

# Department of Religious Education

November 12, 2014

Your Grace, Bishop +MICHAEL, Very Reverend & Reverend Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

*Glory to Jesus Christ!*

Clergy, parents and Church School personnel were invited to three conferences that were held in August. The theme was “*Leading Our Children To The Experience Of God.*” Sylvia Leontaritis presented at the morning session on “*Teaching Our Children to Pray.*” The material she provided equipped attendees with specific steps that we must take ourselves in order to teach others. She also spoke about engaging the children and ways to get parents involved in the education of the youth. Her presentation was extremely well received by all who attended and her message spread quickly to those who were not able to attend. Carol Wetmore, Larissa Sovyrda, and Fr. David Cowan led the afternoon session. They spoke on the importance of integrating children into the musical liturgical worship and gave practical steps to involve them in the services. The first conference was recorded and will be made available on the Diocesan website soon. 31 people (6 clergy, 25 laity) attended on August 2 in Randolph, NJ; 24 people (7 clergy, 17 laity) attended on August 9<sup>th</sup> in Cohoes, NY; 23 people (5 clergy, 18 laity) attended on August 16<sup>th</sup> in East Meadow, NY.

Many people were back from last year along with some new faces. Every attendee received a feedback survey, of which 36 were completed and returned. All but one was overwhelmingly positive. Many people commented that they wished for better attendance. Many people also said they only learned about the conference a week or two before the date. Last year we heard that the major obstacle to educating our youth is the parental involvement both at home and through participation in parish church school programs. In response to the concern for a lack of parental involvement this year the parents were invited, and yet the attendance dropped. My goal is to have every clergy member, everyone involved in the education of our youth, and as many parents as possible attend next year’s conference. One way I am looking into increasing parent involvement is to offer babysitting during the conference. If you have any helpful ways to work together in accomplishing this goal so that we may grow a generation of youth who love the Church and will share the Gospel, please feel free to contact me.

Our Facebook page has 187 followers and reaches people from all over the world. 209 people follow our 24 boards on Pinterest. Many of our followers are well-respected authors, educators and department heads from many jurisdictions. Both of these tools increase awareness about our Diocese and increase opportunities for communication and education. They contain tools, lessons, articles, videos, music and ideas about how to educate all ages. We have been invited to share our resources with other well-respected educators. I encourage you to take a look and follow us on both sites. My hope is to develop a website so that all these resources can be found in one location.

We are currently researching speakers and new locations for next year’s conferences.

If you have an education program in your parish for either adults and/or children and would like to be added to the database, please contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Matushka Andrea Diamantis*  
Chairman  
Department of Religious Education