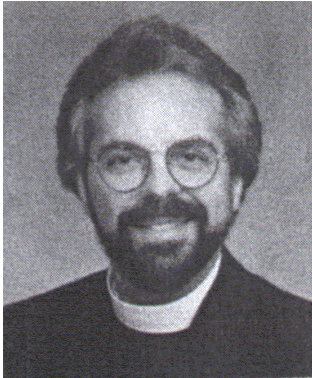
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Greek Orthodox Diocese of Pittsburgh
Vol. VII, No. 1, Fall 2000
Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div., Director

Please make copies of pp.
1-8 for all staff members!

DIOCESAN CONFERENCE

Fr. Frank Marangos, Archdiocese DRE, will be in Pittsburgh on **Saturday, September 16** at **St. Nicholas Cathedral**. Registration and browsing of the many new items in the Diocesan Display begins at 9:00 AM. We'll **begin promptly at 10:00 AM and end at 2:30 PM**. A fee of \$15.00 per person is asked to cover Fr. Frank's travel and accommodation expenses, plus other expenses for the day. It is hoped that each parish will underwrite the registration fees. Detailed information, directions, and a flyer were mailed separately in early August.



If you need a reason to attend, here are eight:

- ✓ Increased knowledge of our Orthodox faith
- ✓ A better understanding of teaching techniques
- ✓ Inspiring our teachers in their ministry of teaching
- ✓ The opportunity to meet other catechists
- ✓ A time to share over lunch
- ✓ Previewing the newest resource materials
- ✓ The opportunity to introduce a future teacher to what is available
- ✓ The opportunity to learn how the parish catechetical program fits into the greater picture of the Diocese and Archdiocese

FOR FASTER COMMUNICATION

Since many individuals and parishes now have Email, I am compiling the email addresses of both Clergy and Church School Directors. As resource materials are located and reviewed, events scheduled or announced, or if there is a need to communicate quickly, I can do so more easily with email. Enclosed is this year's Directory of Parishes, Clergy & Church School Directors. Please submit any updates or corrections to me ASAP. If either the Priest or Director do not have email, identify a staff member with email who would be willing to see to it that the information disseminated.

REQUEST FROM THE DIOCESAN YOUTH COORDINATOR

Vasie-Leigh Chames would like to reach out to more of our children by direct mail for Summer Camp & Retreats. To do this she needs the names & addresses of all the children in our Church School programs in order to update the Youth List in the Diocese computer. Each parish is requested to submit this year's roster to her 5201 Ellsworth Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15232-1421 by September 30.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES FOR EACH GRADE

Over the past several years I have been asked if there is a listing of what a student should know at each grade level. The Archdiocese's "Scope & Sequence" is somewhat overwhelming for a teacher or parent to use. Bishop Nicholas of Detroit requested that Fr. James Bogdan, his Diocesan DRE, compile such a listing, and that I be asked to examine it. Fr. Bogdan conducted a survey among the clergy and church school directors of the Detroit Diocese, compiled the results, and then sent it to me.

Meanwhile, Annunciation Church [Akron, OH] sought to evaluate the parish's curriculum, which is predominately from the Greek Archdiocese coupled with some OCEC materials, because the teachers of the High School class had repeatedly observed gaps in the knowledge of their students.

- ❖ Are the gaps of knowledge built into the curriculum?
- ❖ Did the students' irregular attendance lead to the gaps of knowledge?
- ❖ Are the teachers teaching the curriculum?

The first step was to determine what is in the curriculum at each grade level. The following categories were selected: Church History, Doctrine, Ethics, Feasts, Hymns, Liturgy, Missions, Mysteries/Sacraments & Other Services of the Orthodox Church, Prayers, Saints, Scripture, Service, Spirituality, Tradition, Worship.

It should be noted that at various stages the work was taken to Annunciation's Curriculum Committee for commentary and input. Additional members of the Curriculum Committee: Fr. Jerry Hall, Fr. Michael Monos, Church School Director Elaine Poulos, Georgette Constantinou, Ph.D., Connie Gerassimakis,

MD, Presbytera Helene Hall, Jeanette Moleski-Criswell, DO.

For Preschool through Grade 6, Nick Gerassimakis, Ph.D. and I (1) examined each page of each textbook and teacher's guide of the Greek Archdiocese curriculum, (2) integrated those findings with the Detroit Survey results, and (3) cross-referenced the combined information with the "Living Our Orthodox Faith: Scope & Sequence." *For grades 7-12*, the Detroit Survey results and the results of several brainstorming sessions were cross-referenced against the Scope & Sequence.

The information has also been rearranged by the following topics in order to offer an OVERVIEW: Feastdays, Hymns, Prayers, Mysteries/Sacraments & Other Services, Saints, and Scripture. One can see at a glance (1) in which grade an item is introduced, (2) if a particular item actually appears in the curriculum and (3) how often an item is discussed over the years.

The 40-page document was forwarded to Fr. Bogdan and given to Annunciation's Curriculum Committee and Church School Staff to review and determine (1) what topics need to be added, (2) when they should be added, reviewed, or expanded and (3) list resources for the topics to be presented in Grades 7 & 8 and Grades 9-12.

Annunciation/Akron's Curriculum Committee hopes to develop a "Critical Skills Checklist" for each grade and a "Parents' Packet" for each grade level. We all realize the need to get the parents more involved with the religious education of their children. To that end, developing materials that would encourage and assist them in the task would be beneficial.

[Notes: (a) The Vocabulary section needs to be expanded. (b) Based on the DRE's 2000 Climate Survey, a majority of parishes are satisfied with the existing curriculum for Preschool through Grade 6. Therefore, these materials will not be revised at this point. The DRE will address the need for materials for the Jr. & Sr. High classes first. The work that we are doing now, though, will be valuable when the former is revised, as well as better preparing our students now.]

The Annunciation teachers of Grades 7&8 and Grades 9-12 are developing lessons based on the proposed topics. In speaking with Fr. Bogdan, we agreed to take the document to the Religious Education Workshops at our respective Diocesan Clergy-Laity for additional input and comments.

CLERGY-LAITY 2000

In March each parish received the revised *Religious Education Climate Survey for 1999-2000*. The printed tabulation was distributed to everyone at the Clergy-

Laity Plenary Session. The results were separated by Dioceses and then presented as a comparison among the Dioceses. In the Pittsburgh Diocese, 24 of the 45 parishes that have Church School Programs participated. If your parish did not submit a completed survey, Fr. Marangos can still integrate the information into his presentations this year. Copies of the results can be obtained from the DRE.

Thank you to the following communities for participating: Akron, Campbell, Canton St. Haralambos, Cleveland, Cleveland Hts., Columbus, Martins Ferry, N. Royalton, Rocky River, Youngstown St. John's, Aliquippa, Ambridge, Bethlehem, E. Pittsburgh, Lancaster, Monessen, New Castle, Pittsburgh holy Cross & St. Nicholas, Reading SS. Constantine & Helen, York, Huntington, Weirton. Warren's was received after the deadline.

Foremost among the 12 recommendations that were approved by the Clergy-Laity is (1) the establishment of a long-awaited "committee of Orthodox writers and experts in curriculum design" in order "to develop appropriate **Orthodox catechetical curriculum and resource materials for Teens**," and (2) "The DRE will re-submit the revised by-laws of the national Orthodox Religious Education Teacher Association (DOXA) to the Holy Synod for their approval and adoption." Synodal approval is not only necessary, but it will enhance the organization's success.

The Greek Archdiocese's Interfaith Marriage Ministries has conducted an extensive "Interfaith Marriage Research Project" whose results can be found on the Interfaith Marriage website <http://interfaith.goarch.org>. In addition, there are two Chat Rooms, in one individuals can ask questions pertaining to interfaith marriage issues. During the first 7 weeks after activation, these rooms received over 7000 visitors! The Interfaith Committee session at the Clergy-Laity Congress was probably the best-attended workshop! Project Director Fr. Charles Joanides presented an extensive report that has direct bearing on our catechetical programs.

Two comments have remained with me: [1] Most of non-Orthodox spouses are frustrated with their Orthodox spouses' lack of knowledge about Orthodox Christianity, and [2] The Orthodox spouses did not know the consequences and difficulties of marrying non-Orthodox. Since 2 out of 3 marriages in the Greek Archdiocese are interfaith or intercultural, we must do a better job when we teach about Marriage and we must get our parents to understand the long-term ramifications of religious education, or rather, lack thereof. I encourage all of us to download the information then carefully read it so that we can make intelligent and meaningful additions to our Jr. & Sr. High programs.

REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Even though the Diocesan Conference with Fr. Marangos is the main focus of this year's Teacher Enrichment, I am willing to lead either Regional or Parish Religious Education Workshops. Interested parishes are asked to contact me directly.



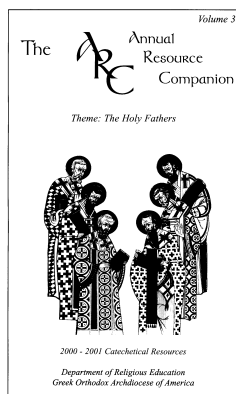
ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

The *Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival Manual* was revised earlier this year. If you do not have the "Revised 2000" edition, contact the DRE for a copy. The *2001 Topics, Speaker Tips & Bibliography* are printed in this year's ARC - Annual Resource Companion. The theme for both the Festival & The ARC is "The Holy Fathers." When scheduling local competitions, don't forget: Parish Festivals in March; Regionals in April; **Diocesan tentatively May 12; and Archdiocesan June 8-10.** If you want to get our students talking about their Faith sooner, consider sponsoring a "JOY Oratorical Festival." The Spring 1999 Packet contained information from Holy Cross Pittsburgh about their 5th Annual Festival.

NEW RESOURCES

2000-2001 "Yellow Pages" has been updated and is included in this Packet. Take time to look carefully at the various resources that are available.

DRE's 2000-2002 Catalog has been available since July. The Department is carrying additional resource materials published by others, including a number of the new resources I have reviewed. Be sure to read it carefully.



The ARC - Annual Resource Companion - The Department of Religious Education has published the third in a series of five resource books entitled "The Holy Fathers," which also includes the 2001 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival Topics & Speaker Tips,

plus a resource bibliography. Cost is \$5.00 plus SH. As part of the ongoing education of our teachers, please be sure that each one receives a copy, then consider discussing one of the articles, perhaps Metropolitan Maximos' "Theology" within the Orthodox Sacred Tradition, at a staff meeting. Included in this packet is Fr. Peter Gillquist's "St. Vincent of Lerins: the Bible Answer Man." I found the article of particular interest and use in dealing with non-Orthodox Christians.

PRAXIS Magazine - Vol. 2, Issues 1 (Old Testament) & 2 (New Testament) have come out since the Spring 2000 Packet. II-1 contains the Oratorical Festival Junior and Senior Division First Place Essays, plus a wonderful article by Dr. Vicki Pappas, "What Our Hymns Can Teach Us." II-2 contains "The Twelve Called and Sent," which includes their names, icon, brief summary, plus the verse in Scripture where each is named. The subscription is \$15.00 per year. Be sure that each teacher receives a copy for his or her ongoing education!

VCS PROGRAMS - "*Living in an Orthodox World*" by Dn. Michael Shanbour was used successfully in Annunciation/Akron this summer. The focus is on centering one's life on the liturgical and personal prayer of the Church. Six of the eight songs from his sing-a-long CD/Audio Cassette by the same name are integrated into the lessons. The program includes the lesson plans, sheet music, cassette, nametags, & certificate. Cost: \$49.95 plus SH. Additional tapes and CD's can be purchased for \$10 and \$15.95, respectively.

ODYSSEY TV - a Henson & Hallmark Entertainment Network - offers some religious programming that may be of interest to us. (As with other non-Orthodox sources, we must do so cautiously.) I missed "Mary, Mother of Jesus" in the spring, but did download the discussion guide that included a section for Orthodox Christians. A 12-part series on "Religions of the World" begins in late August and Discussion Guides can be downloaded from the website www.odysseychannel.com. The Odyssey Newsletter is available by mail or online.

St. Nina's Quarterly, a pan-Orthodox publication dedicated to exploring the ministry of women in the Orthodox Church, begins its 4th year of publication. Subscribers include clergy and laity in over 40 countries around the world! The yearly contribution is \$20. For more information/subscribing: The St. Nina Quarterly, PO Box 397252, Cambridge, MA 02139-7252 or email WOMENUSA@aol.com

CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP SPEAKER

Consider inviting *Anton C. Vrame, Ph.D.* for a parish or regional conference. Dr. Vrame, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Religious Education at Holy Cross, & Lecturer in Christian Education at St. Vladimir's has

been active in the field of religious education for the past decade as a frequent speaker to parishes, scholarly meetings and other gatherings.

His book *The Educating Icon: Teaching Wisdom & Holiness in the Orthodox Way* is ideal for Church School teachers and designers of Christian education programs. It "reflects a truly Orthodox approach to catechesis...that will have universal appeal," say Thomas Groome, Professor of Theology & Education of Boston College.

Workshop titles include: "The Educating Community," "Seeing is Believing – Icons & Other Images," "Service Learning," "Bringing Faith to Life & Life to Faith" (on teaching), "Informing, Forming, & Transforming through Catechesis." I have seen and heard Dr. Vrame at the Archdiocese's Religious Education Institute (Summer 1999) and shared his workshop notes on "Becoming Doers of the Word" at last year's Regional Workshops. He can be reached at 50 Goddard Ave. Brookline, MA 02445; 617-850-1231; tony_vrame@hchc.edu

NEW WEBSITES

Southwest Institute for Orthodox Studies – Want to know more about cults and the New Age Movement? How about from an Orthodox Christian point-of-view? Then check out <http://www.orthodoxstudies.org>. SIOS - a pan-Orthodox ministry - exists to help Orthodox Christians identify the beliefs and practices of cults and alternative religions, and to effectively evangelize the members of such groups. It is currently developing articles, booklets, and other resources analyzing cults and alternative religions from an Orthodox Christian perspective. The materials are designed to provide Orthodox clergy and laity with a quick, easy-to-understand overview of the history, beliefs and practices of these groups, as well as the Orthodox response to the groups.

Other materials include: [1] ***Orthodox Perspectives*** are two-page overviews of cults and alternative religions that give a quick understanding of many new religious groups. [2] The ***Faiths in Focus*** series is an objective, non-confrontational overview - history, beliefs, and practices - of other Christian churches and denominations to be used as a source of information for the education and discernment of Orthodox Christians. [3] ***Articles*** and ***Professional Papers*** about cults and alternative religions for a wide array of publications. The website include articles written for other publications

The founder of Southwest Institute for Orthodox Studies - Jason J. Barker - was reared as a Jehovah's Witness and gained extensive experience in working with Evangelical Protestant ministries that specialize in outreach to cults and alternative religions, prior to his conversion to Orthodox Christianity. I met Jason at a

Lenten workshop sponsored by the Akron Orthodox Clergy Association. His presentations would be excellent for Clergy, Youth Workers, Church School Teachers, Parents, and other interested Orthodox Christians, including our teens and young adults. He can be reached at PO Box 150733 Arlington, TX 76015 / 817-419-8769 / jbarker@orthodoxstudies.org Enclosed is Orthodox Perspectives on The New Age Movement.

The Greek Archdiocese Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries maintains a website <http://www.goarch.org/goa/departments/youth> that contains youth resources that could be used in church school programs, including lives of saints, and listserver (automated mailing list). The website also links to the Orthodox Church in America's Youth Page <http://www.oca.org/OCA/youth-page> and the OCA's Kid's Page <http://www.oca.org/OCA/kids-page>. With so many of our young people surfing the Internet, let's direct them to these pages.

Prosphora - Everything you've probably ever wanted to know about Prosphora can be found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~aquaro/>

My website will be updated by September 1. Check <http://home.neo.rr.com/pmonest> for Christmas plays, previously published articles, past Newsletters and Packet Inserts, the latest "Yellow Pages" of Resources for Orthodox Catechists, and more.

US Consumer Information Catalog - the work of the GSA, Government Supply Agency -is now online at <http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov>. Examples of material in the Children's Section include "Learning Disabilities" that explains the differences between learning problems and disabilities and more, "Parents' Guide to the Internet," "Timeless Classics" a list of 400 children's books. In the Health section, the information in "What to do when a Friend is Depressed" could be used with the teen class and for teacher education. These are also available for purchase at a nominal fee. Catalogs are available from 888-878-3256.

VIDEOS

Substance Abuse: Our Kids are not Immune is the first in a series of six Orthodox videos designed to address concerns facing Orthodox young people. The video looks at the situation and offers ways to combat the temptations of peer pressure via Jesus Christ and His Church. It features theological, scriptural and patristic references, as well as contemporary statistics and resources. There is a special section for parents and youth workers and a resource book with information on retreats, articles on youth culture, and more. Cost is \$35 plus SH. Call 212-570-3561 or on the Internet at www.godenverdiocese.org. I was able to preview

sections of the video at the Clergy-Laity Congress in Philadelphia. It has lots to offer whether used with the youth group or in the classroom.

Decades of Faith: The Greek Orthodox Church in America was first shown at this year's Clergy-Laity Congress in Philadelphia. Produced by GOTELECOM, it is available from them for \$25. The video takes us back in time to the first Greek Orthodox who came to the USA and brings us to the present. It includes video footage from episcopal ordinations and other special events, plus photographs of the early Archbishops, special events, well-known media people, and more, integrated with the current events of each decade. A great resource when discussing the history of Orthodox Christianity on this continent.

Do You Wanna Dance – I read about this movie in The Hellenic Chronicle and wrote the producer asking for a copy for the Diocese's Display. Bob Krantz of Ellinas Multimedia Productions was kind enough to send me a copy. Do You Wanna Dance is about a young man who, through the efforts of the parish priest, ends up doing 500 hours of community service at St. Basil's Greek Orthodox Church in Chicago. The film was entertaining (I laughed a lot), touching (there's a love interest & illness), and shows the good that one person can do. I would have liked to see the priest presented in a better light. If it were used at a GOYA meeting or in a classroom, the facilitator would need to deal with this issue. Has anyone used it?

Bob Krantz also phoned to tell me about his newest venture: 4 30-minute ***Video Documentaries on the lives of Saints Nicholas, Katherine, George and Basil***. Each video integrates the interviews of clergy, iconographers and scholars to give us a fuller picture of each saint.

MUSIC

Living in the Orthodox World written by Dn. Michael Shanbrot, a member of Kerygma, includes 8 sing-a-long tapes and CD's cost \$10 and \$15.95, respectively. Samples of the songs can be heard and orders placed at <http://www.stmaryschurch.com> or from the DRE or Conciliar Press.

EIKONA has come out with The Akathist and The Paraklesis: The Mother of Light on CD's and cassettes. These would be quite useful when we teach about these two services in our classes, as background music during a quiet time, while awaiting students arrival before class begins, in the car or at home to prepare for the service or as a means of bringing the Church into the car/home, etc. Each Church School Program should have at least one of each in the resource cabinet for teachers' use. EIKONA is also working on a Paraklesis hymnal. Cassettes are available from Light & Life for \$11.00 each.

Fr. Seraphim Dedes, Superior of St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Perrysville-Hayesville, OH, has produced the following books to assist the faithful in learning to sing our Orthodox hymns in the traditional byzantine melodies. Texts & Cassettes \$12.50@. CD's \$15.00@ Shipping charge is \$2.50 for the first item, \$1.00 for each additional item. Cash and Checks accepted. Order by mail, telephone or email from St. Gregory Palamas Monastery 934 C.R. #2256, Perrysville, OH 44864/ 419-368-5335 / Email: palamas@bright.net. Check out the Monastery's website for additional texts <http://www.bright.net/~palamas/CyberPsalti>

Texts

1. ***Services to the Most-Holy Theotokos, Vol. I: Small and Great Supplicatory Canons, Feast of the Dormition.*** English Translation (according to the meter of the original Greek).
2. ***Services to the Most-Holy Theotokos, Vol. II: Akathist Hymn (The Salutations), Feast of the Annunciation.*** English Translation according to the meter of the original Greek).
3. ***A Small Octoechos (Parakletike): Weekday Vespers.*** English Translation according to the meter of the original Greek).

Music In Byzantine Notation

4. ***Sunday Matins Music, Vol. IX: The Eleven Resurrectional (Eothina) Exapostilaria, Theotokia & Doxastica.*** English Translation (according to the meter of the original Greek). Byzantine Notation. (See below for Cassette & CD.)
5. ***Dormition of the Theotokos, Hymns for Vespers and Matins.*** English Translation (see above), Byzantine Notation.

Music In Western Notation

6. ***Dormition of the Theotokos, Great Vespers.*** English Translation (see above), Western Notation.
7. ***Small Supplicatory Canon (Small Paraklesis).*** English Translation (see above), Western Notation.
8. ***Original Melodies (Automela): Part I-Stichera of Vespers & the Praises, Part II-Apolytikia, Kathismata & Kontakia.*** English Translation (according to the meter of the original Greek), Western Notation.
9. ***The Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos.*** English Translation (see above), Western Notation. (See below for Cassette.)

Audio Recordings

10. ***The Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos.*** English Translation. Cassette Tape. (See above for text and music)
11. ***Sunday Matins Music, Vol. IX: The Eleven Resurrectional (Eothina) Exapostilaria, Theotokia & Doxastica.*** English Translation. Cassette and CD. (See above for text and music.)

RESOURCES FOR TEENS

Videos that Teach is a guidebook packed with 75 teachable film moments that address biblical topics that range from abuse to false gods to worry. The films listed are many that our young people will have seen, from "Dead Man Walking" to "The Princess Bride," both of which are available online for your examination. The Contents include a "Quick Clip Locator" by topic and by Bible reference, plus the list of the movies in alphabetical order. Each movie clip is given a starting and stopping point, both by time index and text, plus discussion questions to ask after the clip is done. Using film clips is one way to grab our students' attention and hopefully to get them to think critically about what they see at the movies in light of the Christian faith. \$12.99 plus SH, Youth Specialties. [Non-Orthodox source.]

Family Research Council, a conservative Christian organization, has a few materials useful to our purposes. In particular are the "Save Sex" (versus Safe Sex) posters (\$6 each), brochures/flyers (\$1.50 each), T-shirts (\$10 each) that can be incorporated into a unit on sexuality and abstinence. FRC also sells the 10 Commandment book covers (10 for \$3). Some of these can be viewed on FRC's website at <http://www.frc.org> [Non-Orthodox source.]

The Medical Institute for Sexual Health - MISH - publishes a variety of materials to "promote healthier choices." The Abstinence Because brochure can be incorporated into a unit on sexuality and abstinence. Cost is \$24 for 100, \$13 for 50, \$7.50 for 25. Contact MISH for an order form of their materials. A sample was sent in the Spring 1999 Packet. [Non-Orthodox source.]

Junior High Psalms & Proverbs Talksheets is available from Youth Specialties for \$12.99 plus SH. Like the Junior High and Senior High Talksheets, the Psalms & Proverbs Talksheets are to be used as discussion starters. Examples of topics: "When Things Go Wrong" (Trusting God) Psalm 3; "Follow the Leader" (Following Christ) Psalm 23; "Down & Out" (Helping the needy) Psalm 82; "And Then He Said..." (Gossip) Proverbs 17. Until the curriculum for grades 7-12 is begun and completed, we need to develop lessons that will help our teens in their daily lives and broaden their understanding of the Orthodox Faith. Consider using the Talksheet series when planning lessons on specific topics. [Non-Orthodox source. Many of the ideas and discussion starters can be adapted for our use.]

NEW BOOKS

Personalities Who Shaped the Church by Peter Kallelis, contains the lives, troparia, and study questions for five Church Fathers: St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, & St. Gregory of Nazianzus. A number of years ago these were originally

printed as separate books. Check your parish's Church School resources. It is listed in the bibliography for the Oratorical Festival. Available from the DRE, \$6.00.

Another resource book for the Oratorical Festival is *Lives of the Great Fathers of the Church* by Archbishop Lazar Puhalo. (This is Vol. 7 of The Lives of the Saints for young People.) Designed as an introduction to the Church Fathers and as a text for intermediate level students, the 28 saints' lives and accompanying line icons are arranged in general chronological order from the 1st -19th centuries. OrthodoxBooks.com \$7.00

Encyclopedia of Major Saints & Fathers of the Orthodox Church by Basil Eleftheriou (\$10.95 Light & Life Publishing) includes the lives of 100 major saints most of whom were canonized prior to the 10th century, the lives of 44 early Church Fathers and philosophers and their theological contributions, and a brief description of the seven Ecumenical Councils and their decisions. Written in a simple language.

Reaching for the Fruits: Helping Children to Grow Spiritually by Angeline Eliakopoulos (\$11.99 Light & Life) The 8 chapters in this book can be used as the basis for discussion and 6 plays for class dramatization for children ages 6-12. A Teacher's Section provides guidance for discussion.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A Child's Paradise of Saints by Nun Nectaria McLees, illustrated by Elena Stefaraova (\$9.50, Christ the Saviour Brotherhood Publishing) includes the lives of 15 saints, plus original watercolor drawings in iconographic style. The stories are in a warm and informal style, suitable for reading aloud, very useful in the classroom setting or at home. This is one of my two favorite books of the year.

The other one is *A Visual Catechism of the Orthodox Church* by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlahos. (\$16.00, hardback, St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite Publication Society) Metropolitan Hierotheos wrote this book of "basic truths of the Orthodox Faith... for small children, for those coming to be baptized, and for adults whom it may help to consolidate what they know." 58 beautifully illustrated themes are given a fuller analysis in the second part of the book. It lends itself well to families preparing to enter the Orthodox Church, to classroom use, to parents who wish to reinforce what is taught in our catechetical programs, and to godparents and grandparents looking for the perfect gift.

A Special Gift to God is about Spyro and his grandmother making prosfora/altar bread in memory of his grandfather. Written by Iakovina Theodore, it has been recently reprinted by Light & Life Publishing. \$12.95

Esther's Easter Dress by Katherine Kafarakis, the story of a 3rd-grader's experience of Holy Week, covers the scriptural & liturgical significance of each day of Holy Week, as well as Holy Week customs & traditions practiced by Greek Orthodox people everywhere. \$8.95 from Light & Life Publishing.

St. Vladimir's Seminary Press has donated to the Diocesan display 5 recently published children's books that include texts taken from the Scriptures and Church hymns and original illustrations.

The Story of Mary the Mother of God by Dorrie Papademetriou (\$13.95) describes the early life of Mary and is based on the Apocryphal Gospel of St. James.

Celebrate the Earth by Dorrie Papademetriou (\$13.95) is a retelling of Psalm 104:10-25, a poetic description of the first two chapters of Genesis, includes biblical and patristic quotations on the creation.

The Praises, Psalm 148 illustrated by Niko Chocheli (\$16.95) combines iconographic and contemporary art to put the words of the psalm into picture.

Prepare O Bethlehem! The Feast of the Nativity illustrated by Niko Chocheli (\$16.95) combines iconographic and contemporary art to put the words of the hymns and scriptures into picture.

The Book of Jonah illustrated by Niko Chocheli (\$13.95) uses black & white mixed with colorful drawings to make the story of Jonah come alive. Some of the drawings may frighten little children.

ADULT STUDIES

Johanna Manley, author of *The Bible & the Holy Fathers for Orthodox* which I highly recommended, in conjunction with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church of Belmont, California, has developed a new Orthodox Adult Bible Study entitled *TREASURY OF BLESSINGS SERIES* (Pericope Press). Sample lessons are available at <http://www.best.com/~jmanley/job/> Each lesson consists of a set of questions for preliminary exploration and discussion of the subject, followed by explanatory notes. Order from St. Vladimir's. The first three volumes are:

- (1) *The Book of Isaiah as Taught by the Holy Fathers* (\$15.00): 170 pages, 26 lessons, chronology, maps & Index of Selected Subjects. The Holy Fathers' explanations are excerpted, edited and simplified from Isaiah Through the Ages.
- (2) *The Book of Job as Taught by the Church and the Holy Fathers* (\$12.00): 92 pages, 11 lessons, Index of Subjects of Contents, & Lesson Concordance. The Holy Fathers' explanations are excerpted, edited and

simplified from Wisdom, Let us Attend: Job, the Fathers & the Old Testament.

- (3) *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (\$12.00): 94 pages, 13 lessons with liturgical links and Old Testament references.

Philokalia: the Bible of Orthodox Spirituality – Addressing Orthodox Spirituality to the Average Lay Person by Fr. Anthony Coniaris (\$15.95, Light & Life) is divided into two parts: "Introducing the Spiritual Life" and "Orthodox Spirituality According to the Philokalia." It addresses the relevance today of the subjects covered by the fathers of the Philokalia in a practical manner for the average person.

REMINDERS

In case you've forgotten or are a new director or teacher, the following are offered as a review. Each is listed in the enclosed "Yellow Pages."

Orthodox Family Life – a parish ministry to families – begins its 6th year of publication. This quarterly journal is an excellent way to "reach out" to parents, and to provide ongoing adult education at all levels.

Little Falcons Magazine begins its 5th year of publication. This year's themes include Door, Way, Seed, Salt. Subscription is \$15.00 for 4 issues. Back issues are \$5.00 each and cover the following topics: (I) Candles, Incense, The Cross, Bells, (II) Oil, Water, Bread, Wine, (III) Icons, The Gospel, Vestments, The Church, (IV) The Holy Trinity, Canons, Thanksgiving, God's Kingdom. Not only does a subscription make a wonderful gift, but also each issue can be used in the classroom for enrichment and reinforcement. Smaller church schools can develop units based on each theme that the entire group would study, then provide age-appropriate activities.

Children's Ministry Magazine – continues to be an excellent source of ideas for teaching children from Preschool through Grade 6, including games, crafts, seasonal lesson ideas, handouts for teachers and parents, and more. [Non-Orthodox source. Many good ideas that can be adapted for Orthodox use.]

Plugged In Magazine published by Focus on the Family offers reviews of TV programs, video games, contemporary music, and current trends among adolescents. [Even though it is a non-Orthodox source, more often than not, we agree on what is wholesome, moral, as well as that which is vulgar, crude, violent, sexist, racist, and un-Christian.]

Scouting Awards for Orthodox Christian Scouts – Do you have any scouts in your parish? Make sure that they complete their Religion Awards. It's a great way to reinforce the Orthodox Faith.

Charities & Missions

Project Mexico – The staff at Project Mexico has prepared the *Give Christ a Home* Lesson Plans & Fund-Raiser Notebook. The notebook contains three lessons at three levels, handouts, photographs, maps, posters, and games. The program was initially developed to be used during the Nativity Fast. The fundraiser is based on a program I initiated when I was a parish church school director. During the Lenten season, a wall in the Church School vicinity is transformed into an outside wall of one of the homes Project Mexico builds. Students/parishioners purchase stucco pieces, window pieces and door pieces for specific amounts of money, write their names on them (if you so choose), then attach them to the house outline like a giant puzzle. The students/parish will see the house being built before them.

Orthodox Christian Mission Center – The staff of OCMC has developed two lesson plans entitled “Early History of Missions in the Orthodox Church” and “Orthodox Missions around the World: India, Tanzania & Albania.” These were sent together with the coin boxes last Paschal Lent to participating parishes. If you did not receive them then, or did not utilize the lessons then, consider using them this year.

International Orthodox Christian Charities – The IOCC staff developed one lesson for two levels entitled “What Can One Person Do?” The lessons can be downloaded from IOCC’s website or requested by phone or mail. Don’t forget about “Souper Bowl Sunday”! This easy project can be done year-after-year. Students collect one canned good for a local charity and \$1.00 from each parishioner for IOCC on “Super Bowl Sunday” in January. Check the IOCC website for more information.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“TEACHING CHURCH SCHOOL”

by Protodeacon Rodney Torbic

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The church school teacher has an opportunity to help many in the parish community. The teacher has access to teaching materials that shed light on various aspects of Orthodoxy. Meetings with the priest and other teachers enhance the resources and knowledge base of the teacher. Taking time to prepare each week for classes and being in the classroom week after week requires the teacher to sharpen his or her own insights.

The give and take of classroom discussion and the inquiring minds of students challenge a teacher to examine his or her own assumptions and require adequate preparation for each class session. The hunger of students to learn and the desire of the teacher to teach are a solid formula for success. Teaching Orthodox Christianity is food for life. The committed teacher will

be impacted by the content and through the years will experience personal growth. Students learning in the classroom will not only accumulate knowledge, but will incorporate into their lives the lessons of the classroom.

Being an Orthodox Christian teacher necessitates living a life in the Church. Educators who remain part of the church school staff for decades make lasting contributions. Students benefit from the years of the teacher’s experience and the love of teaching which becomes obvious. The church school teacher comes to the classroom to fill a parish need and to honor the call of employing his or her talents for the benefit of the parish community. The words of St. Paul serve as a joyful reminder: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them...” (Romans 12: 6)

Classroom time is precious and must be used wisely. Throughout the year, the teacher must be vigilant in evaluating ways to make the most of the classroom experience.

Prayer is an integral part of the life of the successful church school teacher. Students sense the love of Christ that emanates from the teacher’s demeanor. Parishes are extremely fortunate when there is one or more stalwart teachers who have given decades to the building up of the church school and the parish community. The impact goes well beyond the weekly classroom time.

At the Service of Prayer when Children Begin Their Instruction, prayers are offered for the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the enlightenment of minds, the expelling from the heart of youthful turbulence, and for a virtuous life. (Hapgood, p.520) These prayers establish expectations and stress the importance of the church school undertaking.

The church school teacher is constantly challenged by the expectations of God’s calling to a life in the classroom. We are blessed to have teachers who by God’s grace meet the challenge.

ENCLOSURES

- ❖ *Change of Director* form
- ❖ *2000-2001 Planning Calendar*
- ❖ *“St. Vincent of Lerins: the Bible Answer Man” by Fr. Peter Gillquist* (Taken from The ARC III: Holy Fathers.)
- ❖ *Orthodox Perspectives: The New Age Movement*
- ❖ *2000-2001 “Yellow Pages” of Resources*
- ❖ *2000-2001 Directory of Diocesan Parishes, Clergy & Church School Directors*

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