



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION Report to the 45th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress September 9-10, 2020 (Virtual Event)

Archdiocese Council Committee on Religious Education: His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios, Presiding Hierarchy; Mr. Gerry Clonaris, Chair; Rev. Dr. Alkiviadis Calivas; Dr. John Colis; Mrs. Fotini Economides; Mr. Jim Gabriel, Mrs. Polaxeni Maouris Hillier, Dr. Anthony Limberakis; Rev. Fr. Paul Palesty; Mr. Peter Papadakos.

Department Staff: V. Rev. Archimandrite Anton C. Vrame, Ph.D., Director; Anestis Jordanoglou, Office Manager; Maria Tiches Klonaris, Customer Service, Webstore Administrator; Angeliki Constantine, Educational Ministry Specialist (furloughed); Sarah Parro, Project Coordinator, Managing Editor, *PRAXIS* (furloughed).

In addition: Mrs. Kathy Orfanakos Demacopoulos, National Chair, St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. Special thanks to Mrs. Elaine Kakis for serving as Co-Chair for 2019 and 2020.

OVERVIEW

The Department works to create new and revise older resources that serve the religious education ministries of our parishes. Communicating the work of the Department is a central focus and activity. Through the use of print and mail, electronic and social media, the Department works to reach a larger audience. For example, the Department Facebook group has nearly 6000 members, with nearly 2/3 of them actively using the group. A listserv post from the Director reaches about 3000 individuals. A strong area of growth for our work is with individuals.

The Department continually seeks out the best prices and new vendors to produce resources at the lowest costs, while still maintaining a high quality. Orthodox Marketplace, the Archdiocese on-line store, handles the work of most Archdiocese departments in addition to making other items that supplement parish ministry available.

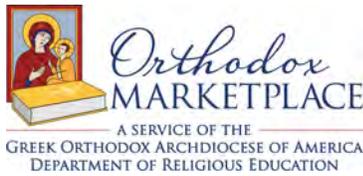
CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE



In response to the Coronavirus Pandemic and the stay at home guidelines, the Department quickly began to develop a weekly “Religious Education at Home” webpage. This page contained lesson ideas and activities for preschoolers to adult learners. Every staff member offered contributions, from resources that could be purchased on Orthodox Marketplace to trying out various craft ideas for younger learners to make sure that someone at home would be able to manage them. There were eight installments beginning March 20, for the Third Sunday of Great Lent and ending on May 22, for the Sunday of the Blind Man. The page was on the Archdiocese website, and the link was posted on three Facebook sites (Orthodox Christian Religious Educators, GOA Department of Religious Education, and the Orthodox Covid-19 Network). In addition the link was shared via the Director’s blog posts.

The Department participated in a videoconference organized by the Department of Outreach and Evangelism on March 26, “Keeping our Members Connected to the Church and their Faith.” For Holy Week, the Director collaborated with the Center for Family Care and Youth and Young Adult Ministries for a “Be the Bee” episode on experiencing Holy Week at home. The Department coordinated a videoconference with the Department of Outreach and Evangelism on May 20, “Keeping the Summer Connection Active,” which dealt with ways to honor graduates and teachers, and how to approach summer programs, such as Vacation Church School, through on-line platforms. This last conference became the basis of a new webpage from the Department.

Looking ahead, for the rest of 2020, the Department intends to continue to blog and use the listserv with ways for parishes to hold religious education and youth ministry programs in a virtual world. We also hope to offer online workshops for teachers as well as offer suggestions for using the existing resources in a virtual world.



ORTHODOX MARKETPLACE

To report that 2019-2020 was a challenging time for Orthodox Marketplace is an understatement. From September 2019 to February 2020 the store was off-line due to a catastrophic technological failure at the Archdiocese. During the offline time, all functions of the Marketplace were done manually. Orthodox Marketplace was not fully on-line until late February 2020. Then, the Department had to “catch up:” meaning every transaction recorded manually during this period was entered into the accounting software and processed for payment, etc. Second, with the Coronavirus pandemic, sales on the site slowed dramatically. While we are still gauging the effect, 2020 sales may have dropped around 50% from the year before. Third, the departure of two staff members by the end of 2019 meant that all functions of Orthodox Marketplace, from customer service, sales order processing, to mailing of invoices were now handled by only two people. At this moment, the environment that hosts the store is being replaced with new equipment at the Archdiocese.

For comparison purposes, Orthodox Marketplace had \$536,517 gross sales in 2018, \$408,477 in 2019 (functioning only nine months), and \$126,626 in 2020 by June 30. We believe, perhaps optimistically, that 2020 gross sales will reach \$200,000.

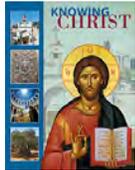
In early 2019, the Department purchased software to create a new online store with greater capabilities than the present store. But, we were unable to work on it due to the technological problems that began later that year. We intend to resume this project. The Department has made a proposal for a less expensive shipping arrangement.

The Department fully participated in the financial audit of the Archdiocese, including the physical inventory of products. In February 2020, the Department began working with the Finance Office more closely on developing processes for expenditures. The Finance Office since then has taken over the accounts payable of the Department. In May 2020 the Department and the Finance Office began developing new financial control procedures, dealing with purchasing, inventory management, accounts receivable, and accounts payable. As of this writing, these are not complete. The transition to these new procedures will take some time.

WORKS IN PROGRESS OR RECENTLY COMPLETED

The 2020-2021 Planner

While some work had begun on this edition of the Planner, in light of the pandemic and the cost-control measures that Departments were asked to implement, we decided not to publish this edition.



Knowing Christ Teachers Guide

The Teachers Guide for this junior high resource is complete. As of this writing, it is waiting to go to press. Per Archdiocese directions about cost-saving measures, we have taken this project to a “press-ready” state.

Growing With God – Grade 4 Teachers Guide

The Teachers Guide is complete. As of this writing, it is waiting to go to press. Per Archdiocese directions about cost-saving measures, we have taken this project to a “press-ready” state.



The Church: We Are One in Christ Teachers Guide

The Teachers Guide for this high school resource is complete. As of this writing, it is waiting to go to press. Per Archdiocese directions about cost-saving measures, we have taken this project to a “press-ready” state.



The Divine Liturgy Illustrated

This a new edition of an older and very popular work, first published in 1976, last revised in 1984. Now it reflects the 2015 translation of the Divine Liturgy and includes other items for the young user. We have also used the new illustrations to create a coloring book. As of this writing, these two books are waiting to go to press. Per Archdiocese directions about cost-saving measures, we have taken this project to a “press-ready” state.

LOOKING AHEAD

Adult Religious Education

There is a great need to enhance adult religious education work in our parishes. The Department would like to develop resources and ministry guidelines, possibly programs themselves, for adult religious education.

The following are new publishing projects for the end of 2020 and beyond.

Journey through Marriage

The marriage preparation program materials are being revised for publication in September 2020. There are three resources: the couples' workbook, the facilitators' guide (which will be available electronically only) and the PowerPoint deck (electronically). The Department has taken over this project from the Center for Family Care.

Spiritual Wisdom of Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos

This book, containing lessons from Bishop Gerasimos (Papadopoulos) of Abydos is intended to be ready for a symposium scheduled at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, now re-scheduled for October 2021. This project is being undertaken as a first step towards broadening the scope of what the Department publishes, including books for a popular audience.

Holy Week Gospel and Sunday Gospel Book

With a grant from Leadership 100, the Department is preparing two new Gospel books for use in parishes, the kind that are placed on the altars and read by clergy in services. The first will contain the readings for Holy Week, from Saturday of Lazarus to the Agape Vespers. The second will contain the Sunday readings and major feasts and sacraments. The Legal Counsel of the Archdiocese has worked with the Director of DRE to obtain the necessary licensing for the English text of the New Testament. Artwork for the interior and cover has been obtained. This project is being undertaken as a first step towards broadening the scope of what the Department publishes, including some needed liturgical books.

2021-2022 Planner, 2022-2023 Planner

We intend to resume publishing the Planner in the summer of 2021 and 2022. This desk calendar is still very popular, selling over 1000 copies each year.

Second and Third Grade Resources

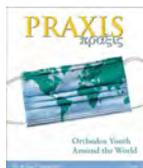
We are working to create materials for third grade and second grade Sunday school classes. Grade 3 is titled, *Sharing God's World*, Grade 2 is titled *Loving God*. These pieces are major updates of the textbooks with the same titles. The intent is not to create textbooks, but a set of worksheets covering the same topics.

Junior High School and High School Resources

The Earth is the Lord's (working title). This will be a zine on the Orthodoxy and ecological awareness.

Lord, Teach Us to Pray (working title). This will be a zine on prayer.

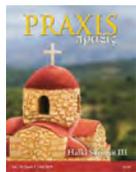
PRAXIS



The Spring 2020 (19:3) issue of *PRAXIS* focused on “Orthodox Youth Around the World” as a contribution to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s call that 2020 be a “Year of Spiritual Renewal and Concern for the Youth.” As a cost-cutting measure, this particular issue was not printed and mailed, but delivered via email.

The Fall 2020 issue will contain articles written by the Directors of the Ministries of the Archdiocese (Family Care, Y2AM, Religious Education, Communications, Internet Ministries,

Outreach and Evangelism, and Stewardship, et al.) with a focus on the Coronavirus pandemic, what we are learning, how these ministries may change, etc. Going into 2021, we intend to include articles on the history of the Archdiocese, as we prepare to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of its establishment.



Since the last Clergy Laity Congress, *PRAXIS* has published the following issues:

- Vol. 18:1 – Fall 2018 – Digital Media
- Vol. 18:2 – Winter 2019 – The Clergy Family
- Vol. 18:3 – Spring 2019 – Parish Vitality
- Vol. 19: 1 – Fall 2019 – Halki Summit III (Environment)
- Vol. 19:2 – Winter 2020 – Freedom from Isolation

With the Communications Department, we have begun to explore the possibility of taking *PRAXIS* online. Currently, back issues are available on-line. Creating an on-line magazine will require greater technological support than presently exist.

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL



The 2019 Archdiocese St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival was hosted by the Direct Archdiocese District and the Archangel Michael Church in Port Washington, NY.

In 2020, in light of the pandemic and the stay at home guidelines, the Department began regular discussions with the Metropolis Coordinators to determine if the program might continue virtually. An outline and timeline was developed and shared, but after much discussion (in early April), the Coordinators and the Department concurred that continuing the program was just asking too much of families, parishes, etc. So, whatever remained of the program at that moment was cancelled.

The Department worked with Legal Counsel George Tsougarakis and Maria Andriotis to reach out to the hotel in Loveland, Colorado for cancelling the Archdiocese Festival, which was done. As of this writing, the intent is to return to the Metropolis of Denver in June 2021, at the St. Spyridon Church in Loveland for the Archdiocese Festival. For 2022, the Metropolis of New Jersey will be the host.

Increasing participation in the Festival is always an ongoing matter. In 2019, 207 parishes registered their Festivals with the Department, about 40%. The Direct Archdiocese District, 18; Atlanta, 43; Boston, 22; Chicago, 29; Denver 17; Detroit, 18; New Jersey, 29; Pittsburgh, 14; San Francisco, 17. The number of speakers ranges from year to year between 650 and 750 across the Archdiocese.

The Archbishop has approved the 2021 topics, which are traditionally released around September 1, 2020. The Department intends to develop contingency plans for the Festival should in-person events continue to be restricted. While parishes may be able to hold their Festivals, the District and Metropolis level festivals, as well as the Archdiocese Festival may be affected. We hope that by the Spring 2021, when these events would occur, in-person gatherings, travel without quarantines, etc., will be possible.