



# GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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## DEPARTMENT OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

### REPORT TO THE 40<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS CENTER FOR FAMILY CARE

#### MISSION

The mission of the Center for Family Care of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is, in the words of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, “both to affirm the importance of the family as a blessed gift of God and to address the specific needs of families as they try to live in a very challenging culture and world. As Orthodox Christians, we know that each and every family needs to be connected to the Church, a place where true relationships with God and one another are nurtured and sustained. Thus, through this program we will be working to bring more aspects of our faith into the home and to bring more families into the Church.”

#### OVERVIEW

In his keynote address at the 2002 Clergy-Laity Congress in Los Angeles, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios presented a bold, new initiative for the Greek Orthodox Church of America. He announced that the Church would begin an intense effort of focusing on the needs of families. Under the direction of Fr. Constantine L. Sitaras and through the generous financial grants from Leadership 100, a dedicated group of volunteers worked to make the vision of the Center for Family Care a reality. In 2005, several part-time staff members were hired to help with resource development. The summer of 2006 brought the Center’s ability to hire its first full time employee, Melissa Tsongranis. In the summer of 2008, Panayiotis Sakellariou was added to its staff as a full time resource coordinator. As the Center has the potential for such a large scope of services, it is working to create a long-term plan for development while continuing to create resources for families. The Center hopes to branch out so that eventually there are resources and services to meet the needs of all Orthodox Christian families in every part of the family life cycle. We look eagerly toward the future of this ministry and continue to ask for your prayers and feedback as we grow.

#### CURRENT PROJECTS AND RESOURCES

- Orthodox Family Study—Last year we completed our first national study *The Orthodox Family in America at Home and in Church*. This study is a first step towards a better understanding of the particular needs of families. Specifically, we examine how Orthodox families in America organize their everyday lives with regard to living their faith and how our Church ministers to them. The results of the study will be used to guide the future of family ministry in our Archdiocese. The study is available online and through the Center.
- Table Top Prayer Guide Volume I and II—This guide provides a collection of Orthodox prayers and meditations for daily use. It can be used for both personal and

family prayer time. Volume II was just made available at the end of June and can be ordered from Orthodox Marketplace ([www.orthodoxmarketplace.com](http://www.orthodoxmarketplace.com)) and are available online in PDF.

- Family Link Email Ministry— This monthly email will keep families and parishes informed of current Orthodox resources as well as give tips for parents and marriage couples. This was launched in March 2010 and has more than 500 subscribers. To sign up for this email ministry, visit our website at [www.family.goarch.org](http://www.family.goarch.org).
- Family Gospel Lessons—This resource is meant to guide the family through the Church year based on each Sunday Gospel Reading. We encourage parishes to include the Family Gospel Lessons in their weekly bulletin for each upcoming Sunday so families can use them to prepare for the Liturgy. Each lesson contains the Gospel reading, brief information about it, discussion questions, activities, a final quote or story, a prayer, and further resources. Currently available online.
- Parish Family Night: Volume I—This 200 page resource includes 12 detailed sessions and information on how to plan a family night at a parish. In January 2009, a copy was mailed to all Metropolises and parishes in our Archdiocese, and is now also available online. We are available for training and consultation to help parishes start this program.
- Website ([www.family.goarch.org](http://www.family.goarch.org))—We continue to strive making this website a clearinghouse of Orthodox family articles, resources, and information to help parents raise their children in the faith and to assist parishes in their ministry to families. We are continually working on further updating, expanding, and organizing this site.
- Family Worship: Creating and Using a Place in Your Home—This folio gives detailed information on how to create and use a place of worship in the home. It can be ordered from Orthodox Marketplace ([www.orthodoxmarketplace.com](http://www.orthodoxmarketplace.com)) and the information contained in it is available online.
- Family Retreats, Seminars and Gatherings—The Center for Family Care has conducted family retreats, parent seminars and other gatherings throughout the Archdiocese. We are always available to assist with planning as well as with leading these events.
- Family Connections—This page was added to the Orthodox Observer in the summer of 2004 under the name “For the Orthodox Family”. In the Fall of 2008, we changed the name to “Family Connections.” The aim of this page is to help Orthodox parents educate their children in the faith. We have a special expanded summer 2010 edition available online and at our booth at the Clergy Laity Congress.
- Youth Worker Pulse Email Ministry—Through collaboration with the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, the Center contributes information of interest to families once a month. To sign up for this email, list visit [www.youth.goarch.org](http://www.youth.goarch.org).
- Zine Parent Guide—In collaboration with the Department of Religious Education, the Center created parent guides to supplement certain issues of their popular Zine series, a magazine that explores specific topics of our faith for teenagers. At this time, we have completed the companions for *For to Us a Child is Born* and *Journey through Holy Week*.
- Family Outreach Sunday—In collaboration with the Department of Outreach and Evangelism and the Ladies Philoptochos Society the Center promotes Family Outreach Sunday in the parish. On this Sunday, active members of parishes are invited to bring inactive family members and Orthodox Christian friends for a special day of Christian fellowship and spiritual renewal.

#### COMING SOON

- Family Mission Team—In collaboration with OCMC, we will help train and lead a family mission team to Albania in the summer of 2011.
- Ionian Village Family Camp—In collaboration with Ionian Village, we will offer a family camp in Greece the summer of 2012.

- Family Podcast—In collaboration with Internet Ministries, we will produce a monthly family podcast exploring a variety of topics with priests, theologians and professionals in the field of families.
- Parish Family Night: Volume II—The sequel to Volume I will include 12 detailed sessions and information on how to plan a family night at your parish. Its theme is the 12 Great Feasts and is currently in its early stages of development.
- Guidelines for Family Ministry—This booklet will outline best practice for running different types of family ministry programs. It will assist parishes in their planning programs that are edifying to all who participate.
- Family Brochure Series—A series of brochure packets will be created for parishes to give to parents. Different topics in the series include: Worshiping as a Family, Discipline, Early Childhood (to include, prenatal preparation, birth, 40 days, baptism), and Social Issues.

## **KEY ISSUES**

The Center for Family Care has been working with the Office of Parish Development to seek out other funding opportunities and develop a strategic plan for our ministry. Securing ongoing funding is critical so that we can continue to develop and provide support to all Orthodox Families. At this time, the Center's operations are not a part of the Archdiocese budget. We are funded entirely by a generous grant from Leadership 100. We are thankful for their support.

We have been collaborating with the Metropolitans to develop an advisory committee with 2 representatives from each Metropolis. The representatives will be appointed to the committee for 3 years and are to consist of one member of the clergy and a lay person who is a marriage and family professional or a parent. This committee would meet 1 to 2 times a year and would direct the activities of the Center for Family Care.

Over the past 3 years the Clergy Family Critical Care Committee has been meeting with the purpose of addressing the important issues facing our clergy and their families. The Center for Family Care will be focusing its attention on the development of a program to address these issues with dignity and confidentiality.