

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

*Read the Encyclical of His Eminence
Blessing the Religious Education Year
on page three.*



**How Can We
Revitalize our
Religious Education
Programs?**

By Dr. Paraskevè (Eve)
Tibbs

Religious Education Coordinator,

How Can We Revitalize our Religious Education Programs? This is an important question – and a deceptively vague one as well. When the term "religious education" is mentioned, it is most often assumed that the discussion is

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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 at the St. Nicholas Ranch and

Retreat Center in Dunlap, Calif. Each year we invite 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 ("Revitalize" - continued from page 2)

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Last Year's Metropolis Religious Educators' Workshop & Retreat



The Annual SF Metropolis Catechists' Retreat and Workshop, at St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center, March 2005. Keynote Presenter was Fr. Frank Marangos with the Theme: Holiness: Living It - Teaching It

*(Annual Workshop—continued from page 1)*

riculum material. Additionally, 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 next Workshop/Retreat is rapidly approaching on Friday, **October 13 through Sunday, October 14, 2006.** **Dr. Anton Vrame**, Director of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute at the Berkeley Theological Union will be this year's Keynote Presenter. The theme will be: "Teaching without words: Taste and See that the Lord is Good." We hope that each parish in the metropolis is able to send at least one representative. We hope to see many of you at the Ranch this coming October!

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco
Annual Religious Educators'
Seminar & Retreat

October
13 & 14
2006
 (optional Sunday stay)

Save the
Date

St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center

Featuring Keynote Presenter & Seminar Leader:
Dr. Anton Vrame, Director,
 Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, Berkeley, CA

**Theme: "Teaching without Words: Taste
 and See that the Lord is Good"**

*Visit our Metropolis Religious
 Education Website!*

www.sf.goarch.org/religioused

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

("Revitalize" - continued from page 1)

about children. But Christian education is about a lifelong transformation, not just one stage of life. Although childhood is a foundational period in life, children are not the only proper objects of Christian education. All Christian learning, regardless of age, is a process of interaction and growth in understanding from one spiritual level of development to another. Unfortunately, what has been forgotten in the day-to-day living out of this fact is the most important aspect of religious education: the Adult. I would like to propose that many of the practical issues of our youth education programs – not to mention many of our parish management issues – would be benefited by a re-emphasis on the adult as learner.

Why direct our attention to adults? The late Dr. John Boojamra, who headed the Antiochian Department of Religious Education for many years reminded us that "Christianity is a religion of adults – presented in adult categories, speaking to the needs of adults through their life-experiences." We know that all the catechumens were adults, and their instruction was more "formational" than "informational". In a similar way, St. John Chrysostom tells us that children were educated by parents largely from modeling than by formal instruction. Until just the last generation or so, this was exactly the case - all formal educational efforts were

directed at adults, and children were left in the hands of the parents.



There are two ways to grow or learn as a Christian. One way is Mystagogy, in which the Holy Spirit teaches

mystically through participation in the community's liturgical life, and the other is Formal Catechesis. What have we done? We have typically limited mystagogy to adults, and formal catechesis to children. Both exclusions are un-Orthodox. Children need to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit in worship – by participating in the worshipping community of the Body of Christ, and adults need to continue to make efforts to grow in Faith by education and continual re-commitment.

Another imbalance is the emphasis we give to certain "teachers" who are assumed to be the select few given the task of learning about the Faith. St. Gregory Nazianzus writes that "there is no boundary line between the giving and receiving of instruction" in the Church. The entire Church – in community - is the educator. In the correct expression, each Christian person is really a learner. Both teacher and learner are mem-

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Blessing Encyclical of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco to the Catechists and Students of the Holy Metropolis of San Francisco



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

To the Directors, Teachers, and Students of the Parish Sunday Schools, Greek Schools, and Parochial Schools of the Metropolis of San Francisco:

I am writing to offer my blessings upon the Sunday School, Greek School, and Parochial School programs of our Holy Metropolis as we begin the new school year together. I pray that God may grant wisdom and discernment to the directors and teachers, and willingness to learn to the students, so that this year may truly be a time of spiritual growth and development for all.

In our Orthodox tradition, the greatest example of a teacher is St. Paul the Apostle, who says to his spiritual children of the Church of Thessalonica, "So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own selves." This is truly what it means to be a teacher: to offer one's own self, to give unstintingly and without reserve for the benefit of one's students. And it is St. Timothy, Paul's apprentice, who is the great example of what a student should be. As Paul says to Timothy, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him." Students, this is what a good teacher expects from you: that you do your very best, always offering your utmost efforts to the task of learning, knowing that God sees your heart's desire and intent.

I pray that God may pour out His grace richly upon all of you throughout the coming year, so that you may grow in your knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a Greek Orthodox Christian. With my prayers and best wishes for a wonderful year, I remain:

With Love in the Lord,

+ *Metropolitan Gerasimos*

Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco

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Summer Fun, Fellowship & Faith!

My name is Despina M. Kreatsoulas and I am the director at Annunciation in Sacramento. We just finished our Summer Day Camp and the theme was Helping Hands. The entire week, the children learned how to help in their homes, community and church. Here are some quick notes of things we did: We made get well cards that will be sent to children's hospitals; we received donations and made 30 IOCC Heart to Heart Kits; we learned hymns of our church and how to make prosphoro which was used in a "Learning Liturgy" for the kids; during the Liturgy, the children read all the prayers and were the "choir"; and we used the idea of the "Kindess Tree", each time the children performed an act of kindness, helped someone, prayed for someone, etc., their tree

bloomed. I have included some photos for you. What was really great about the camp was we had two students from Hellenic College (one is from our community, Stephanie Lewis) run the camp and we had our junior high and high school students as assistant teachers, and by keeping these older children involved and giving them an important role in the community (as the assistant teachers), they develop a stronger bond to their community and a desire to keep involved. It was fantastic for these younger children to see their older peers so actively involved in the church and the camp, they all want to be "camp leaders" now when they grow up!



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-Despina M. Kreatsoulas



Photos from Summer Day Camp at the Annunciation Church, Sacramento



Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Long Beach, CA

Presents ...

Summer Christian Olympics

I'm An Orthodox Christian



Please join us for:
learning, crafts, games,
fellowship & more!

ages 3-12

August 21, 22 & 23

9:30 a.m. ~ 12:30 p.m.



New Education Complex in Irvine, Calif.

January 8, 2006 was a joyful long-anticipated day for the parish of St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine, California. It was the blessing and opening of their new 32,000 square foot Educational Complex, including the nearly 3000 square foot library named in honor of founding pastor, Fr. George Stephanides, of blessed memory. One of the distinctives of this building is the overwhelming presence of the heavenly Cloud of Witnesses. Gracing the plaza are beautiful mosaic icons of Saints Leonidas, Olga and Irene, and the playground with an icon of Saint Hannah. Each of the 22 classrooms has also been dedicated to a Saint, with a large

hand-painted icon bearing a laser-engraved Scripture passage, or intercessory prayer request from the donating family. There are also nearly 100 icons along the corridors donated by families and friends of St. Paul's parish. On opening day, donors to the "Honoring the Saints" fundraising program followed Prois-tamenos, Father Steven Tschlis, Father Simon Thomas, and Father Thomas Avramis out of the church sanctuary, each carrying a framed copy of the icon that had been installed in the building. The rest of the congregation followed and participated in the Service of Blessing outside of the new complex. The

180 children of St. Paul's Church School program then processed into their new classrooms for the first time, and were blessed with Holy Water by the Reverend Clergy as the new classrooms themselves were being blessed. The adults waiting patiently outside were blessed next, and the doors were opened for the first time to hundreds of admirers. After the period of touring the large complex, a celebratory luncheon followed. Sadly, architect Sam Grillias never saw his beautiful design come to fruition. He passed away after an illness only weeks after the building was opened. The plan of the parish is to start an Orthodox preschool & elementary school in the near future.



Presvytera Elaine Stephanides cutting the ribbon of the Fr. George Stephanides Library



L.: Fr. Steven Tschlis blessing the children in their new classroom



R.: 11th & 12th Grade Class of Dorothea Love and John Britigan in their new classroom.



Local Spotlight

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Portland, Oregon

At Holy Trinity, we have the most excellent teachers. Not only are they dedicated, but they have a way of connecting with our youth. Each teacher is unique in their teaching style. They utilize our Archdiocese's materials to the fullest extent, and add their own touch of crafts or in the higher grades discussions of contemporary moral issues that our youth really do enjoy. Every Sunday, our school is packed with eager children. From grades Preschool through High School, our classrooms are packed. The real magic is that the youth are so bright and challenge the teachers with issues and questions that are very timely. They love the discussion and debate.

Kathryn Harris

Co-Director of Holy Trinity Sunday School



Fr. Paul Schroeder, Proistamenos

This year Holy Trinity also held a Holy Friday Retreat for the HOPE and JOY groups. We had over 55 children participate. The retreat consisted of Orthodox Life lessons with the Fathers, Lenten liturgical music lessons, and crafts. (see photos)



Kelly Thorsell, parish choir director teaching retreat participants



Co-retreat coordinators, Athena Paskill, (also HOPE Advisor) and Christina Geist look on during a lesson.

St John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Las Vegas, Nevada

The religious Education program takes care of the Pennies for Prayers program. Each class takes turns collecting on Sunday's and this year, we raised over \$700.00. During Lent, we do our "Lenten Talks". Each class picks a subject, we research it, and we going in front of everyone, to discuss of topic.

We also, have "Teen Talks" with Father John. We meet for 4 weeks (6th-highschool) and discuss different topics with Father John.

For our Christmas Program, we did a play about different saints, including St. Barbara. All of the students get involved with either singing, acting or building props. Then the play is performed in our hall for everyone to see.

- Eileen Koutsulis

St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church Elk Grove, California

Saint Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in Elk Grove, California hosted a series of three educational workshops for Orthodox religious educators in their region on November 5, 2005, January 7, 2005, and February 5, 2005. These workshops were designed to provide teachers with a methodology for creating and teaching effective lesson plans and were facilitated by parishioners Kathy Walkowich and Tracy Sittig, both educators in the public school system.

If your parish or region has news to share or events to promote, please send an email to etibbs@adelphia.net for posting on our home page (www.sf.goarch.org/religious) and our Newsletter.



How can we Revitalize our Religious Education Program *(continued from page 2)*

bers of the Church; both share the same sacraments and life. All persons are equally important to the Body of Christ – the Church – whether adult or child; clergy or lay person.

parishes. For example, teacher recruitment and youth religious education will immediately benefit by better-informed adults who are living out the Faith as role models, not

just information providers. And this concept will extend into choirs and chanters who understand the theo-

legs, pastorally supporting one another, and reaching out into the community, rather than relying solely on the Priest to do all the "religious" work. The entire community would ultimately be positively impacted by adult Christians who understand the Christian Gospel and who share it and live it out within the community of Faith of the Orthodox Church.

Our challenge therefore, is to continue to grow and improve youth religious education programs, while increasing the emphasis on adult religious education programs. One of the first ways this can begin to be accomplished is that there should be regular and frequent opportunities for the training of lay catechists of our youth – not merely in the practical teaching techniques – but at the level of the Christian formation of the teacher as a learner of the Faith. Suggestions include Bible studies and reading groups for catechists, and every teacher meeting could include a short spiri-

tual/educational component. Another important first step would be to offer regular, formal classes on Orthodoxy for both current adult parishioners and for catechumens.

Thankfully, the curriculum resources for adult Christian education are now plentiful. Unfortunately, the human resources are not so plentiful, and there are just so many hours in the day of a busy Priest. But as adults in the parishes become better informed about the Faith, and as their commitment to Christ deepens, there would emerge those laypersons who could assist the Reverend Clergy in teaching and supporting the religious formation of other adults, as well as youth. This is undeniably not an instant solution to revitalize our religious education programs, but is nevertheless the patristic model for Christian education, and a sound model even today, towards which I believe it would benefit us to direct our efforts.



By no means am I suggesting we abandon the child and forget their formal catechetical education, but that we take a new look – with ancient eyes – to the proper way to "educate" a Christian within the parish community. By inspiring all adults to become active learners, and active participants in their own Faith communities, I believe the benefits will extend far into many of the current "problem areas" of many

logical as well as musical beauty of what they sing, and a parish council which appreciates the correct "ministry" of Christian leadership in its intended application; a Philoptochos which understands and embodies the biblical admonition of humble *diakonia*; acolytes who experience awe in their service with the Cherubim and Seraphim at the altar, and a parish family which becomes Christ's arms and

WORD OF THE WEEK

A glimpse at a special program from Mari-Faye Karambelas, Sunday School co-Director Holy Trinity, Portland, OR



Do you know exactly what the word "Hosanna!" means? How

about Dynamis!" or "Alleluia!"

Yes, you hear them every Sunday during the Divine Liturgy, but can you honestly say that you literally know what they mean and why they're significant? Your Sunday School children understand these vital words and more! In fact, in these first 10 weeks of Sunday School, your children have learned, if not reinforced, 10 new Liturgy vocabulary words!

Deacon David Cole graciously compiled for our students and teachers, *A List*

of Special Greek and Foreign Words Used in the Services of the Greek Orthodox Church. It is from this list that the entire student body is given a WORD OF THE WEEK. A culminating list of these words is displayed in every classroom and reviewed each week, thus encouraging retention.

You as parents and significant adult figures, play an important role in your children's Church education. Support your child's development by showing interest in what they've

learned in class each week. Ask them about their new WORD OF THE WEEK, and ask them to teach you what it really means. Not only may you learn something, but you may also share in an "Aha!" moment during the Church service!

And by the way... "Hosanna!" means "Please Save Us!" (It's a Hebrew word of praise and hope sung to God by all His faithful.) And the others? Ask the kids!

Christian Education: Nurturing the Faith by Father Steven Tsichlis

From its beginning, the Christian community has perceived the purpose of its educational efforts as the promoting of a lived Christian faith. Christian faith as a lived reality has 3 essential dimensions: it is first, a belief and a conviction; second, a trusting relationship with God our Father through Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit; and third, a life of self-giving love.

First, faith as belief and conviction: at the celebration of the Liturgy, when we are invited to profess our faith in the common recitation of the Creed, we begin by saying "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty..." even though it would be equally appropriate to say "I commit myself to one God, the Father Almighty..." or even better, "I trust in one God, the father Almighty..." Our faith as believers is certainly more than mere "belief" especially when that word is reduced to nothing more than an intellectual assent to certain propositions or statements. Bishop Kallistos Ware, in his book *The Orthodox Way*, writes that "Christianity is more than a theory about the universe, more than teachings written down on paper. It is a path along which we journey - in the deepest and richest sense, a way of life. As Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow said, the Creed does not belong to you unless you have lived it." So, while our faith implies this intellectual dimension, it is - in the end - much, much more than that.

Second, faith as trusting: the English word "faith" comes from the Latin word "fidere" meaning "to trust." At its very root, having faith means trusting in the living God. This dimension of trust is the fruit of our relationship with God our Father who has saved us in His Son Jesus Christ and given us the gift of the Holy Spirit. This trust is nurtured in personal prayer, community worship, the disciplines necessary for living a Spirit-filled life and obedience to the will of God. It finds concrete expression in our loyalty, love and attachment to Christ and His body, the Church. Because the Lord God is faithful to us, we can commit ourselves to Him in confidence and with complete trust. His faithfulness to us has been expressed in the life, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our response to this love is trust, awe, reverence, gratitude, love and adoration. Are we - and our children - being shaped by these values?



Sunday of Orthodoxy, 2006 St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, Seattle, WA

Third, faith as the living of a life of self-giving love. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus explains that simply professing "Lord, Lord" is not sufficient for admission into the Kingdom of God. The will of God must also be done (Matthew 7:21). Christian faith, as a response to the commitment of God towards us, must include the doing of His will. Faith and love can be distinguished in the Christian life but cannot be separated. Of course, as sinful and broken human beings, we often know what is good, right and true but don't actually do it. But a genuine and deeply lived Christian faith demands not only that we know what is good, right and true but that we do it, as well. To put it in another way, the faith is in the doing. In the biblical understanding of what it means to know the Lord, there is an entering into a trusting relationship with the Lord and there is a doing of God's will. Or, as James, the apostle and brother of the Lord put it, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Thus, a genuine, lived faith has at least 3 essential components: believing, trusting and doing. Does your faith include these 3 dimensions and if so, how deeply? Does the faith that you are transmitting to your children at home have these 3 dimensions? These are important questions to ask and to answer. As we pray for our children each year during the service of blessing that opens each new year: May the Lord open their minds and hearts to turn from what is evil and seek what is good that they may live wise and virtuous lives and grow in their understanding of the true faith!

Fr. Steven Tsichlis is Pastor of St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine, California