

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco



METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO



The Catechist

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His Eminence Metropolitan
Gerasimos of San Francisco



Enthronement April 2, 2005

Annual Catechist Training Workshop & Retreat

One of the main focuses of the Religious Education Ministry of our Metropolis is to provide regular opportunities for the development of the volunteer staff who are responsible for Christian Formation at the parish level. To this end we sponsor an annual metropolis-wide Workshop and Retreat, the last three of which have been held at the St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center in Dunlap, Calif. Each year

we have invited a well-known expert in the field of religious education to present both technical advice on how to be more effective in the classroom, as well as providing greater theological awareness of the curriculum material. The opportunity to gather with other like-minded Orthodox Christians and share experiences and ideas has become an invaluable aspect of our annual meetings.

The 2006 Metropolis Religious Educators' Workshop & Retreat

A Birds-Eye View of the Metropolis Religious Education Ministry



By Dr. Paraskevè (Eve) Tibbs
Religious Education
Coordinator, Greek Orthodox
Metropolis of San Francisco

Greetings to my fellow workers in the Holy Metropolis of San Francisco. Like most of you, (if not all of you!) it has been a busy year for me personally. Glory to God, it has also been a productive year for the Religious Education Ministry of our Metropolis. Our Religious Educators Resource Website continues to grow and de-

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The Annual SF Metropolis Catechists' Retreat and Workshop, at St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center, October 2006. Keynote Presenter was Dr. Anton Vrame with the Theme: "Teaching Without Words: Taste and See that the Lord is Good"



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A Report on the Ministry of Religious Education

prepared for His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco
and the delegates to the 2007 Clergy Laity Congress of the Metropolis of San Francisco
by Paraskeve (Eve) Tibbs, Ph.D., Ministry Chair

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos, Reverend Clergy, and Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Since my appointment in early 2001 to the Chair of the Religious Education Ministry for the San Francisco Diocese, I have been thankful for the opportunity to offer my humble work to our Lord and His Church. In general, there are three primary functions of this position: *liaison*, *resource* and *facilitator*, (which are described more fully on page 4.)

Areas of Emphasis for the Religious Education Ministry in 2007:

There are two primary areas of emphasis that should continually be given priority in any discussion about Religious Education in our current age and situation.

A. Children must be fully included in the Eucharistic action of the community. Everything that takes place in the classroom, no matter how beautiful and beneficial (even discussion *about* worship) is nonetheless secondary to the actual praxis of our Faith in the sacramental action of the *entire* worshipping community. Nurturing our children in love, to attain personal faith in Jesus Christ, with full participation in the liturgical life of our Faith is the true Orthodox Way.

B. Religious Education is a continual process, and is necessary for everyone in the community. The training of adults in the Orthodox Christian Faith cannot be neglected, though it often is. All Christian learning, regardless of age, is a process of interaction and growth in understanding from one spiritual level of development to another, and although childhood is a foundational period in life, children are not the only proper objects of religious education. Our challenge is to continue to grow and improve youth religious education programs, while increasing the emphasis on adult religious education programs.

The Growing Challenges of our world:

Not surprisingly, we have seen a drop-off in the attendance at our annual seminars for very understandable reasons: time, money, family commitments and the increasingly-daunting challenges of air and highway travel. To this end, I am exploring new ways to connect us. Internet and email have certainly been helpful, but I believe it's time to consider bolder ways to provide both information and inter-connection between those who are called to the ministry of Christian Education in their parishes. This year, I would like to explore the possibility of offering a remote Seminar (called a "Webinar") where the Topic, Day and Time are advertised in advance (just like a regular seminar) but the location will be any computer with a fast internet connection.

This could be a Church hall, with a big-screen setup, or one's own home or office computer. The Webinar attendees log on, and are visible by name and location at the Webinar. During the scheduled time, the speaker/presenter can be heard by everyone, and the presentation graphics will be visible onscreen to everyone. Each attendee can enter questions for the speaker at any time, and during the chat session following the presentation, the attendees can ask questions of one another, or exchange contact information for future discussions. The costs of a "Webinar" are dependent upon the provider, length, number of participants and type of features desired. For example, for a one-time use, Web-Ex charges .33 per person per minute. For a 75 minute seminar and 200 attendees, the cost would be approximately \$5000—about \$25 per person. (I believe with additional research, the price might be substantially reduced from this figure.) One scenario I am considering would be to host an annual Webinar on a broad theological topic (not just for Religious Educators) and moving to *less-frequent* in-person Metropolis-wide Religious Education Seminars, and *more-frequent* Regional teacher training events.

Budgetary Issues:

At the February 2006 Clergy Laity meeting, the Metropolitan Council granted this ministry's request for a budget of \$6000 to: 1) cover production and mailing expenses for an annual print newsletter of an informational and educational nature; and 2) cover the cost of attendee materials and speaker fees for annual workshop/retreat weekend; and 3) defray the room and board expense to encourage increased participation at annual workshops. Each of these activities took place during 2006.

This year we will again prepare a Metropolis-wide Newsletter, but will primarily use electronic means to distribute the majority of copies, therefore substantially reducing the costs. The costs of maintaining our website are relatively minor. For 2007, I would like to request a repeat of the budget of the previous year of **\$6,000** for the purpose of: 1) annual newsletter production/distribution and 2) either wholly sponsoring or defraying the cost of one (or more) Religious Education "Webinars" in order to provide information to a much wider base of people called to serve in our parishes.

Respectfully and humbly submitted,

Eve Tibbs

Paraskevè (Eve) Tibbs
Coordinator, Religious Education Ministry
Metropolis of San Francisco



Town Hall Meetings with New Archdiocesan D.R.E. Director of Religious Education

Two southern California churches recently each hosted a Town Hall Meeting with Dr. Anton Vrame, who as of January 1, 2007, is the new Director of the Department of Religious Education for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The Topic for the evenings was: "Effective Christian Education: Challenges and Opportunities." The two events took place on Monday, January 8th at St. Nicholas Church in Northridge for Los Angeles County, and on Tuesday, January 9th at St. Paul's Church in Irvine for Orange County. The attendees included volunteer religious educators and concerned parents.

Author of the book, *The Educating Icon*, and most recently serving as the Director of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Ca, Dr. Vrame brings a practical approach to the topics that affect the Orthodox Christian life in general. Those in attendance heard his concerns and views on curriculum and program development, as well as his perspective on the entire Church as "educator" - not just a select few designated as "teachers". Since the purpose of the town hall meeting was for Dr. Vrame to begin to assess the Religious Education climate in our Archdio-



Dr. Anton Vrame

cese, the discussion was two-way as comments and questions from those in attendance helped to set the direction of the Forum. Dr. Vrame prepared those in attendance to also expect a full-scale written survey early this year. The next Town Hall Forum with Dr. Vrame will take place January 22 at St. John the Baptist Church in Las Vegas, NV.

*Visit the
San Francisco
Metropolis
Religious
Education
Website!*

www.sf.goarch.org/religious

*You'll find great ideas
from other teachers
and many curriculum
resources, in addition
to upcoming teacher
training events in
your area.*

*Every parish Reli-
gious Education
representative should
visit the site to
register as a parish
contact person.*

A Birds-eye View of Religious Education in the Metropolis

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velop and we produced an eight-page full-color Newsletter for the 2006 Archdiocesan Clergy-Laity Congress in Nashville, which highlighted religious education events, ideas, and photographs from parishes across the San Francisco Metropolis. (also available online at our website). Our Metropolis-wide Catechists Workshop & Retreat took place in October, 2006, and two "Town Hall Meetings" with the new

Director of the Archdiocesan D.R.E. have been held already in 2007, with more scheduled to take place in our metropolis (see above). Regional Religious Educator Seminars have already been scheduled for Fall 2007 in both southern California and the Bay Area.

Most Church Schools in our Metropolis are holding classes apart from the primary worship of the community in the Divine Liturgy. Some parishes are exploring alternative days

for catechetical classes, with the majority of churches holding classes after Holy Communion.

Communicating directly with the individual parish volunteers continues to be a challenge for me as archdiocese lists are incomplete and usually also outdated since Church school volunteers in many parishes change frequently. We have established a link from our website where a parish representative can set up

and maintain contact information for that parish, and it has met with partial success.

Email has become the primary means of communication, and to that end, it would be most helpful if **each parish Priest could arrange for one (or more) religious education contact person(s) to register as a representative of your parish by email to: ReligiousEd@sanfran.goarch.org or by telephone (Eve Tibbs) at 714 692-3325.**



LOCAL SPOTLIGHT



(Left) His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco tonsuring the Acolytes of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, San Jose, together with the prayers of their Proistamenos, Father John Asimacopoulos.

(Right) Children of St. Katherine's Greek Orthodox Church, Redondo Beach, CA gather around their pastor, Fr. Michael Courey, as he teaches about the *Proskomide* Service of Preparation.



(Left) Commencement 2006 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Portland OR with Fr. Jerry Markopoulos and Proistamenos Fr. Paul Schroeder at right.

The Role of the Metropolis Religious Education Coordinator: Liaison, Resource & Facilitator

Liaison: As a liaison between the Metropolis of San Francisco and the Archdiocesan Department of Religious Education, the Coordinator represents the Metropolis to the Archdiocese at large, and brings back the vision and work of the Archdiocesan DRE to the Metropolis. This has been an active, participatory role, which involves authoring of articles, lesson plans, curriculum materials, committee participation and attendance at planning meetings and seminars, and making formal presentations.

Resource: As a resource and contact person for teachers and parish Church school directors in the San Francisco Metropolis, the Coordinator is responsible for disseminating information about religious education activities throughout our metropolis. Calls and emails are often received from parish coordinators in the Metropolis looking for advice for curriculum materials, program ideas, etc. The Coordinator also visits churches (upon invitation) and has made presentations at various parish and regional seminars in the metropolis.

Facilitator: It is a primary goal of the religious education ministry to provide opportunities for the formal education and training in the Orthodox Faith of religious education volunteers (catechists) as well as technical training in the area of teaching techniques, classroom management, etc. To this end, an annual metropolitan seminar is offered, and regional seminars (planned and hosted by local parishes) are encouraged and supported.