

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America 39th Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress July 2008

Anton C. Vrame, Ph.D., Director

Mission

The purpose of the Department of Religious Education (DRE) is to serve the parishes and metropolises of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America by providing materials and services that will advance their programs of religious education. The Department also serves individuals, organizations, military bases, ecumenical groups, and overseas parishes with catechetical resources that advance the spiritual admonition to "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

OVERVIEW

At the 2006 Clergy-Laity Congress, Rev. Dr. Frank Marangos was the Acting Director of the Department. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios appointed Dr. Anton C. Vrame as Director of the Department, effective January 1, 2007. Dr. Vrame promoted Mr. Anestis Jordanoglou to the position of Office Administrator on March 1, 2007, replacing Presv. Haidee Marangos who had left the Department with Fr. Frank. On August 1, 2007, the Department added a Curriculum Specialist, Mrs. Aimee Cox Ehrs.

Effective Christian Education: Challenges and Opportunities

Building upon the earlier Religious Education Climate Studies, the Department launched a study of Effective Christian Education in February 2007. Two Metropolises were selected to pilot the study: Detroit because of its geographic diversity and San Francisco for its growth rate. The study had two goals:

- To obtain a comprehensive picture of the *actual stance*, of the scope and the format of Christian education programs and activities.
- To identify major challenges and problems in the area of parish-based Christian education and to suggest ways to address them.

A nine-page survey was sent to the Sunday Church School supervisors in all parishes in the two Metropolises, requesting responses from the supervisor and three teachers. The Department hired the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute to design the study and process the data.

A 58-page report contains the results, which was distributed to the Archbishop, the Members of the Holy Synod, and the Metropolis Religious Education Coordinators. In late 2008, the Department intends to extend the study into two or three additional Metropolises.

The study provided some very interesting and serious results. A few positive elements:

- Teachers are enthusiastic about their ministry.
- Careful planning and administration of parish programs is taking place in many places.
- A welcoming atmosphere of learning exists in many programs.

On the negative side:

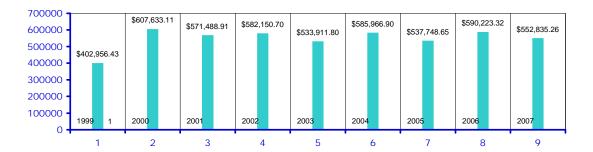
- Other than Bible Studies, there are virtually no organized adult religious education programs in our parishes.
- Only 32% of teachers believed that their parish "expects people to think and to learn."
- As many as 80% of respondents report that they do not use the Internet, computers, or television/VCR/DVD in their parish religious education programs.

In addition, reviewing this study we might say that our parishes do an adequate job teaching the Orthodox faith to children. They have great difficulties in reaching out to teenagers. There are very few attempts to educate adults. Our parishes invest very little of their financial resources in education programs.

Sales/Inventory/Year-End Procedures

The Department's gross revenues average \$550,000 per year. We have seen a drop in sales in the last two years. There are at least three possible reasons: 1) The production of new resources by the Department was interrupted by the transition to a new Director; 2) The availability of religious education resources – especially supplemental works - from other sources, e.g., Orthodox Marketplace, the Orthodox Christian Education Commission; 3) When the Department does not distribute catalogs to parishes, sales drop.





Annually, the Department staff conducts a complete physical inventory. At the end of 2007, the value was \$716,480. All financial modules for Inventory, Accounts Receivable, and Accounts Payable have been closed for the year 2006 and 2007. The Department's Statement of Activity and Balance Sheet are at the end of this report.

New Resource Catalog (2008-2009)

A new resource catalog with more than 600 resources has been published and distributed at this Congress. It will be mailed to more than 17,000 clergy, Church school directors/teachers, and individuals on the DRE mailing list. The Department is looking into producing an annual catalog. This would enhance the Department's ability to market new items.

The Department is in discussion with Orthodox Marketplace to have all Department resources available in their online store. We are discussing how to combine the strengths of the Department in customer service, management, and accounting with the strengths of Marketplace in on-line ordering and shipping in a way that can benefit both. In addition, a goal is to create an "Archdiocese Resource Catalog," reflecting the various ministries. The goal is to have one source for resources, "one-stop shopping."

Metropolis Directors of Religious Education

The Department held a meeting of the Metropolis DREs on September 27, 2007 with eight of the nine Directors present. We reviewed the activity of the Department and future needs of parishes, especially in curriculum development. We shared information and documentation for "Safe Environment" policies for volunteers working with young people, not only to prevent but also to identify abuse, predatory behavior, etc., by others. The Metropolis Directors were urged to disseminate this information and begin including awareness programs in future teacher-training seminars. We reviewed a "job description" for a paid Director of Religious Education in each Metropolis. We anticipate holding an annual meeting.

First Full-time Metropolis Director of Religious Education

The Archdiocese and Department in concert with the Metropolis of Pittsburgh has established the first full-time Metropolis Director of Religious Education. Mrs. Phyllis Meshel Onest, nationally known for her work in Religious Education went from a part-time employee of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh to full-time status, effective March 15, 2008. This position is being administered similarly to "youth directors" with half of the support coming from the Metropolis and half from the Archdiocese.

The Metropolis of Atlanta has a staff person, Rev. Grigorios Tatsis, who does the work of the Metropolitan Director of Religious Education in addition to other duties.

A goal for the coming years is for the other Metropolises to study the possibility of a paid Director of Religious Education, on at least a part-time basis.

PRAXIS Magazine

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

- Vol. 6:1 The DaVinci Code (2006)
- Vol. 6:2 Teaching Teens Today (Spring 2007)
- Vol. 7:1 The Adult Catechumenate (Fall 2007)
- Vol. 7:2 The Church at Home (Winter 2008)
- Vol. 7:3 Local Church History (Spring 2008)

The Department has cleaned up the mailing list and has reduced print runs to be more cost and space efficient. We have begun offering bulk subscriptions to a single address and implemented a regular renewal process. There are 813 paid subscribers, 1561 complimentary subscriptions (GOA hierarchs, clergy, retired clergy, parish RE Directors, Archdiocese staff, Archdiocese Council), and DRE orders approximately 1000 copies for

PRAXIS
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promotional purposes. We have also begun printing the magazine in color.

PRAXIS has been reformulated to have a "cover story" and additional material and articles on other topics. For the next three issues, we anticipate the following "cover stories."

- Vol. 8:1 Fall 2008 Teaching Young Children (tentative mail date, October 1, 2008)
- Vol. 8:2 Winter 2009 The Arts (tentative mail date, January 15, 2009)
- Vol. 8:3 Spring 2009 Camps (tentative mail date, May 15, 2009).

Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival National Finals

The Department, with the assistance of National Co-chairs Fr. John and Presvytera Margaret Orfanakos, plans and coordinates this program throughout the year. In 2008, the Oratorical Festival celebrated its 25th Anniversary.

The 2007 National Festival was hosted by the Metropolis of Atlanta at the St. Sophia Cathedral of Miami, Florida from June 15-17, 2007

The 2008 National Festival was held June 6-8, 2008, hosted by the Metropolis of Boston at the St. Nicholas Church, Lexington, Massachusetts.

The Department is exploring locations for the 2009 and 2010 National Festivals.

The Department plans on measuring the number of speakers at the Parish Level from year to determine the progress of the Oratorical Festival.

Summer Institutes

In the non-Congress years, the Department sponsors a "Summer Institute." In 2007, because of the late arrival of the new Director, the Department co-sponsored the Summer Institute with the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute in Berkeley, California, with the theme, "Will Our Children Have Faith?"

A Summer Institute is scheduled for July 29-August 1, 2009 on the campus of Hellenic College-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

Director's Activity

The Director of the Department is available for workshops and presentations to Metropolis programs or parish programs. In 2007, he traveled to the following: St. Nicholas Church, Northridge, CA; St. Paul's Church, Irvine, CA; St. John the Baptist Church, Las Vegas, NV; Metropolis of San Francisco Clergy-Laity Assembly; Spring Seminar, Metropolis of Boston DOXA; Summer Institute of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute, Berkeley, CA; Sts. Constantine and Helen Church, Newport News, VA; Holy Trinity Church, Portland, ME. In 2008: Panagia Pantovasilisa Church, Lexington, KY; Metropolis of New Jersey Teachers Seminar; Holy Cross Church, Stroudsburg, PA; St. George Church, Trenton, NJ; California State University-Sacramento; St. George Cathedral, Hartford, CT; Catechetical Conference in Durres, Albania.

The Director is Adjunct Associate Professor at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, teaching the introductory course in Religious Education (PAST 5301) and leading a Field Education Seminar (FLED 5052). He also serves as Director of Holy Cross Orthodox Press, which has allowed for the combination and sharing of certain functions between the Department and Holy Cross.

The Director represents the Archdiocese to the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches, serves as the Commission's Chair, and serves on the Executive Committee of the Governing Board of the NCC. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the Orthodox Christian Education Commission - the SCOBA agency for religious education. He is the President of the Orthodox Theological Society in America.

NEW EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Distance Learning

With the assistance of the IT Department, the Department ran a pilot Distance Learning program from February 19 to April 11, 2008. Using the open source software program "Moodle," the Department prepared a five-week course, "Living Great Lent" with video presentations, readings from texts, questions for discussion and reflection, an agenda for use of the program in small groups, and a moderated on-line discussion forum. As of April 1, 2008, 207 students had registered for the course, with various levels of participation.

The Department plans to develop additional courses. For September 2008, we plan to develop three new courses: an introduction to the Orthodox faith, a course for religious educators, and a course on parish life. The Department plans to revamp its Teacher Certification and Training Program around the distance-learning program.

The Department has offered to work with other Archdiocese Departments to develop on-line courses, sharing what we have learned and guiding the development of additional courses.

We anticipate charging students for on-line courses, in the range of \$25-50, depending on the length and extent of the course.

To fully develop the on-line learning program, the Department/Archdiocese will need to add personnel – through DRE and IT - who can assist with course material development (e.g., video production, compression, etc.) and technical assistance for learners as well as facilitation and administration of the course material.

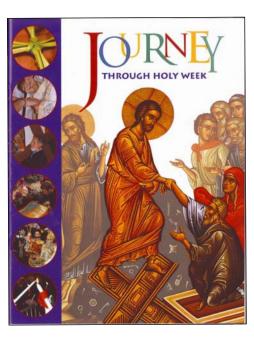
Journey Through Holy Week

This twenty-four-page magazine was published in March, 2008. This "zine" (derived from magazine) written at a sixth grade level, was designed to introduce the liturgical services, the stories and meanings, and the traditions of Holy Week to the reader.

Initial feedback was very positive. The magazine format is commonly used in schools today. It has wide applications: parish-based schools, retreats and camps. In addition, because a magazine is also likely to be sent home, it has the potential of being read by parents and other adults.

Junior High and High School Resources

Since January 2008, the Director has been meeting with a group of six Holy Cross School of Theology students who



were teachers to discuss the development of High School resources. After our discussions we are also able to include the development of Junior High resources in our plans. Given the success of the "zine" format, we are planning to develop between 5-7 resources on thematic issues, including, "Journey Through Great Lent" (junior high), Parables of Christ (junior high), the Bible (junior high), The Divine Liturgy (junior high), Ecumenical Patriarchate (junior high), Orthodoxy in America (junior high), the Birth of Christ (junior high); and the Eucharist (grades 10-12). The group is also looking into areas of personal ethics and morality, questions of science and faith, and matters of personal growth, such as vocations and career for grades 10-12, and even for young adults.

The Department will develop teacher's guides for classroom use. The Department is also exploring the creation of a website that will enhance the print resource. When the topic warrants, the Center for Family Care will develop guides for parents on how to present the topic at home. Youth and Young Adult Ministries will look into developing resources for retreats. The work to create High School resources is being funded from a grant from Leadership 100.

The present reality – reported in "Effective Christian Education" and in gatherings of teachers - of irregular attendance in Sunday Church school programs and combined classrooms (that is, two or three grades in one class) makes the utility of graded textbooks with sequentially developed lessons highly questionable for learners beyond the fifth grade. The Department is attempting to adapt to this reality.

Interactive CD-ROM: The Feasts of the Orthodox Church

With a grant from Leadership 100 the Department has created a CD-ROM, "Feasts of the Church." It will be available for release in September 2008. A demo version can be viewed at the Department's exhibit.

Vacation Church School

The Department has produced "Traveling on the Ark of Salvation, The Twelve Great Feasts of the Church, 1 - Feasts of the Theotokos," developed by a group led by Barbara Harris, Laura Morton, and Rhonda Webb, from St. Louis, MO. Over the next two years, the Department intends to complete the three-year series created by these authors.

Speaker's Bureau

There is a need to develop a "Speaker's bureau" to facilitate and expand the many lecture programs of the Metropolises and Parishes. In the coming two years, the Department will develop a Speaker's Program, with names and contact information that will be distributed to the parishes.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Recent studies have underscored repeatedly that addressing the lack of understanding of the Orthodox Faith by the members of the Church is of fundamental importance for the future. The 2007 Department of Religious Education study, "Effective Christian Education," the 2006 SWOT,

and the ongoing study "Evolving Visions of the Clergy" by the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute present serious educational and practical issues for the entire Church to address.

In addition to pursuing the goals described above, the following recommendations are made:

- That the Archdiocese Finance committee and the Department review how the Department is financed from its sales and an allotment from the Archdiocese in order to find ways to increase the investment being made in religious education.
- Should the funding be available, each Metropolis should explore the possibility of hiring a Metropolis Director of Religious Education, whether full-time or part-time, using the job description and guidelines created by the Department in 2007.
- That the Department evaluate the Living Our Orthodox Faith textbook series in order to begin updating these resources, published between 1989-1993.
- That every Parish annually submit and update the names and contact information of its Sunday church school supervisors and teachers to their Metropolis Coordinator of Religious Education, which will be shared with the Archdiocese Department.
- That every Parish begin a regular educational program for adults, beyond the traditional Bible Study.
- That every Parish set aside between 45 minutes to one hour per week for Sunday church school.
- Children should attend as much of the Sunday Divine Liturgy as possible, ideally through Holy Communion.
- Parishes that do not have "bookstores" should establish one.

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY AND FUND BALANCE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2007 AND 2006

	2007	2006
Operations		
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Sales	8492,582,63	S528,372.87
Suboription Revenue	5,492,90	696.16 18.453.78
Income from Shipping and Handling, net of expenses Cost of Goods Sold	12,945.46 (270,728.58)	(254,223.74)
GROSS PROFIT	\$240,291.41	\$293,299.07
ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATING EXPENS	ES	
Automobile Expense		1,621.39
Bad Debt Expense	13.49	
Blennial Survey Expense	11,988.75	
CLC Conference		2,741.37
Catolog Expense	26.04	32,334.43
Continuing Education/Training	1	55.09
Depredation	15,238.12	19,526.68
Donations Given	10.000.41	250.00
Equipment Rental and Service Contracts	12,959.41	8,451,81
Holy Cross Course Development	2540.070	77.33
Miscellaneous Expense	(512.37)	12.070.00
Office Expenses and Supplies	16,732.16	12,070,65
Payroll Taxes	21,647.60 15,749,29	18,141.53 19,042.05
Prax's Magazine Expense Professional Fees	20,583,49	9.760.00
Program Development	20,000.40	206.27
Salaries	295,635,38	214,444.35
St. John Chrysosiom Oratorical Festival	5,395.89	10.867.27
Subscriptions and Dues	Mysteriolog	293.50
Teenage Curriculum Development		3,480,00
Telephone and Fax Services	33.95	2,526.93
Travel	5.898.43	3,718.37
Warehouse Expense	2,903.59	2,465.30
Total Administrative and Operating Expenses	\$424,303.22	\$358,373.33
Excess Expenses Over Income- Operations Other Income / Expense	(\$184,011.81)	(\$65,074.26)
Dividend Income	192.00	236.90
Donations Received, Misc Income	37.50	193.35
Interest Expense	(30.14)	(211.47)
Interest Income	5,968.35	6,297,52
Miscellaneous Grant Income		94,620.00
Other Expense	6 770 00	(2,235.88)
Other Income	2,770.00	382.98
Summer Institute locome	B 272 00	4,252.17
Unrealized Galn/ Loss - Stocks on Hand	3,673.60	2,432.00
Total Other Income	12,811.31	106,147.47
Net Profit- Operating Fun&	(\$171,400.50)	\$41,073.21
St. John Chrysostom Fundtn- Restricted Fund		
Contributions	\$12,475.00	\$10,105.00
Interest Income	1,113.20	1,009.38
Scholarshipa Pafd	(6,500.00)	(21,500.00)
Other Expense	(14.80)	
Not Profit- Restricted Fund	\$7,073.40	(\$,10,355.62)

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