Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth. May Israel now say:

1. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
2. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves in the third year.

Psalm 127
A Song of degrees.

5. The plowmen plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.
4. The Lord is righteous: he cutteth asunder the cords of the wicked.

6. Let them be as the grass: upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up."
The Icon of the Second Coming of the Lord is frequently displayed on a church’s western wall—the last image worshippers see as they leave. The icon often includes elements of the Last Judgment. This particular icon has Christ seated on a throne carried by the six-winged seraphim. He is surrounded by a mandorla, which in this example seems to “rip through” the heavens, reminding us that Christ transcends our concepts of space and time. Angels fill the heavens. At His feet are the four figures described in Revelation 4:7, which have become symbols of the Evangelists (the eagle for John; the lion, Mark; the angel, Matthew; the ox or calf, Luke). At Christ’s right are Eve and John the Baptist, and on His left are the Virgin Mary and Adam. All are in acts of supplication or prayer to Christ.
Some people feel guilty about their anxieties and regard them as a defect of faith, but they are afflictions, not sins. Like all afflictions, they are, if we can so take them, our share in the passion of Christ.

C. S. Lewis

The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts.

C. S. Lewis

Love for God begins to manifest itself, and to act in us, when we begin to love our neighbor as ourselves, and not to spare ourselves or anything belonging to us for him, as he is the image of God: “For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”

St. John of Kronstadt

Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.

Mother Teresa

If we remain ignorant of God, we do not injure Him. Rather, we deprive ourselves of His friendship.

Justin Martyr

If you stand by a brother who is being slandered and do not defend him against those who sinfully attack him, you too are a slanderer and guilty of sin.

A Desert Father

Give rest to the weary, visit the sick, support the poor: for this also is prayer.

Aphabat

The word is our master and we must be imitators of His works and doers of His words.

St. Irenaeus

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38–39 (NKJV)
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The need for substantive adult education programs in our parishes is tremendous. We cannot overstate the fact that we live in a very challenging world, and we are confronted with attitudes and values that lead hearts and minds away from the truth as revealed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. In the workplace, in social activities, in the engagement with media and technology, and in the home, people face significant issues; but they are often challenged in addressing these issues from the resources of their Orthodox Faith.

You have been called as priests, teachers and leaders in your parishes to teach our Faith. This calling, as described by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, has several clear goals in relation to adult education. First, you have the sacred vocation of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” (4:12). Through the teaching ministry of the Church, the faithful receive guidance in applying the Faith to life. They learn how to respond to the needs of others with the love of Christ and the message of the Gospel. They are prepared to be witnesses of the truth and bearers of the grace of God.

Second, your work as teachers of the Faith is “for the edifying of the body of Christ,” as St. Paul continues in Ephesians 4:12. When adults are engaged in classes, programs and studies that strengthen their knowledge and experience of our Orthodox Faith, the bonds of communion in Christ will grow stronger among all the members of the parish (4:15–16). The parish as a whole will have a spiritual character of love, prayer, fellowship and service that will not only nurture growth in the faith but also gather others into God’s home.

Third, adult education programs in our parishes are critical for spiritual maturity. St. Paul affirms that the equipping ministry of the parish leads to the “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4:13). We must emphasize that spiritual growth is a lifelong process. The great depths and treasures of our Faith, the blessings of deeper communion with God, the knowledge of truth and its relevance to all aspects of our lives: these are not things that are gained in a few years of instruction. Our task is to guide adults in living a life of prayer, to encourage them to explore more aspects of Orthodox Christianity, to help them embrace the wisdom of Scripture and the saints, and to address the challenging issues of our day with the power and grace of a saving Faith.

The result of this sacred work will be brothers and sisters in Christ who “grow up in all things into...Christ” (4:15). We are unable to describe the joy that we experience when we see those around us growing in the Faith. We are blessed through the blessings they receive. We are strengthened in our ministry as we see the transforming power of God in their lives. These blessings, the strength of our parishes and the spiritual well-being of so many are dependent on strong adult education programs. I encourage you as leaders in your parish to plan, implement and commit to adult education, so that all members of the body of Christ receive the spiritual nourishment and guidance they need for a blessed life in Him.

With paternal love in Christ,
Beloved in the Lord,

Throughout most of our history as the Church in America, the main focus of religious education has been on the children and youth of our parishes. While this is necessary and noble, we have often overlooked the largest segment of our faithful: the adults of our communities. Parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles, and so forth all have a vital role in the development of an Orthodox Christian ethos among our young people. Just as the early Church took seriously adult catechism, so too must we today.

From the earliest times, becoming a Christian was not a single act or event, but rather a process. The catechumens, those seeking membership in the Church, were integrated into the life, work, worship and spiritual life of the community over time, so the catechesis (literally, “through sound”; in other words, by hearing) imparted by the bishop, presbyters and other teachers became a normal part of life. This integration was relational and formational in its nature, which allowed for learning appropriate to each catechumen’s age and maturity level.

However, such learning never stops in the life of the Christian. As we see our children being instructed in the Faith, through the lessons of our Sunday School programs, we must not forget, as St. John Chrysostom reminds us, that “the human family constitutes the primary and essential element of human society.” Young people gain most of their education and experience through the guidance of parents, not through formal instruction and lessons, but by example and relationship. Thus religious education goes hand in hand with the practice of our Faith, with the family in the home and in attendance at our Church worship.

It is this family-centered ministry, whereby the Church teaches the family about the life in Christ and what the role the family has within the worshipping community, that is of extreme importance. The family structure—parents, grandparents and children—makes up not only members of the community of the Church, but also the Church in the Home. Essential to this is our service and worship, through Christian practice, prayer, and participation, especially in the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments).

Through the religious education of an adult, we look not to make individuals theologians or professors in the dogma of the Church, but rather to restore the balance of the knowledge of the Faith with the practice of the Faith. Knowledge of the Faith does someone no good if there is no practice. And the adult in the home becomes an example to the next generation.

In this issue of PRAXIS dedicated to adult religious education, we emphasize that “facts” and “doctrine” are not an end in themselves. Important as these are as guides in the Christian life, religious education for the adult must be founded in the worship and praxis of the Church. Adult religious education is not something done solely in a classroom but is instead a living and breathing encounter with the Body of Christ. It is our relationship with one another and with our God.

I would like to commend Dr. Anton Vrame and the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America for focusing this issue of PRAXIS on this most important topic. One must never forget that we as Orthodox Christians carry on a great, living, dynamic Tradition. The knowledge of our Faith is boundless and infinite, continually growing until our Lord and Savior calls us home to be with Him in His heavenly kingdom. May our good, loving, and all-merciful Lord grant us wisdom and understanding so that we may grow nearer to Him each and every day of our life.

With paternal love and blessings,

† IAKOVOS
Metropolitan of Chicago
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions should be 1,000–2,000 words in length and directly discuss education in the theology and tradition of the Orthodox Christian churches. Lesson aids or graphic enhancements may accompany the articles submitted. We also encourage the submission of photographs relevant to parish life (praxis). Please also provide a biographical sketch of the author not exceeding fifty words.

PRAXIS Magazine is seeking submissions of lesson plans based on articles from previous or current issues of PRAXIS. Submissions should use the article as the text/background of the lesson plan. Lesson plans are welcome for any or several age groups. Please send submissions in a Word document with a length of 1,000–2,000 words to tvrame@goarch.org.

Material previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere will not be considered without prior consent of the editor. We reserve the right to edit for usage and style; all accepted manuscripts are subject to editorial modification. Articles sent by mail should be accompanied by an electronic version on CD-ROM in Microsoft Word for Windows or for Macintosh. Articles in Microsoft Word may also be e-mailed as an attachment to tvrame@goarch.org.

Address submissions to: Anton C. Vrame, PhD, and/or Elizabeth Borch.

CREDITS

Executive Editor: Anton C. Vrame, PhD
Managing Editor: Elizabeth Borch
Design and Layout: Steven Klund
Copyeditor: Aimee Cox Ehrs
Front Cover: Popa Sorin
Inside Front Cover: Nektaria Brandon
Back Cover: Elizabeth Borch
Printing: Lane Press, South Burlington, VT

Additional Photography: Elizabeth Borch, St. Catherine’s Vision, Niko Tzetakis, Dimitrios Panagos, and Carrie Coman.

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the views of the Department of Religious Education.

© 2010, Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. ISSN 1530-0595.

A publication of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, PRAXIS magazine is published three times a year. The subscription rate is $15 per year. Checks, payable to the Department of Religious Education, should be sent to:

PRAXIS Circulation
50 Goddard Avenue
Brookline, MA 02445
(617) 850-1218
FEATURES

6 Beyond Child’s Play: Adult Education in the Parish
   Anton C. Vrame

9 Orthodoxy 102: On the Role of the Lay Teacher of Adults
   Harold A. Peponis

11 Encountering Women of Faith: The Experience of St. Catherine’s Vision
   Barbara K. Harris

14 A Year of Adult Education: A Teacher’s Perspective
   Brent Holliday

SERIES & ARTICLES

16 The Wood of the Cross: The Leadership of Anamnesis
   Rev. Dr. Frank Marangos

20 Parent to Parent
   Jeanette Aydlette & Elizabeth Borch

23 Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos: Reflections on a Blessed Life
   Fr. Peter Chamberas

26 Words with Thought: Experiencing the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival
   Michael Goodfriend

29 Religious Education Basics: Does the Archdiocese Have a Curriculum?

30 Book Reviews:
   Teach Like a Champion – Doug Lemov
   Reviewed by Anton C. Vrame
   Go Forth – Fr. Luke A. Veronis
   Reviewed by Stanley S. Harakas

32 From the Director:
   Focusing on Adults Changes the View
   Anton C. Vrame
Adult Education in the Parish
Anton C. Vrame

Adult education is a multidimensional ministry in the life of the Church. This makes for many possibilities for adult education, inviting creativity on the part of a local parish. But before we begin organizing programs, let us consider some important matters that separate adult education from childhood education.

**WHAT IS AN ADULT?**

Child development is usually divided into stages or periods that can range from a few months to a few years. Our physical, emotional, intellectual, social and religious capabilities develop relatively rapidly from birth to about age eleven or twelve. In some cases, teachers even see significant development in their students over the course of one year, as they reach milestones in physical, intellectual and social capabilities. Scientists have given each of these stages of development its own name or label.

Yet there is no universal standard for determining when adulthood begins. Stop for a moment and ask yourself the following: When did you become or consider yourself to be an adult? Was it your first paying job? Was it going off to college? Was it when you married or moved out of your parents’ home? Many students to whom I pose these questions say that getting a driver’s license marked the beginning of adult life.

But does one ever cease being an adult? Most of us then spend the next sixty to seventy years of our life with the label “adult.” A twenty-five-year-old is just as much an adult as one who is eighty-five years old. A new parent is just as much an adult as a retiree doting on grandchildren. Even as our lives change dramatically in terms of roles and functions, we are still called “adults.” This means that adult education must address many developmental moments of life.

Across our very long adult life span, our religious needs and questions develop steadily. We encounter the ethics of the workplace and attend to the religious nurture of children, and we prepare for and deal with aging, illness and eventually death. All of these needs touch on questions of faith and meaning.

Unfortunately, parishes frequently structure education as an extension of child education—in effect, treating adults as if they were children. Typically, classes are organized around dispensing information. This arrangement can be useful, but it usually reaches only the small minority of adults in a parish who are interested in that form of learning.
families. These experiences are not just current; there may be years of history in any and all of just these few examples.

Adult learners can bring experiences and examples from many areas of their lives to the classroom, and they apply what they learn to their experiences. Also, adult learners want to share these experiences with others.

Second, the cognitive skills of adults have to be taken into account in education. Recent research shows that our brains develop physically until we are about twenty-five years old. Adults are capable of high levels of critical abstract thinking. This ability begins as early as the preteen years, but it continues to grow and develop throughout life, not reaching its fullest until we are well into our twenties or even thirties, and it may continue to grow. A key element of abstract thought is the ability to examine an idea—especially an idea, not just a concrete object—from multiple perspectives. Another is metacognition, the ability to think about one’s own thinking. To make a stark comparison, asking five-year-olds why they think the way they do won’t go very far, but adults can “step outside” of their thought and reflect upon their own thinking processes.

We also need to be aware of how our cognitive abilities change over time, especially with advanced age. The main change is speed of recall. The knowledge and abilities are still present as we age; they just take longer to retrieve. A good example is talking with an older person who takes more time to find a word. The person still knows the word, but it takes him or her a bit longer to retrieve it than someone younger would.

Third, adults want to apply what they have learned as quickly as possible. Children and teenagers go to school, acquiring many facts, theories and skills, but they usually cannot do much with their learning right away. They cannot apply the lessons of U.S. history on the playground or soccer practice. However, adults are usually—albeit not always—looking to immediately apply what they are learning. Importantly, they are capable of doing so.

As a result, adults are usually problem-centered, not subject-centered, learners. They seek education to solve a problem they are facing, not just because they are interested in a topic or because someone else decided it’s important. Not meeting these needs of adults will, most likely, dissuade them from returning to a class.

Fourth, adults need to be comfortable physically and not stressed when they are learning. Asking adults to sit in spaces designed for children will not go over well. This is particularly true with older adults, who require rooms with good lighting.
and acoustics to offset the declines in sight and hearing that most people face after turning forty.

Timing is another factor that can cause stress. Time is valuable, and most adults don’t want to waste it. If a class is to begin at seven and end at eight-thirty, then it should start and end on time. Most adults cannot commit to events planned months and months ahead of time. They plan in four- to eight-week intervals.

STRUCTURING ADULT LEARNING

LEARNING FOR THE FIRST TIME

In all parishes, there are people who want to acquire information. It could be that they never learned it earlier or that that they are simply filling in gaps of knowledge. It might be that they are new to the community, such as inquirers interested in possibly embracing Orthodoxy. Parishes can create many programs and opportunities for “first-time learners.”

STRETCHING AND GROWING

We can all benefit from a refresher course now and then, but parishes that offer only the classic “101” courses are limiting their offerings. Once the basics have been presented, many adults will want to explore a topic more deeply or explore more complicated topics. Beyond acquiring information, these learners may also want to explore what something means for their lives. For example, the first-time learner may want to understand the origins of the affirmations of faith recited in the Nicene Creed. His or her next step might be to read more closely the terms themselves and their meaning.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

“So what?” is not just the question of a smart aleck. It’s an important step in faith. Discerning the implications of faith for our lives and for the world in which we live is about application of learning, putting the lessons of faith into practice, and adding to the experiences that comprise an adult life. For example, at this level, a parish could sponsor a study of the Church Father’s teachings on poverty, and couple it with a social analysis of poverty—culminating in action to alleviate poverty and its effects, from working in food pantries and soup kitchens to supporting local job training programs to promoting legislation that addresses causes of poverty.

Anton C. Vrame, PhD, is Director of the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.
Orthodoxy 102

On the Role of the Lay Teacher of Adults

Harold A. Peponis

In our service to the Church as clergy, teachers and mentors, we sometimes mistakenly believe that religious education applies solely to the young, which may be the result of the intense focus which we place on their education. Yet in truth, catechesis is not a limiting event or interval in the life of the Orthodox Christian. The path of theosis is not and cannot be established exclusively by attending religious education classes or “Sunday school” until one reaches adolescence. Rather, the learning process is part of the ongoing life process and journey of faith. If we as the people of God are to comprise and build up the Church as the Body of Christ, then adult religious education must be an integral factor in the catechetical life of the parish.

Just as adults need to continue learning to keep up with the constant changes that they face in their temporal lives, so too their faith journey must bring them into a fuller understanding of the Orthodox phronema (mindset) in the light of Christ’s teachings and into a continuing personal relationship with Christ.

For at least one generation in the history of the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States, religious education was negligible, to say the least, and adult education inconsequential. Today our Sunday schools abound, yet I wonder if adult religious instruction in many of our parishes goes beyond basic Bible study and the popular theme of “Orthodoxy 101.” Do we offer surveys and summaries, lectures and presentations as part of parish life? Do we provide the opportunity to read the Scriptures in small groups, to study the teachings of the Church and the Fathers and carry on discourse and conversation in enthusiastic learning surroundings, gaining a deeper insight into our faith?

Within the context of instruction, we might question whether the average Greek Orthodox priest and parish have the time, ability and capacity to emphasize and prioritize the cultivation and promulgation of an adult catechetical ministry. To respond to this situation, parishes must identify qualified lay instructors to offer adult instruction and dialogue. The pressures and time constraints on the clergy are great. Empowering qualified and dedicated lay teachers whose understanding of orthodoxy, the truths that comprise Christian knowledge and worship, and orthopraxia, the application of those truths to life in the Faith, could offer a nurturing environment for true living and sharing of that Faith. Lay teachers are in a sense disciples who have been called to build up the Body of Christ through their sacramental life and their experience, study and reflection.

Generally, adults who voluntarily seek to be educated do so with a thirst for enlightenment. It behooves us as Church therefore to provide programs that creatively engage and inform the adults of our communities who seek to know the word of God and His Church. The search, sometimes timorous, springs from the seeker’s innate desire—sometimes difficult to acknowledge or express but a desire nonetheless—to know and love God in a more profound and discerning way. As the seeker is to be transformed, the teacher must be continually formed and informed, steeped in the doctrines and traditions of the Church. The deposit of faith (parakatatheke) must be handed forward from generation to generation by catechists who integrate that legacy into their lives. Although knowledge of the Faith is important, for the Orthodox, living the Faith is critical.

As a parish seeks to develop an adult religious education ministry, the Divine Liturgy and the sacraments of the Church are...
perhaps of the greatest importance. It is in prayer and worship that we commune with God. In praise, prayer and thanksgiving, the spiritual and liturgical life of the community becomes an integral part of the ongoing education and maturing of the Orthodox Christian. Especially for adults, whether cradle Orthodox, converts, or the “unchurched,” our responsibility is to share the Good News, to welcome the rightful and to make the sacred traditions of the Faith resounding and spirited. It is through Liturgy that we grow toward perfection in Christ.

Although we can address the curriculum in the traditional manner of the study of Scripture, the Church Fathers, iconography, hagiography, etc., I submit that a close reading of Anton Vrame’s book The Educating Icon: Teaching Wisdom and Holiness in the Orthodox Way offers a unique and suitable vision of an Orthodox approach to religious education. His book provides a way of considering education within the Church from the viewpoint of the theology, artistry, and liturgical and devotional uses of icons. The liturgical life (the mysteries and worship of the Church), visual life (the icons, their veneration and their stories), and family life (the experience of the community, the Scriptures and stories of the Faith) provide the basics for the entire educational process. Enmeshing the curriculum or subjects of a religious education program within the ritual, worship, prayer, and the transformative function of icons can provide the same spiritually rewarding educational experience that was the province of the early Church. In the sacred space of the temple lies the participation, the visualization and the explanation that leads to an ongoing understanding of our lives in Christ and the path to divinization.

Dr. Vrame, in a later article in PRAXIS (“Religious Education Basics,” Fall 2008), further points out that “the life of the parish is the curriculum for teaching people what it means to be an Orthodox Christian. The curriculum of the parish is its life of worship, its social programs for its members, its service to the world, and its witness of the Orthodox Church and faith to others.” Dr. Vrame’s work deserves examination and consideration as a purposeful method for adult religious education in our parishes.

Establishing our educational processes in living a life in Christ, Orthodox Christian enlightenment serves to bring us “to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) and ushers us on the path of theosis, so that we may “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Through dialogical as well as didactic forms of teaching, a firm grounding can be established in the substance of our Faith.

Excellent catechists provide that foundation. The qualities of good teachers are many and varied, but in adult situations there should be an emphasis on patience and respect for the personality and faith maturity of the learner. Adult catechesis and teaching needs to begin with the understanding that many adults have not had any customary catechesis. Those who minister to them should be able to perceive each individual’s needs for the particular stage of his or her faith journey.

Classes should provide a positive encounter guided by individuals who manifest a love for teaching. Qualities basic to teaching by lay adults are knowledge of the doctrines, liturgy, sacraments, scripture, traditions, iconography, and teachings of the Fathers of the Church. Organizational as well as evaluative skills are meaningful competencies to be sought in the lay instructor. First and foremost, the catechism of adults is at its root interacting with and guiding learners into the life of Christ and the Church. Finally, the teacher should predominantly model faith. The administrator of the religious education program must have a process for assessing or evaluating the efficacy of the adult program and the teachers.

In our endeavors to provide ongoing religious education for adults, we should strive to keep faith formation welcoming and redeeming because religious education is a lifetime encounter. Growing in faith means growing in one’s relationship to God and knowledge of the Faith.

We might look at adult religious education from the vantage of the encounter of Philip and Nathanael:

Jesus...found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”

...Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” (John 1:44–46)

“Come and see” is the simple yet great ongoing invitation of the Church. It is the invitation to the Divine Liturgy, it is the invitation to Christ’s saving grace, and an invitation to a lifetime of living and learning as disciples and models of faith within a community that offers the riches of Orthodox Christianity to its people. Above all, it is an invitation to the Church to embrace and support adult religious education.

Harold A. Peponis is an insurance broker in Chicago and a steward of the Annunciation Cathedral. A member of parish, metropolis and archdiocesan councils, he writes and lectures on the Orthodox Church. He is an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and he holds a master’s degree in Religious Education.
Saint Catherine’s Vision (SCV) is a group committed to three initiatives: Orthodox unity, spiritual renewal and religious education. We chose to honor St. Catherine simply because her vision was of Christ. He is the foundation of our faith, and her vision is a reminder of the love of God working in our lives. SCV was founded in a discipline of love and seeking the discernment of the Holy Spirit, and strives to explore, study and work toward the “edifying of the Body of Christ” through Orthodox theology and ministry.

**HOW DID SCV BEGIN?**

In summer 2003, a small group of women who had attended Orthodox theological schools over the past thirty years met at a retreat center on Cape Cod. The purpose of this initial meeting was to forge new relationships, to strengthen long-standing ones, and to rediscover common ground in answering the call to pursue advanced studies in Orthodox theology. Most of the women had never met. Many of the formal and informal discussions focused on contributions women graduates of theological schools have made in the past, are making at present and hope to make in the future. Worship and fellowship enriched the discussions. One woman said that she had not realized how hungry she was for this type of fellowship. It awoke in her the same fervor she felt while studying at seminary with like-minded (and like-hearted) people. All those attending said they would like to continue meeting, not just as theologians or as a women’s group, but in order to “work toward the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

**FOUNDING A DISCIPLINE OF LOVE**

Our community is committed to the practice of listening without judging. We strive toward conducting our work in an environment in which individuals feel safe to express themselves. It can be a challenge to listen with the heart without judging. We bear good will toward one another as we discern what the other person is trying to express. There are moments of silence (sometimes very long moments) and powerful moments of validation. This disciplined practice opens us to the loving presence of our Lord to act among and between us. We have spent more than seven years cultivating our relationships through this practice.

**THE WORK OF SCV**

When we met again in February 2004, we took further steps to grow in the discipline of love: we began work on the first volume of Encountering Women of Faith. (Volume II will soon be published, and the preparations for a third book are underway.) We challenged one another to write chapters following a unique pattern, weaving several threads together:
- Presenting a study of a woman saint’s life viewed through the prism of the spiritual practice the saint embodied, e.g., kenosis, humility, obedience, courage, audacity/holy defiance, accountability, thankfulness/gratitude, and doxology/praise
- Examining how that practice speaks to women in today’s society
- Engaging the life of the saint and the practice in a deeply personal manner.

This task was both arduous and life-giving—it required a scholarly examination of Orthodox theology, prayerful discernment and public exposure of a deeply personal engagement with that saint and spiritual practices.

All of this was done intentionally, within a community of love. Authors were tasked to continually re-examine their work, honing the messages of their chapters. We met in several writing retreats and helped one another draw out the best. Recurring words of encouragement and challenge included, “I want to hear more of your experience” and “I want more of the history and theology.” We had vivid discussions about word choice, developing consensus and even consulting the dictionary.

In addition to writing *Encountering Women of Faith*, SCV has hosted two retreats for women graduates of Orthodox theological schools. In November 2005, twenty-seven women met for prayer and small and large group dialogues at the Antiochian Village Retreat Center in Ligonier, PA. Women came to the retreat with the strong desire to see old friends and make new ones. They were hungry for interaction with and among theologically educated women—to learn how others were using their education and to determine how, collectively and individually, graduates can use their knowledge and experiences in the future.

Victoria Trbuhovich, a St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary MDiv graduate, offered the keynote address about spiritual warfare through the example of a royal family in Serbia who confronted a Muslim invasion. Valerie Zahirsy, MDiv, St. Vladimir’s, delivered the St. Catherine’s Vision Lecture (Ephesians 4:13). Iulia Corduneanu Curtright, a Holy cross graduate and a PhD candidate at Marquette University, offered the Sunday homily.

The second retreat for women graduates was held in August 2007 on Cape Cod at the Sacred Hearts Retreat Center. Discussion focused on chapters from *Encountering Women of Faith*, Volume I. Studying the lives of some of the saints whose stories are included in the book sparked dynamic conversation about the Church today, its Tradition, and the ways in which women continue to serve and share their gifts.

Hilary Chala, MDiv, and Nikki Stournaras, a student at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, led the discussion about “St. Olympias the Deacon” and the Orthodox understanding of ordination. “St. Xenia the Fool for Christ” was the second chapter presented. Valerie Zahirsy and Eleni Simmons, MDiv and ThM, Holy Cross, led the conversation. It focused on identifying and responding to abusive relationships in all their forms (family, friends, work and church). It was an especially intense engagement for those who had experienced various forms of abuse, and the discussion raised all of the participants’ awareness. There was a strong recom
mendation about the importance of including this topic in seminary education.

Although bringing together women graduates is important, it is only the first phase of SCV’s efforts to serve Orthodox unity, spiritual renewal and religious education. SCV is neither an exclusive club of women graduates nor an Orthodox women’s movement, as this would be self-serving and in direct opposition to Orthodox ecclesiology. The life-giving work of SCV has helped us individually and collectively to find our voices and to speak.

SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

We are sincerely committed to Orthodox unity, spiritual renewal and religious education. Writing and publishing these books continues to help us articulate that vision. If you are interested in sharing in these experiences, we ask that you study Volume I. Contemplate the discussion questions at the end of each chapter. Perhaps you could use the book as a springboard for your book club, women’s group or adult education class. We challenge you to encounter these saints and one another in a discipline of love—listening from the heart without judging.

Barbara K. Harris is a graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology with an MA in Church Service and of Washington University in St. Louis with an AM in Non-Profit Management. She resides in St. Louis, where she is exploring the intersection of practical theology, leadership and education. She also serves on the board of St. Catherine’s Vision. Kyriaki FitzGerald and Valerie Zahirsky contributed parts of this text.

SCV has a pan-Orthodox board and is the only organization of its kind endorsed by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA). The Lilly Endowment has provided funding for its work and publications. Visit www.orthodoxwomen.org to learn more about SCV, to share your experience with Encountering Women of Faith, and to inquire about inviting our authors to share St. Catherine’s vision with your parish or group.

Want to be part of the conversation?
Join our Facebook group:
Orthodox Christian Religious Educators
We endeavor to share ideas and support with each other as we “hand forward” the Orthodox Christian Faith to the next generation.
A Year of Adult Education

A Teacher’s Perspective  Brent Holliday

Last year, I had the privilege of sitting in on the adult religious education class at St. Gregory’s Church in Mansfield, MA, as part of my field education requirement for seminary. The goal of the class was to expand the participants’ knowledge of the Faith and to delve deeper into the traditions of the Church. On average, 12–15 people attended each week; most of them were married, and most of them were from the Boston area. The class itself was conducted as a discussion group with one facilitator (there were three different group leaders throughout the year). This arrangement allowed for greater openness. The format not only allowed the group members the opportunity to ask questions but also allowed them to share experiences or opinions that they normally may not get to express. I made it a point to let them talk out the topic at hand among themselves before I began answering their questions—as opposed to immediately answering every question or throwing out some piece of information anytime I saw the chance. This, along with challenging the group, presenting questions that the group rarely faced, and bringing them out of their comfort zones, were important factors in making the class effective.

The topic for that week usually coincided with the Gospel, event, or saint being commemorated that week. We discussed theology, but not to the lofty extent that can be found in the works of some modern scholars. As important as these scholars and their works are, they don’t necessarily touch on the experience of the common parishioner. The average adult parishioner has the responsibility for the health of his or her family’s spiritual life, along with the reality of paying the mortgage. Each discussion topic had to be something that penetrated their lives. The group would usually start with the supervisor giving a brief introduction to the topic and clarifying certain details (e.g., defining “unmercenary”).

After the introduction, the supervisor would pose a particular question that would hopefully resonate with the group. One of the most memorable discussion starters dealt with Christ and the blind man (John 9:1–41):

As evidenced by the question posed by the disciples, the belief in Christ’s day, and which persists today, is that sin causes misfortune. Christ notes that the blindness was not due to sin, but for ‘the glory of God.’ What does this mean?

This prompted serious discussion as to whether or not bad circumstances (a child born with Down Syndrome, for example) are caused by a certain person’s sin. If we look at Christ’s words in this Gospel, then we can see that this is not necessarily the case. Now, when a child is born with FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), this is generally a consequence of alcohol abuse. This topic apparently struck a chord with members of the group. They asked, “Why do some people say ‘It’s God’s will’ when something tragic happens?” and “What is the relationship between what happens in our life and God’s will?” This stirred up many opinions that showed that they were being engaged by the topic, and that one way or another, these were things that they had to deal with in their lives. Inevitably, someone mentioned Hurricane Katrina and asked whether it had anything to do with all the voodoo that takes place in New Orleans. If anything can be taken from this discussion, it’s that our people are facing the same questions as the rest of society.

As the year went on, I began to notice a pattern to the comments, and I was surprised by many of the things said. I noticed that people were very willing to ask questions. A typical question was, “If Christ asks His apostles to leave all things behind and follow Him, are we doing this even though we have a family and a job?” The simplest answer to this was
that St. Paul speaks of the Apostles with families still having to work to support their families.

The group was also very willing to discuss the day’s topic, especially if it was concerning God’s Providence, and explore different aspects of the subject matter; this was a good sign, showing their interest in learning more about the Faith. The group was also very open in expressing their opinions—and, granted, sometimes it may have just been to get something off their chest, but most offerings were thoughtful and added to the discussion.

People weren’t afraid to ask the questions which they personally had been struggling with. One week someone asked how some people who are seemingly very pious end up having affairs. This resulted in a good deal of discussion, and there were some participants who thought that it was because their piety was just an act. Some group members seemed taken aback when presented with the idea that good people can do dumb things. We then had to delve into why it’s possible for a genuinely pious human being to make careless choices that result in committing adultery.

One of the most important, and at the same time most frustrating, topic discussions we had was “How do we act as positive Christian witnesses to those around us, and not create a source of confusion?” Since there were several questions like this, the group would usually discuss how patience, meekness, and generosity were important when dealing with those around us. People would also relate stories of the hospitality their own parents would show to any and all visitors.

Other frustrating discussions involved ways to help the poor or needy. The group generally discussed helping the poor through the framework of volunteer organizations, and although there were many good ideas tossed around, those thoughts didn’t pertain to helping the poor in other ways. Usually one of the supervisors had to suggest thinking of other ways that didn’t include charity groups. It seemed as if encountering and engaging the homeless and poor on the street just wasn’t a possibility to some of the group.

The importance of the adult religious education class at St. Gregory’s goes beyond simply educating adults. It allows adults to take what they have learned and to teach it to their children; it gives them the opportunity to discuss the Faith and practices of the Church with their fellow parishioners in a way that is different from how they relate at home or in public. It also demonstrates that these people care about the Church and its teachings and are using this opportunity to gain knowledge. I gained more insight into what our parishioners are struggling with as they seek salvation.

Brent Holliday is a third-year seminarian at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He has a BA in Psychology from the University of South Carolina.

STS. CYRUS & JOHN, THE UNMERCENARIES: A LESSON PLAN FOR ADULTS

WHAT IS A MERCENARY?
Per Merriam-Webster, the term “mercenary” dates from the fourteenth century and means “one that serves merely for wages, especially a soldier hired into foreign service.”

WHAT, THEN, IS AN UNMERCENARY?
(Saints’ lives from www.goarch.org & www.wikipedia.org) These saints lived during the years of Emperor Diocletian. St. Cyrus was from Alexandria, and St. John was from Edessa of Mesopotamia. Cyrus practiced the art of medicine, and he had a workshop that was later transformed into a church dedicated to the Three Holy Youths (Ananais, Azarias, and Mishael; alternatively, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego). He ministered to the sick gratis, and at the same time he labored with all the ardor of an apostle of the Faith and won many from pagan superstition. Because of the persecution of that time, Cyrus fled to the Gulf of Arabia, where there was a small community of monks.

John belonged to the army, in which he held a high rank; he was also one of the familiars of the emperor. Hearing of the virtues and wonders of Cyrus, he went to Jerusalem in fulfillment of a vow, and from there passed into Egypt, where he became the companion of St. Cyrus in the ascetic life.

Henceforth, they passed their life working every virtue, and healing every illness and disease freely by the grace of Christ; thus their title of “Unmercenaries.” They heard that a woman named Athanasia had been arrested together with her three daughters, Theodora, Theoctiste and Eudoxia, and taken to the tribunal for their confession of the Faith. Fearing that the tender young maidens would be terrified by the torments and renounce Christ, Cyrus and John went to strengthen them in their contest in martyrdom; therefore they too were seized.

After Cyrus and John and those sacred women had been greatly tormented, all were beheaded in the year 292. Their tomb became a renowned shrine in Egypt and a place of universal pilgrimage. It was found in the area of the modern-day resort named Abu Kyr, near Alexandria.

SO WHAT? (DISCUSSION)
What lessons can be drawn from the lives of these saints? Where do each of us have opportunities to behave as “unmercenaries”?

PRAXIS ♦ Fall 2010 ♦ page 15
A most fascinating discovery was recently made at Ground Zero. Evidently, while excavating the future location of the underground security vehicle center, contractors unearthed a row of sturdy upright wooden timbers spaced at regular intervals. Further digging revealed mariner tackle and a 100-pound anchor. It was not long before governmental officials determined that the remnants belonged to the hull of an old wooden schooner. According to archeologists, the 250-year-old ship was apparently dumped at this lower Manhattan location when the city was attempting to enlarge its valuable geographic footprint. Before it was filled and made into dry land, the parcel was part of the Hudson River. Amazingly, the World Trade Center was built on the site without the memory of the unique wood buried beneath it.

Great care should be taken to respectfully recall the foundational memory of the solid truths that sustain our soaring achievements. Often, like the tragedy perpetrated by terrorists at Ground Zero, the opportunity to discern spiritual stabilities coincide with parish difficulties, family misfortunes and personal heartbreaks. It is during these occasions of complexity, however, that Church leaders should be prepared to provide the necessary guidance to dig deep beneath the rubble of the present in order to discover the wood of the cross, the solid spiritual conviction needed to rebuild robust, faithful futures!

Is it possible for Orthodox Church leaders, the contemporary contractors of Christ, to forget the true nature of their respective ministries’ foundation? Is it possible to overlook the Church’s primary purpose and pursue other ideals? Is it possible to inherit the firm site plan of Orthodoxy and then to forget the spiritual truths upon which our current constructions are established? Tragically, some parish leaders suffer from such a form of spiritual amnesia that, like the World Trade Center contractors, leaves them unaware of the foundational material upon which they are working!

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations
Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will tell you . . .

—Deuteronomy 32:7
The Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, celebrated on September 14, provides Orthodox clergy and parish leaders an annual opportunity to refocus their syndiakonia on the foundational memory of their ecclesiastical and administrative duties. Although the flaw of forgetfulness seems to be a characteristic of humanity’s fallen state, the potency of remembrance—what is theologically referred to as anamnesis—is a mark of spiritual literacy and growth. Corporate worship and annual religious festivals are often associated with liturgical anamnesis; the sacramental “recalling” of God’s saving words and actions throughout history. The practice of mature religious leadership, however, may also be sustained by such corporate “recollections.”

Spiritual anamnesis is a valuable gift from God that reveals a pattern for traversing life’s difficulties through the grace of divine provision. Anamnesis is an ancient Greek word that means to “recall” or to “represent” the “truths” that belong to a past event so that their potency may become operative in the present. In both the Old and New Testaments, the term is used to mean “remember” and “recollect.” Apart from its Eucharistic implication (gathering and “re-membering” the Body of Christ), the word suggests a dynamic experience of past events whose truths transcend cognitive recollections and the confines of history. It is in this active sense of recalling, remembering and/or representing the acts of God and thereby making them operative in the present that anamnesis can provide a leadership rhythm of wisdom, grace and servant-centered humility.

The process of anamnesis had special significance for ancient political leaders, philosophers and theologians. Plato understood the word as an intense probing behind the externals of things and events for the purpose of recalling their “eternal ideas.” Similarly, Old Testament and patristic writers describe how anamnesis provides divine leadership, guardianship, help and training to religious leaders who look beyond external historic circumstances and accept God’s eternal sovereignty. Defective leadership, on the other hand, is a result of spiritual amnesia of God’s past deeds. Christian leadership is a sacred duty and, of necessity, it involves the sincere desire for divine guidance, assistance and nurture.

Orthodox Christian leaders should endeavor to regularly unearth the presence of the Holy Cross, the wood of the Church’s holy hull, which seeks to extend the territory of God’s kingdom like the valuable Manhattan landmass extended into the Hudson. All too frequently, however, the true nature and presence of this critical anchor of Faith is forgotten! If we are not careful, the prominence of our current triumphs may slowly shift attention from God’s wisdom, power and grace to our own talents, intellect and financial resources. The towers of our own achievements begin to overshadow the
timeless convictions of Orthodox Christianity. As a result, Church leaders may forget their original cross-centered calling and inadvertently hide the light of Christ beneath the bushels of their personal interests.

Although numerous Scriptural passages can be cited that warn religious leaders not to forget God’s previous words and action, the Book of Deuteronomy contains the most noteworthy admonitions concerning anamnesis. “Watch yourself,” writes Moses, “that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commands, judgments, and ordinances that I command you today” (8:11). The recurring warnings of this scriptural tome of anamnesis insist that faithful religious leaders should avoid the pitfalls of spiritual amnesia, for it is God “who gives you strength, that you may gain power, and he may establish his covenant” (8:18).

For forty years the Jewish people journeyed together. Deuteronomy provides the collective wisdom that Moses and his people learned during this sojourn. Their journey, however, should not be understood in terms of yesterday, but as a preparation for all our tomorrows. For example, as the nation of Israel was about to cross the Jordan River and enter into the Promised Land, Moses warned them to never forget the lessons of their past, but to faithfully pass them from one generation of leaders to the next.

Orthodox Christian leaders would be wise to heed Moses’s admonition and make certain that we are firmly established in God’s Word, precepts and laws.

Orthodox Christian Leaders would be wise to heed Moses’s admonition and make certain that [we] are firmly established [in] God’s Word, precepts and laws.

malady operates both when a memory is formed and when a memory is accessed or retrieved. Blocking is the temporary inaccessibility of stored information—“It’s on the tip of my tongue!”—suggestibility refers to the incorporation of misinformation into memory due to leading questions, deception and other causes.

Persistence may be understood as unwanted recollections of intrusive and traumatic memories. According to Schacter, in some cases people are so fearful of past events that they may actually become “tragic prisoners of memory,” and eventually commit suicide. Misattribution refers to the tendency to misremember or to the attribution of memories to incorrect sources.

Finally, memory bias is described by the author as retrospective distortions produced by current knowledge and beliefs. Psychologists have demonstrated that present knowledge, beliefs and feelings often skew our memory of past events. Research indicates that people, currently displeased with a romantic relationship, for example, often tend to have a disproportionately negative recollection of their past relationship.

The maladies of transience and bias are perhaps the two most lethal memory viruses that negatively affect contemporary Orthodox Christian leaders. These are precisely the sins that, as Moses warns in his lengthy addresses, in the final analysis, reinforce the need for a collective memory that will dependably counsel Israel’s future decisions. “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations,” insists Moses. “Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will tell you” (Deuteronomy 32:7). In short, anamnesis guards against the deleterious impact of memory transience and bias.
The greatest obstacle to faithful Christian leadership is the propensity toward pride. Only through an honest acknowledgment of the presence of the Holy Cross in our lives can pride be adequately extinguished. Holy Scripture and the writings of the Holy Fathers continually warn religious leaders to avoid the danger of pride and self-sufficiency. Pastoral disorientation and administrative dysfunction are often the consequences of parishes and religious organizations whose leaders do not regularly attend worship services, receive the Holy Sacraments, or seek catechetical enlightenment!

Anamnesis of Christ’s Passion and Resurrection provides faithful Orthodox Christian leaders with a valuable orientation and alignment with God’s vision for His Church. Contemporary parish leaders would do well to understand that we are the ones that must align our respective goals with the crossbeams of God’s vision, and not the other way around! Such realignment occurs when religious leaders take the time and effort to recall the words, actions, principles and precepts of God and honestly apply them to our lives.

Prior to the construction of the Twin Towers, the Taj Mahal was one of the primary measures of all architectural projects. The magnificent structure is not an office building or hotel but one of the most elaborate tombs ever constructed. In 1629, the favorite wife of Shah Jahan, the ruler of India, suddenly died. Grief stricken, the Shah ordered an extraordinary tomb to be built as a loving memorial to her. The Shah placed his wife’s casket in the middle of a beautiful parcel of land and literally began building the structure around it.

Several years into the project, the Shah’s grief was replaced with the passion for the structure. One day, while he was surveying the work with the contractor, the Shah literally stumbled over a nondescript wooden box. Furious, he instructed the workers to throw it out. It was only months later that the Shah realized that the box was, in fact, his wife’s casket! In his desire to construct a monument to his own ego, he had discarded and destroyed what was the foundation of his original love and passion.

Our Lord warned His disciples to not forget the primary purpose of their mission. “You are the light of the world,” he exclaimed, “a city that is set on a hill” (Matthew 5:14). He insisted, however, that such a light should not be hidden but rather elevated high on the proper stand, the wood of His Holy Cross. Only in this fashion can the Church properly focus on its primary purpose “to give light to all who are in the house” (Matthew 5:15).

Christ’s message to His chosen leaders is clear; the good works of the Church should not focus attention on themselves but on the glory of God’s self-sacrifice! Contemporary Orthodox Church leaders would do well to recall our Lord’s admonition to His disciples. Only in this fashion can they remain ever-vigilant against tossing out the primary spiritual anchor lying beneath the construction sites of their respective ecclesial duties. Let us faithfully cherish the collective memory of the life-giving wood of Christ’s Holy Cross for, indeed, it is the only lamp stand upon which Orthodox Christian leaders may strike a match!

Rev. Dr. Frank Marangos is Dean of the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City. He is also an adjunct assistant professor at Saint John’s University (NY). Please visit www.thecathedralnyc.org to view the sermon that inspired this article.
Q. The topic of bullying is all over the news these days. What advice can I offer to my children about dealing with modern bullies, who often use instant messages, e-mails and texts to “cyberbully”?

A: Combat Anonymity

I think most parents today want to keep their teens safe, but the question is how do we do it in the ever-changing world of technology? It was hard enough when our children came home in tears because the neighborhood bully—a kid we all knew—put fear into their hearts by threatening to hurt them if they didn’t do what the bully asked. The advice to parents facing such issues sounds quaint today, such as offering karate lessons, telling children to always walk with a friend, and giving short pep talks to build up our children’s self-confidence.

The world of cyberbullying has caused us to rethink our parental strategies. The cyberbully often hides behind a computer screen, with anonymity as his or her greatest weapon. Like dealing with terrorist, it is difficult to fight the unknown enemy.

My neighbor’s daughter, Sarah, desired to be part of the cool girls in her sixth grade class. She shared her e-mail address with the girls in the class and began to receive messages from one of the girls in the group. It was so exciting for her to finally be accepted. Sarah began to receive a lot of e-mails from other people, but she didn’t always know to whom the screen names belonged. At first the girls were asking simple questions, such as “What is your favorite music or movie?” Soon, the questions were about students in her class. This made Sarah uncomfortable, but she did participate.

She also began getting IMs (instant messages). Suddenly, the nature of the e-mails shifted to much harsher comments, some of which were directed to Sarah personally. There were e-mails that had cut and pasted previous IMs about how Sarah dressed, even commenting that she wore pull-ups for underwear. Sarah would try to defend herself, but it got worse, and soon threats were coming through the e-mails. Sarah didn’t want to tell her mom for fear she would have her computer time taken from her.

Fortunately, the mother of one of the other girls had been monitoring the e-mails. It wasn’t easy for her as a parent to discover her daughter’s role in the cyberbullying, but she called Sarah’s mom and shared the e-mails with her.

Many have asked why one becomes a cyberbully? I believe the answer is in the power he or she gains from sending an embarrassing, malicious e-mail or spreading a vicious rumor. Even a kid who is generally perceived to be nice, a good student, a social leader, etc., can seize an opportunity to become cyberbully because he or she can remain anonymous.

What can we do as parents? Here are a few bits of advice I have found to be helpful.

- Keep up with the latest means of technology. Ask your
Kids to show you all the latest ways they communicate with others.

- Tell your children that you are going to be reading their e-mails, text messages, instant messages, etc., and for them to tell their friends that as well. This is a great way to keep them from cyberbullying because the kids think parents will read it.
- Keep the computer in a central location of the home.
- Talk to your kids about their friends and what they know about others who might be getting cyberbullying messages.
- Ask your children to report any inappropriate messages that they receive, and let them know that you are there for their protection.
- Block all inappropriate e-mails, etc.
- Make copies of all cyberbully e-mails and report them to the school. The school’s punishment? A three-day suspension during which the girls went to the beach daily, as they posted on Facebook and texted their friends at school about their activities, mocking the whole system.

The result of this punishment was not a change of heart or sincere apology, merely more contempt for the system. These girls had no guilt about harassing someone they didn’t like, and the computer is the most cowardly way to do this. Gone are the days where you might actually confront the bully face to face and let him have it—as I did once at age five! Although I am not advocating retaliation, the possibility of a public act being witnessed or some other intervention could be a deterrent. With cyberbullies, the victim is helpless to respond, short of falling to the same level. Meanwhile, the public humiliation and loss of reputation continues.

That’s tough stuff for a kid (or an adult) to shake off for a kid, and it can be an addictive habit for the perpetrator. I want to mention here that it is important to remember that this isn’t just about children. Adults can also be vulnerable in the office and on social networks, though perhaps less overtly so.

Preventing this particular cruelty requires two things: a sympathetic heart and a respect for the computer’s potential. A kind, feeling heart is something that is cultivated throughout one’s life, and it must be modeled in the home and in the Church community. Developing kindness and compassion are issues beyond the scope of this article, but let’s just say that the ability to put oneself in someone else’s situation is a task of maturation. The level of demonstrated maturity should dictate the access parents give their children to the Internet.

Years ago, when we were taking driving lessons, we were subjected to cheesy films that compared the automobile to a loaded gun in terms of lethality. Similarly, it’s important to respect the computer as both a wonderful tool and a harmful weapon. In truth, today competence with these machines is akin to the ability to read and write; isolationism is not a real option. Parents and teens should have conversations about where all of those uploaded images and files are going, and how they can be picked up and spread once they are out there, and how the dispersion is well beyond our personal control! Complete understanding of this reality is necessary for responsible use of digital media by our children.

Jeanette Aydlette has been a teacher and counselor of elementary school children since 1977. She has also taught undergraduate and graduate students in the areas of child development and group counseling. She currently attends St. Katherine’s Greek Orthodox Church in Falls Church, VA. She and her husband, Mitch, are the parents of two young men.

A: PREVENTION IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN THE CURE

A classmate of my daughter’s was recently found guilty of cyberbullying along with a few of her friends against one particular girl. Since this all happened on school-issued laptops—which have ground rules and oversight attached to them—this incident was ultimately discovered. The school’s punishment? A three-day suspension during which the girls went to the beach daily, as they posted on Facebook and texted their friends at school about their activities, mocking the whole system.

The result of this punishment was not a change of heart or sincere apology, merely more contempt for the system. These girls had no guilt about harassing someone they didn’t like, and the computer is the most cowardly way to do this. Gone are the days where you might actually confront the bully face to face and let him have it—as I did once at age five! Although I am not advocating retaliation, the possibility of a public act being witnessed or some other intervention could be a deterrent. With cyberbullies, the victim is helpless to respond, short of falling to the same level. Meanwhile, the public humiliation and loss of reputation continues.

That’s tough stuff for a kid (or an adult) to shake off for a kid, and it can be an addictive habit for the perpetrator. I want to mention here that it is important to remember that this isn’t just about children. Adults can also be vulnerable in the office and on social networks, though perhaps less overtly so.

Preventing this particular cruelty requires two things: a sympathetic heart and a respect for the computer’s potential. A kind, feeling heart is something that is cultivated throughout one’s life, and it must be modeled in the home and in the Church community. Developing kindness and compassion are issues beyond the scope of this article, but let’s just say that the ability to put oneself in someone else’s situation is a task of maturation. The level of demonstrated maturity should dictate the access parents give their children to the Internet.

Years ago, when we were taking driving lessons, we were subjected to cheesy films that compared the automobile to a loaded gun in terms of lethality. Similarly, it’s important to respect the computer as both a wonderful tool and a harmful weapon. In truth, today competence with these machines is akin to the ability to read and write; isolationism is not a real option. Parents and teens should have conversations about where all of those uploaded images and files are going, and how they can be picked up and spread once they are out there, and how the dispersion is well beyond our personal control! Complete understanding of this reality is necessary for responsible use of digital media by our children.
In Matthew 5:22–23, Christ teaches the Parable of the Talents: The man with the two talents also came. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.” His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

As parents, we should allow our children the opportunity to use the computer tool and then gradually expand the opportunity for its use. This requires vigilance and regularity of the part of parents to be sure the child stays within the boundaries that have been set. As the children demonstrate responsibility, more can be granted. The use of a computer is a privilege, just like any other. Contemporary life makes it easy to forget that our minds and hearts need discipline and structure as we grow. Just because a ten-year-old can operate the dumb thing at lightning speed, it doesn’t mean they should…

ON A PRACTICAL LEVEL, HERE ARE SOME GUIDELINES THAT ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE COMPUTING:

1. From the beginning, set daily time limits on media use and enforce them. Use a timer! This not only moves computer use into the realm of a privilege, but it also frees up time for other things, like sports or reading, that could easily be subsumed by the machine otherwise.
2. Even before the use of the Internet becomes appropriate for your child, begin creating a bookmarked list for your child to use—sites that are safe and have your complete approval, such as www.games@goarch.org. (And I’ll disclose that my husband was involved in its development!)
3. Once the Internet is in use, regularly check the browser’s history tab. If it has been cleared by someone other than the parent, a talk is warranted. Preserving the history must be part of the agreement for the privilege of use. Again, this requires that the parents check with diligence. You wouldn’t let your kids hang out with someone you didn’t know, so remember that this is no different.
4. Appropriate Internet filter software should be on any computer a child has access to.
5. Video chat and texting are much harder to regulate, and they can be the easiest gateways to cyberbullying. Implement a household policy of open computer use, requiring that the kids use the computer in a public area (like the living room). Let them know that if you cannot lean over and take a peek at what they are looking at, then they shouldn’t be on that site and they may lose privileges. Ultimately, everything that someone does online is public. Truly understanding the weight of that from the beginning is essential.
6. Cultivate the mom’s network. It is sometimes easier to keep an eye on other people’s children than it is on your own. Making friends with your children’s friends’ parents multiplies your vigilance.
7. Let your kids know that it is their responsibility to report other’s inappropriate activity, because someone is being hurt by it!
8. If it happens, document it by printing it out, and notify the perpetrator’s parents and/or school officials.

Forty years ago, an eleven-year-old boy suffered the humiliation of riding the bus home seated right behind the driver, tilting his own head back while pinching his bloodied nose. This was an immediate consequence of picking on someone “weaker,” a five-year-old named Elizabeth. But by the very nature of their methods, cyberbullies rarely suffer such a social consequence. Legislation and wishful thinking isn’t going to solve the problem, but vigilant parenting can help.

Elizabeth Borch is managing editor of PRAXIS. She has two teenage children.
On October 10, 2010, the Hellenic College and Holy Cross community celebrated the centennial anniversary of an extraordinary human being whose life is inseparably connected with our school and our Church here in America. His earthly life began on October 10, 1910, in the mountains of Greece. As a shepherd boy, the hand of God guided his steps through several critical stages in his odyssey of life and eventually brought him to our school. The better portion of his long life was spent here on the campus of Holy Cross in Brookline, MA, where his physical and spiritual presence over the years left an indelible mark, and where he now lies asleep in the Lord under the oak tree behind the Holy Cross chapel.

Elias Papadopoulos, the shepherd boy, was destined to become our own beloved shepherd and deeply respected Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos, who is fondly remembered for his exemplary ministry of love and service. As Professor of New Testament, as a devout monastic priest and later as a hierarch of the Church, and as a wise and saintly spiritual father, he taught many generations of students and priests so much about the one essential thing: authentic love for Christ and His Church.

From his earliest family life, young Elias was different. His intellectual capacity and his prudent disposition made him appear more mature than his peers, who responded with confidence and respect. At the age of thirteen, after completing school, he left his family and began working first in the small town of Nemea and later in the city of Patras. During this time he began listening to the fiery preaching of Fr. Gervasios Paraskevopoulos. He read the life of St. Alexios the Man of God, and he experienced the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession for the first time. His heart and mind were being cultivated and significant things were being raised to his consciousness, such as love for the Church and devotion to Christ. By March 1928, when he was not yet eighteen years old, Elias left everything without telling his family and arrived at the Monastery of Mega Spelaion, near Kalavryta, to become a novice. A year later, when his family learned where Elias had gone, the father approvingly remarked, “God gave me many children; let Him take one for Himself.”

As a novice in the monastic life, Elias was drawn to the liturgical life of the Church and made progress under the
guidance of Fr. Dorotheos. Over time, an inner struggle was developing into intense desire for a more austere and deeper form of spiritual life. Soon after he first heard about Mt. Athos, he found himself at the Skete of St. Anna—guided by the “hand of God,” as he noted years later in Recollections of My Life.

On Mt. Athos, the young Elias Papadopoulos soon renounced the things of this world and dedicated his life to Christ forever, thus becoming a new man, the Monk Gerasimos, as he again notes in his Recollections: “During the sacred ceremony of my tonsuring as a monk, I really felt that I had become another person…even though we realize that the old man is, to a large extent, still hiding in us.”

On June 17, 1935, the Monday of the Holy Spirit, Metropolitan Damaskenos of Corinth ordained Gerasimos the monk to the diaconate, and on March 29, 1941, he was ordained to the priesthood by Metropolitan Michael of Corinth. During this time, his strong desire to gain a better and fuller education led him to complete his studies first at the Theological Seminary in Corinth, then in Arta, and finally at the University of Athens during World War II and the German occupation of Greece. During these trying years, Fr. Gerasimos, as director of an orphanage, helped many orphans not only to survive but also to experience nurturing love.

After surviving the war and the occupation, Fr. Gerasimos saw the “hand of God” guiding his life into yet another series of providential events, including his service as Chancellor of the Metropolis of Corinth under Metropolitan Michael. He also traveled to the University of Munich, where he studied the Greek philosophers and did the research for his first book, Greek Philosophy as Propaedia to Christianity.

By spring 1951, Fr. Gerasimos was standing at another crossroads in his life. Would he stay and serve the Church in Greece as perhaps a future metropolitan, or would he come to America, where Metropolitan Michael, now the Archbishop of North and South America, was inviting him to come and be at his side? Archimandrite Gerasimos chose to come to America, and by July 1952, he was in Boston ready to begin his teaching career at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology as professor of New Testament. He was so overwhelmed by the beauty of the school and the opportunity to teach there that he quoted St. Peter on Mt. Tabor to express his spiritual delight: “It is good for us to be here!” Indeed, it was his destiny and clearly the will of God for him to be at Holy Cross, and to remain there longer than anywhere else in his life. Of all the people who have served the school over the years there is probably no one else who has served the school as long as he did. From the start and throughout his long career as a teacher, his genuine love for the students enabled him to effectively transmit to them not only knowledge, but also his own love for Christ and His Church as well. This is what we read in his Recollections about this point in his life:

What I wanted was to spur their interest, to think more deeply about the faith: Who is Christ? What has He brought that is new? Not merely in teaching but ontologically, in reality…We have three “explosions” in the history of the world. The first is the creation, the second is the Incarnation of God for the salvation of the world in time and in the Church, and the third is our salvation in eternity.

On May 20, 1962, Archimandrite Gerasimos became Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos. In addition to his teaching at the school, he was now also the arch-shepherd of the New England Diocese, serving here for five years and later another ten years in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, where he accepted to go even though he would be away from the school he loved so much. During his fifteen years as bishop, he sought a close relationship with the priests and the communities. He welcomed their opinions and ideas, and he also wanted them to know their important position and responsibility in the Church. In his mind, the priests were his officers and soldiers and in effect the “bishops” in their own communities. They knew better the joys and the problems of their faithful and could effectively organize and carry out the spiritual programs with the encouragement and cooperation of the bishop. In matters of faith and order, he applied the rule of strict interpretation; in matters of secondary importance, economia and flexibility.

In his sermons, lectures, personal guidance and conversations, Bishop Gerasimos emphasized the sacredness of the faith in the person of Jesus Christ and in the life and mission of the Church. He sometimes likened the Orthodox Church to a small shop with very select merchandise in the midst of the multitude of other faith communities in the large marketplace. He reasoned that because we cannot compete with them in numbers, we must be aware of our responsibility to demonstrate to all the particular spirituality that characterizes the Orthodox Faith and way of life. In order to do this, he always reminded us that we must first live an authentic Orthodox life. He reminded us that the beauty of the Orthodox Church is her profound faith in Christ as the Apostles knew Him and loved Him, and as the great Fathers of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church have presented Him to us in the depth of the prayers, the services, the icons, the hymns, and above all in the spiritual masterpiece of the Divine Liturgy, which is the life experience and the expression of the living faith of the whole Church throughout the ages. At times Bishop Gerasimos was most emphatic in saying that one who does...
not understand and does not live and experience what is going on during the Divine Liturgy is not yet an Orthodox Christian, simply because such a person does not experience the total reality of Christ—Head and Body and which includes the Church—in all his or her depth and height and breadth.

His vision of the Church in America, as it was going through the critical adjustments and changes of the 60s and 70s, was well-grounded and anchored in sacred Tradition. Bishop Gerasimos was never at a loss about how to effectively apply the Faith to the changing circumstances and needs of a different time and place.

When Bishop Gerasimos came to America as a young professor, everything then was done in Greek and there was no immediate language problem. That had changed within a few short years, however, while he was traveling around the country and interacting with the younger generations. He was an early proponent of introducing more and more English into the worship services of the Church. He even proposed as early as 1956 that the students at Holy Cross be trained in giving sermons in English. He saw the language issue not merely as a problem, but as a tragedy, for he believed ardently that we cannot abandon the Greek language and must do everything we can to maintain it. At the same time, he believed that more English should be introduced as needed in the various parishes. While he fully appreciated the admirable contributions of the Greek pioneers in America, he was very sensitive to the rising needs of the new generations. He did not want to see Church life remain for them a lifeless formality, worthy of some sympathy and respect, but never a serious expression of Christian faith that engages and renews lives. By promoting the use of English in Church life, Bishop Gerasimos by no means meant to dishonor the Greek language, but rather to help our new generations and our many new converts to be well-informed and conscientious Orthodox Christians, and, at the same time, to appreciate the best aspects of Hellenism that are indeed embodied in Orthodox Christianity.

After retiring from his administrative responsibilities as bishop, Gerasimos was truly guided by the hand of God, just as he had been throughout his long life and career. He chose to take up residence at Holy Cross, living quietly as a resident scholar and spiritual father for another eighteen years. Each morning and evening he was present for the daily liturgical services, teaching us with his life to pray always, not so much with human languages, but with the mystical and experiential language of the heart. The unforgettable holy elder was and shall always be a precious gift not only for Holy Cross and Hellenic College, but also for the whole Orthodox Church in America. He has made perceptible the presence of holiness in our own time and place.

His virtuous Christian life was adorned with many charismatic gifts. Certainly the crown jewel of his personality was the true and unfeigned Christian love. His love for peace was also so impressed upon his face that just looking at him was enough to transmit to us a heavenly peacefulness. His humble spirit and unaffected simplicity allowed him to live without being noticed—carefully concealing his many gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus teaching by example the beauty of those fragrant flowers of humility and simplicity. He loved to study and wanted always to learn. To the very end of his life, he was working on a commentary of the Gospel of St. John, which was in manuscript form when he died. He was a thoughtful man who was also joyful and had a sense of humor and a twinkle in his eye. Bishop Gerasimos was truly a man of God, a saintly man whose passing through this life was “a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18). May the memory of his holy presence and the legacy of his spirit and contribution to our school ever be an inspiration for others to emulate, so that Orthodox Christianity may grow deep and strong roots here in America through the presence and the work of many other Orthodox Christians who will bear the spirit of the ever-blessed and memorable Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos.

Fr. Peter A. Chamberas is Chaplain at Hellenic College – Holy Cross in Brookline, MA. For a bibliography of books by and about Bishop Gerasimos, visit: www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/religioused/praxis
Experiencing the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival

Michael Goodfriend

When I received a phone call earlier this spring asking me to participate in the 2010 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival, I was flattered and a bit surprised. It’s been twenty-five years since the festival changed my life, but in those twenty-five years I hadn’t given myself time to reflect on what the festival did for me and for countless other young people throughout the nation. You might say that I’d forgotten.

When I tell people about the festival, or when someone asks me about it, myriad memories flood into my mind for a fleeting moment, then repackage themselves nicely on a shelf in the back of my mind until called upon for another brief recollection, usually concluding with the pat refrain: “It was great!”

Now, having agreed to introduce finalists in this year’s festival, I find myself looking back over the years since I placed first in the first-ever St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. Here are some things I’ll never forget:

The small stage in the basement of my small church in Madison, WI, where I first gave my speech, and the little old lady who approached me afterward and said rather cryptically in a low voice: “You’re the one. You’re the one!”

I remember that participating in the festival was something I did not want to do at all. But my parents made me do it. In fact, my stepfather refused to let me out of my room until I’d written a speech. I argued that I didn’t know how to write a speech. I’d never written a speech, or given a speech, so how could I do it? He gave me a few simple instructions to get me started and left the room, telling me the only way to learn to do something was by doing it.

I selected my subject almost randomly. It was “My Favorite Bible Story.” The Good Samaritan came immediately to mind, so I figured that was my favorite Bible story and I’d write about it. I thought I knew the story, but of course as I began to write, I found I really didn’t know it as well as I thought. I had to examine the story carefully in order to write thoughtfully about it, and in the process I came to understand the story in its multiplicity of meanings, and to understand the value of parables as a means of illuminating the complexities of our time. I realized that the story of the Good Samaritan could easily take place, indeed often did take place, right
in my own midst at school and in town. A couple of hours later, I came out of my room with what would essentially remain the speech I delivered in the final round of the festival.

I remember that time of my life. I’d just started at a new school after what was my fifth move to a new home. I had just turned thirteen years old, the same age at which I would have been bar mitzvahed if my mother and I hadn’t converted to Orthodox Christianity when she married my stepfather. I remember wishing I could be bar mitzvahed like my brother had been. The oratorical festival turned out to be my bar mitzvah, quite literally, if you consider that one of the chief challenges for a boy at his bar mitzvah is to deliver a speech.

I remember the thrill of speaking at the second round in Chicago and the hilarity of receiving a placard with the inscription “TPIP TO NEW YORK!” Somehow, the leg of the R in the word “trip” had been forgotten. My stepfather joked that it was a Greek R.

I remember that TPIP to New York vividly. We stayed at the Hilton near Rockefeller Center, and I insisted we stay in a room on one of the top floors. My stepfather was my chaperone. He was also attending the Clergy–Laity Congress as the representative of our home parish. He didn’t tell me until years later how much he disliked being up high in skyscrapers.

I’ll never forget my first impressions of a city that would years later become my home. The noise and excitement and the sheer terror of it all to a boy from rural Wisconsin are as vibrant in my mind as the subway I took to get here from Queens this morning.

I remember my nerves when I gave my speech in the final round. The woman who introduced me had to lower the podium as far down as it could go, then stung me with the added humiliation of placing a crate on the floor behind the podium so I could be seen when I spoke. I stepped up to the podium and looked down at my notes. My red tie was flapping distractingly against my chest. I realized it was beating in rhythm with the pounding of my heart.

I’ll never forget addressing the entire Clergy–Laity Congress the day after placing first in the festival, and the sermon Archbishop Iakavos delivered immediately after I spoke. He held me firmly under his arm the entire time he spoke. I look at a photo of that moment now and see it as an image of the source of strength that the Church has been for me in the years since.

As these memories flood back into my mind, I find it is
impossible to quantify the impact the festival has had on my life. I see the festival’s manifestation in virtually everything I do.

As an actor, writer and talk radio producer, words have become my way of life. The value of the spoken word rings true in the opening sentence of St. John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” I am, thanks to the oratorical festival, ever mindful of the importance of text. As an actor, I have profound respect for the writers who create the words I speak on stage. Words are the conduit for the expression of emotion, both constructive and destructive, and they are ultimately our best hope of being understood.

The festival made me aware of the importance of speaking with purpose. Words without purpose are little more than breath, or, as King Claudius says in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, trying in vain to pray to God for forgiveness after killing his brother, “Words without thoughts never to heaven go.” When I write for the stage or the screen or when I learn my lines as an actor, I know my words will be without value if they are without thought.

The festival taught me to appreciate the power of words. Now, as the producer of a weekly talk radio show that is broadcast nationwide, I’m reminded constantly that words can be a force of destruction. That is perhaps felt nowhere more palpably than in the world of talk radio. My task is to shape the content of conversation for broadcast in a way that will make it entertaining, informative, illuminating and, ultimately, elevated. That requires guests and hosts who are willing to use words to speak truthfully on air.

Finally, there is one lesson I learned by participating in the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival that I am constantly relearning and rediscovering: the love and support of the Greek Orthodox Church is boundless and ubiquitous. Without the Church, I may never have had a chance make these discoveries. But, as I now know, Archbishop Iakovos, Mr. Ernest Villas and Ms. Minerva Stergianopoulos decided that the Church should have a national oratorical festival—and, as a result, countless young people like me have been challenged in ways they may never have been otherwise. Through that challenge, countless young people discovered they were capable of far more than they ever dreamed.

We embark on numerous great journeys in the course of life. These journeys may take us far from the Church at times. But as finalists in this festival, you have already borne witness to the immeasurable value of the Church. You have spoken words of wisdom to Church elders, and you have inspired other young people to follow in your footsteps.

I ask my fellow finalists to remember the Church in your journeys ahead, wherever they may lead. Remember that the Church led you here and that this is a wonderful place to be. Continue, if you can, to bear witness to the beauty of the Church as you journey. Don’t forget to call upon the Church in times of need and distress. Don’t forget to honor the Church in your success.

You will be amazed to discover the places in your lives where you will find the Church, and where the Church will find you. It will deepen your faith and love for all the Church has to offer. And when you remember this day, I hope you will recall the Church’s role in bringing you here, and you will bear witness to that through the power of the Word, spoken with clarity and purpose, in your own voice, as you did today.

Michael Goodfriend resides in New York City and is a talk radio producer, writer and actor. These remarks were delivered on the occasion of the 2010 Archdiocese Oratorical Festival in New York.
This question is posed all the time. The answer is simple. Yes! First and foremost, the curriculum of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is the life of the parish itself. That curriculum consists of a liturgical and sacramental life (leitourgia), a social life (fellowship or koinonia), a life of service (diakonia), a life of witness and proclamation (martyria and kerygma), and a life of learning (matheteia).

The religious education programs of parishes should consider all of these elements to be parts of the program. For example, children and families should attend as much of the Sunday Divine Liturgy as possible. If this is a consistent habit, then Sunday Church school can work to explain and explore what is occurring in the Liturgy. Participation in the Liturgy and instruction about the Liturgy can go hand in hand. Parishes with active social ministries usually involve all the parishioners. Learning the rationale—from the stories of Scripture, the lives of saints, and more—ties the ministry of the parish to the Orthodox Tradition, making it more than just a nice thing for people to do, but something that we do because our Faith teaches us to care about others. Serving the poor and learning about serving the poor are connected.

Beyond that, the “curriculum” that many people are asking about is really a question about standard resources. And here, too, the answer is: “Yes! The Archdiocese has a standard program.” From 1989 to 1993, the Archdiocese Department of Religious Education published a textbook series covering preschool to fifth grade. These resources replaced an older series of textbooks. Indeed, these are now approaching twenty years old. What is timeless is the content and relevance of the Orthodox Faith and way of life that they present. What is clearly dated in them is the world that the students know. The Orthodox Christian Education Commission (the Christian education agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America) also has a textbook series.

For junior and senior high school students, plenty of resources exist. But the Department of Religious Education is currently focused on producing a series of zines (from “magazines”). These present one topic of the Faith in a unit of study comprised of several lessons. The zines are easy-to-read, with small bites of information, plenty of graphics, and many interactive elements, such as questions for reflection or things to look up in the Bible or other sources. The first thing that many people notice is that there are no formal lessons in the zines themselves. The lessons are contained in the Teacher Guide. Each lesson’s activities and discussions lead students to a deeper understanding and active application of the short texts in the zine.

FIVE ZINES ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

- A Lamp to My Feet: An Introduction to the Bible
- Of Your Mystical Supper: The Eucharist
- Heaven on Earth: The Divine Liturgy
- For to Us a Child is Born (about the Incarnation of Christ and the Christmas season)
- Journey through Holy Week

The goal is to create a menu of topics for teachers and students to select for study. This will allow teachers and students to collaborate on the curriculum—the course of study—for the year.

The zines also necessitate our approach to instruction. Information is easily obtained today. In fact, many people are overwhelmed by all of the information that can be found simply by Googling a topic. But what do we do with all this information? Sifting through it, understanding it, and applying it are the three educational challenges today. The zine, by presenting that which is most important and manageable for a learner, cuts through to the core of the issue, asks questions to assist in comprehension, and poses challenges for application of the topic to the learner’s life.

For more information, visit www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/religioused/zines.
Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College

Author: Doug Lemov
Reviewer: Anton C. Vrame

Teach Like a Champion and the work of its author, Doug Lemov of Uncommon Schools, received a lot of media attention when it was published in April. After reading the book, it was easy to see why. Teach Like a Champion is not a method or theory of instruction. Rather, the book provides teachers with concrete strategies to improve student achievement that can be implemented relatively easily in a classroom, no matter your instructional method. The strategies were not developed by the author, but have been compiled after observing excellent teachers at work.

The forty-nine techniques are divided into seven categories: 1) setting high academic expectations; 2) planning that ensures academic achievement; 3) structuring and delivering lessons; 4) engaging students in lessons; 5) creating a strong classroom; 6) setting and maintaining high behavioral expectations; 7) building character and trust.

The techniques themselves often have clever names like “Cold Calling,” (Technique #22), in which the teacher selects students at random, not just those who raise their hands. This keeps students engaged in the lesson because they soon get the message that they could be called to answer a question at any time. The techniques are described thoroughly in a step-by-step approach. Variations of each technique are often presented. For those who want to see the techniques in practice, the book includes a DVD with clips of exemplary teachers using them.

The book frequently explains how a technique can transform an ineffective or inefficient practice. For example, “Positive Framing” (#43), one of the techniques for building character, shows how teachers can correct students in a positive manner, whether behaviorally or on an academic matter. So, instead of saying, “Stop looking out the window, John,” say, “John, I need you to keep your eyes on the blackboard.”

Many of these techniques would transfer well in a Church school setting. Teachers will also want to look at “Stretch It” (#3), which rewards right answers with more questions, and “Post It” (#8), which recommends that teachers prominently post the purpose for the lesson that day.

Professional teachers and those who want to pursue teaching as a career should find Teach Like a Champion quite interesting and useful. It may remind them why some techniques they already use are successful, like having a “Strong Voice” (#38) in the classroom. I know that I intend to use some of the techniques with graduate seminarians (even keeping them engaged is an issue sometimes) as well as passing them along others so they can include them in their work as Sunday school teachers.

Novice teachers will find the strategies extremely helpful because, from my experience, new teachers need and are looking for concrete strategies that they can implement to feel confident in the classroom. Because many parish religious educators are either novice teachers or have little training as teachers, the techniques will help them implement classroom management strategies armed with techniques that will create a better experience for all.

Doug Lemov, Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College (Jossey-Bass, 2010), 352 pages, DVD included.
real human encounters, real suffering, real victories and real experiences of God in the mundane realities of a dirt-poor nation struggling to realize a spiritual reawakening.

One of the most inspiring characteristics of this volume is how effortlessly and unobtrusively Fr. Luke garneres spiritual lessons from his family’s life as missionaries, and from the authentic struggles of ordinary yet courageous Albanian people.

On the cover of the book is a photograph of Fr. Luke offering the Paschal light at a Resurrection Service. He is outdoors above one of the main boulevards of the capital city of Tirana, with 20,000 people joyfully receiving the light of the Resurrection with the candles in their hands. If you look very carefully, in the bottom corner you can see a woman receiving the light. She is smiling with radiant joy in sharing in Christ’s Resurrection. I predict if you read this book, you will share in that same joy!

Fr. Stanley S. Harakas is the Archbishop Iakovos Professor of orthodox theology, Emeritus, at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He is also the author of many fine books.

Go Forth: Stories of Mission and Resurrection in Albania
Author: Luke A. Veronis
Reviewer: Stanley S. Harakas

Most Orthodox Christians are unaware of the rich history of missions in their Church. An even more closed door is the actual life of Orthodox missionaries. What in fact do Orthodox missionaries do? Well, if you are curious enough to find out, I heartily recommend to you this book, which is a collection of very human, very inspiring, very interesting, and very attention-grabbing missionary stories. After reading this book, you will have most of your questions answered and will have entered into the real experiences and reflections of a modern Orthodox missionary who participated in and witnessed the astounding rebirth of an almost extinguished Christian community in a small nation of southeastern Europe: Albania.

Perhaps the reason for most Orthodox Christians’ indifference to missions is that, after the fifteenth century, most Orthodox Churches found it almost impossible to do what Jesus Christ told us to do: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The reason for this lack of mission sensitivity was the stifling conditions of the Muslim oppression of the Church that continued until the beginnings of the nineteenth century. Four centuries in the self-preservation mode had left the Orthodox, clergy and laity, without a missionary consciousness.

All this began to change radically about fifty years ago in the minds and hearts of a small number of clergy and laity in Greece. One of the leading figures in this tiny movement was a young Greek clergyman, Anastasios Yannoulatos—who is now the Archbishop of Albania. He and his associates began a revival of Orthodox mission consciousness with the publication of a magazine titled Πορεθήκε. The periodical was also issued in English, with the title Go Ye!, which essentially is also the title of this book, Go Forth. In one sense, Fr. Veronis’s book is a fruition of the aspirations of that first effort in rekindling Orthodox interest in missions. Fr. Luke Veronis, the son of one of the most distinguished missionary-minded priests of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Fr. Alexander Veronis, has advanced the sense of mission in the Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada.

In Go Forth he has provided a beautiful, moving and truly inspiring collection of personal stories describing the triumphs and successes as well as the painful failures and disappointments of a modern missionary. It is almost impossible to stop reading these stories, one after another: real efforts,
From the Director

Focusing on Adults Changes the View

Dear Reader,

People in the Church have been calling for “adult education” for many years. The religious education of children can take one only so far. We encourage education for our children into college and graduate school so that they can excel in life. Expanding religious education into adulthood could help them excel in faith. The need to continue our education in faith into adulthood is apparent, yet to do so would require adjusting our vision.

A teacher of mine once asked in a class, “When you look through a camera lens, there are points that are clearly in focus and points that are still in the picture, but not as sharply focused. In our recent history as Christian educators, we always point the camera at children, focusing sharply on them. Adults are in the picture, but not as well focused. What would happen if we refocused Christian education on adults?”

The first thing our class agreed on was that children would remain in the picture. Adult education would not and should not replace the education of children in our parishes. There is still a vitally important ministry in the education of children in our Sunday Church school programs and other ministries. But focusing attention on the adults would change how we understand the education of children because it would create a larger context for learning. More adults in the parish would be seen as teachers of children, because more adults would be involved in learning. Parents would now be able to teach their children at home with confidence. Parents would become stronger role models about matters of faith to their children. Children would grow up surrounded by adults who took learning, knowing, and living their Faith seriously. Hopefully, this would also translate into children taking learning their Faith more seriously.

The second thing my class realized was that adult education was the historical method of the Church. In the early Church, children “went along for the ride” of Church life; the Church spent most of its energies educating adults—from the catechumens preparing for baptism to listening to the homilies of Church fathers. As the late Orthodox educator John Boojamra liked to point out, Christianity is an adult religion, with adult concepts that are presented in adult categories (for example, Trinity: One God, Three Persons; what we say we believe about Jesus Christ in the Creed; the presence of evil in the world). We do Christianity a disservice by reducing Christianity to games and what Boojamra liked to call “trivia retention” in order to make it comprehensible and accessible to children.

Third, we realized that to teach adults the Church would need to rely not only on our clergy but also on many additional people. Although the clergy are the primary stewards and exponents of the Faith, Tradition, and Way of Life in a parish (with the bishops as the exponents of them in and for the Church), one priest cannot possibly attend to all the educational needs of the adults in a parish. There are too many adults, and their needs and interests are too diverse. Also, we must recognize that in plenty of parishes there are non-ordained persons capable of teaching the Faith; many are just as knowledgeable as the clergy, and some are more so. Therefore, before even beginning an adult education program in a parish, more teachers for adults would need to be identified and, as needed, educated themselves before they begin to teach others.

Anton C. Vrame, PhD
Director
New Shipping Procedures and Rates from the Department of Religious Education

Effective immediately, customers of the Department of Religious Education will notice changes to our shipping procedures and rates.

1. Orders of resources produced by the Department of Religious Education—especially textbooks—will ship from a new warehouse in Tulsa, OK. Other resources will ship from the Brookline offices of the DRE. This means that customers will often receive items in different shipments, at different times. Shipping times from Oklahoma will be three to four days to most places in the United States, thus serving customers better. Items shipped from Brookline will continue to take one to seven days to reach most customers. Invoices will no longer be included with domestic orders, but will instead be mailed separately. International orders will continue to be shipped as they have been, but at the new rates.

If you are a customer who sometimes visits the DRE office to place and/or pick up orders, please contact us (800-566-1088) before coming to the office—some items are no longer available for pick-up in Brookline.

2. Shipping charges will now reflect actual, final shipping cost, whether UPS or US Postal Service. Additional handling fees are based on the dollar amount of the order. (Formerly, both shipping and handling rates were based only on the dollar amount.)

The Department of Religious Education has initiated these new procedures and rates to serve its customers with greater efficiency. Everything else about placing orders, invoicing, and payment remains the same.