

Department of Religious Education

November 10, 2015

Your Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, Your Eminence, Archbishop +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 June. The theme was “*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it,*” (Proverbs 22:6). The day was divided into two parts. The morning presentation was Darkness to Light’s *Stewards of Children*. Mrs. Cindy Heise, LMSW, Coordinator for ORSMA, presented in Paramus, NJ and Endicott, NY. Mr. Anthony Zenkus, LMSW, Director of Education for The Safe Center, LI presented in East Meadow, NY. Both presenters were very professional and poised. They fielded questions and spoke well on this very sensitive topic. They were engaging with the audience and offered specific steps to take in order to best keep our children, ourselves and our parish as safe as possible without creating an atmosphere of fear. All participants received a certificate to present to their parish priest as evidence that they completed the course. All Directors, teachers and anyone who has more than casual contact with children in our parishes must take some form of training. The OCA recommends that each parish follow this program as a unified approach to prevent abuse.

The afternoon session offered the OCEC Director/Teacher Training level two. Participants got to choose between two tracks and could complete the third track online in order to receive their certificate. The presenters were V. Rev. George Alberts, Nike Bach, Khouria Anna Timpko Hughes and Matushka Myra Kovalak. The two tracks offered were *Enriching the Classroom Experience* and *Moral Issues Overview*.

Again we offered tables full of sample curriculum and enrichment material from all jurisdictions and various sources. Many of those attended were able to discuss different options for their classroom and share ideas with other attendees. 21 people (8 clergy, 13 laity) attended on June 13 in Paramus, this is 10 less than last year. Eight people (3 clergy and 5 laity) attended on June 20 in East Meadow, this is 15 less than last year. 29 people (12 clergy, 17 laity) attended on June 27 in Endicott, this is five more than last year and quite impressive since there was a last minute change of venue and the upstate NY region is pretty spread out.

Every attendee received a feedback survey. All were overwhelmingly positive and as again the request for more attendance and more notice from their priests were requested. This is the third year that attendance has dropped and each year I hear

that those who do attend have only heard about the conference a week or two before.

My goal is still the same, to have every clergy member, everyone involved in the education of our youth, and as many parents as possible attend next year's conference. We were not able to provide babysitting during the conference this year, as there were no volunteers in that department. 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 is up from 187 followers to 262 and reaches 1.1 thousand people from all over the world with many sharing our posts. Some of the most popular posts are on the topics of why we fast, how to best manage crying children in church, how to talk to your child about dating and the 7 Questions, 7 Answers from Archbishop Michael. 236 people follow our 44 boards on Pinterest. We average 1,640 monthly viewers with 47 engaged (meaning they have clicked through or repined our post.) 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. I encourage you to take a look and follow us on both sites.

We also have a brand new website which is still in the very beginning stages. You can find us here doenynjoca.org. The goal is to unify posts in all three places in order to maximize our reach. I welcome your feedback or requests for a specific post.

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