



## Department Highlights of 2021 for the Diocesan Assembly

Master, Bless!

Your Eminence, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers,  
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

2021 was definitely a “two steps closer, one step back” kind of year for many of us in Youth Ministries. We have seen how the Pandemic has taken its toll on our youth, how it has changed them. We need to get to know them again, and “meet them where they are”. We have to re-think how we engage them, revising our method, and be creative in the way we meet both in person and online, so that we can re-claim our youth who are not coming to church ... those who are coming but not often ... and those who come to the Sunday Divine Liturgy but are not staying for Church School.

Here are the things we did in 2021 to get closer to this goal:

### Lenten Resources...

Resource Links were offered on the Diocesan Website *weekly* during Great Lent. Here is a sample from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Lent:

#### ***Lenten Tips of the Week*** **SECOND WEEK OF GREAT LENT**

#### **FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES...**

Click [here](#) for ***Journey to Pascha 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Lent Lesson***  
from the OCA Department of Christian Education

#### **FOR YOUNG CHILDREN...**

Click [here](#) for ***Lenten Activity Book***  
from Tending the Garden of Our Heart

Click [here](#) for ***All About Icons Lesson***  
from OrthodoxPebbles.com

## FOR TEENS & ADULTS...

Click [here](#) for video lesson on *Venerating Icons*  
From Y2AM

Click [here](#) for video lesson on *The Triumph of Orthodoxy*  
from Y2AM

## FOR FAMILIES...

Click [here](#) for *Reflections on the 2nd Week of Lent*  
from the OCA Department of Christian Education

## Spring Teacher Training...



### **CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD FORMATION TRAINING COMPLETE**

Glory to God! The Department of Christian Education congratulates nine Diocesan Teachers who have completed their *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* Formation Training and are now Certified CGS Level 1 Catechists.

Led by CGS Formation Leader, Shelley Finkler, nine diocesan participants were able to complete their training May 14-24 at Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers, NY. This training had begun in 2019 and was postponed many times since, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With God's help and the hard work of our Catechists and numerous volunteers, our Diocese now has five working Atriums (the CGS teaching environment), the most of any Diocese within the OCA.

Our Archbishop Michael opened the event with a *Molieben* Service for the Beginning of a Good Work and encouraged the participants, who were about to embark on 10 days of rigorous formation training. His Eminence emphasized the importance of this great effort they were making to learn how to guide our children in a closer relationship with Christ and His Church.

New to this training was the opportunity for observers to attend the sessions, those interested in the program who wished to "come and see". Eighteen observers — priests, church school directors and teachers, parents and parishioners — came and witnessed the methods and content of the CGS program. One observer, with tears in her eyes, commented, "We need a CGS Atrium for Adults; not just for the children. I learned so much... in a way that I had never experienced before!"

This “way” is the core of what participants learned as they were formed into catechists – and as they came to experience that the CGS Program is where the mystery of the child meets the Mystery of God.

In closing, Archbishop Michael came and participated during the second week, observing lessons on the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, the Paschal Celebration, and the Last Supper. Moved by what he saw, His Eminence exhorted, “This experience is so important because it is the reality behind the Scriptures ... so, the more experience you have in the Liturgy, in the celebrations and processions and all of the liturgical components, the more meaningful it is going to be. The children are going to remember this. It’s all about the experience!”

We give thanks to God for the support of Archbishop Michael, the generosity of the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors Fund (DDB) for sponsoring this training, and to Fr. Volodymyr and Matushka Jeanne Zablotsky and Holy Trinity Parish in Yonkers for hosting this beautiful experience, in which they generously provided daily meals and lodging for many of our training participants.

## Fall Church School Workshops...

### ***Re-Claiming Our Children For Christ***

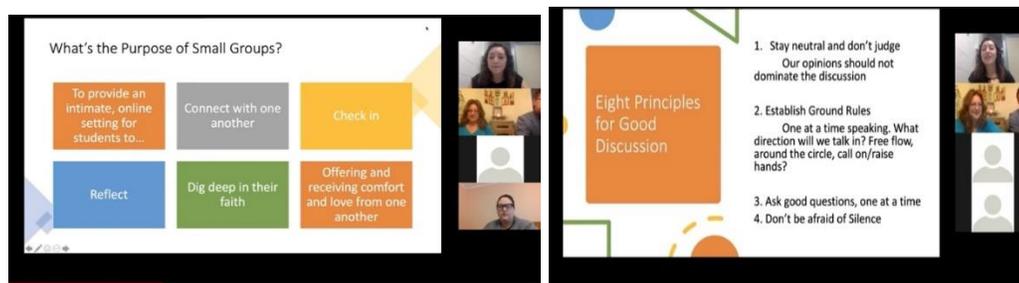
A Series of **FREE** Online Workshops

for Diocesan Church School Teachers and Clergy

**SATURDAY, September 25, 10:00 – 11:30 am**

### ***A Whole New Language: Working Online with Youth in Small Groups***

Teacher Training to learn to connect and deepen fellowship with small groups of youth



CS Small Groups Workshop 9 25 2021

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**Presenter: Kristina Anastasiades**, former Northeastern Region OCF Student Leader and currently a Youth Ministry Leader serving in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Certificate Program at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School.

**TUESDAY, September 28, 7:00 – 8:30 pm**

## ***Success Stories: Christian Education During the Pandemic***

A sharing of successful Christian Education classes and activities during this past year



Success Stories - Christian Education During the Pandemic - 9/28/21



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**Presenters: Archpriest Eric Tosi and Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky**

Rectors, respectively, of St. Gregory the Theologian Orthodox Church, Wappingers Falls, NY and Holy Apostles Orthodox Church, Mechanicsburg, PA

**SATURDAY, October 2, 10:00 – 11:30 am**

## ***Back to Basics: Getting to Know Each Other Again***

Learning how to reunite with our youth and how to bring them back to church



Back to Basics CS Workshop #3 10-2-21



**Presenter: Natalie Kapulek-Nixon**, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA since 2000. She is Chairman of the Orthodox Youth Directors in North America and sits on the Board of Directors of OCF.

What excellent teachers we had! These workshops averaged 16 registrants, although more clergy involvement is needed for more teachers to be exposed to these important youth ministry skills. Recordings of all three workshops have been made available to Diocesan clergy with the intention that you will share these short classes with your parish teachers and parents.

## What's Coming up in 2022?

- Weekly Nativity Fast Resource Links on the Diocesan Website
- Planning Deanery Activities for Children and Families to get together
- A Re-Start of the ***Bible Bowl Competition*** to be held in person in the Spring

I am thankful to God for the following Diocesan Family Members for joining our team this year and offering their time and talents for the education of our youth: Fr. Eric Tosi, Fr. Vlad Zablotsky, Mat. Jeanne Zablotsky, Mat. Kathryn Karney, Olga Ptach, Elena Paolercio, and Christine Wood.

A special thanks to Archbishop Michael, a teacher at heart, always wanting us to be inspired and encouraged, looking out for those who have been left behind, and ensuring that all parishes are given the resources needed to re-claim our families and our children for Christ!

In closing, I welcome anyone who is interested to join our Christian Education Department team to help bring these many projects to fruition for the benefit of our youth. Please feel free to contact me with any questions about these programs and upcoming events or to obtain recordings of the workshops.

We are here to help you move forward when you have had to “take a step back”!

Glory to God for All Things!

With love in Christ,

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