



Department Highlights of 2023 for the Diocesan Assembly

Master Bless!

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

At the Diocesan Assembly of 2021, our beloved Archbishop Michael gave the directive to “re-examine our Church School programs and parish youth organizations ... giving way to more personally involved methods of bringing Christ to our young people.” We continue to follow this directive, and this year we have added an Adult Education element to our workshop focus.

This year’s Christian Education Workshop is a first in our Diocese....one date, with different presenters in each one of the three deaneries, presenting the same material.

Catechesis: Learning the Faith at all Ages Christian Education Workshop is a *collaborative* effort of *our own* Diocesan Christian Educators as the Presenters. We will give “a taste” of the exciting new offerings from the Department of Christian Education of our own Orthodox Church in America and from Saint Tikhon’s Monastery. During the workshops we will “unbox” and show how to effectively use the following new programs:

Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: Manul for Adult Instruction

Blessed is the Kingdom: A Catechism-Based Church School

Heaven on Earth: A Musical Catechesis for Children

Sample lessons from **The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)** will also be presented during the second half of the workshops.

We are thankful to Fr. Stephen Evanina and Holy Resurrection Parish in Wayne, NJ; Fr. Nicholas Garklavs and St. Nicholas Parish in Whitestone, NY; and Fr. Ambrose Inlow and Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Syracuse, NY for graciously hosting these events.

I am profoundly grateful to our Diocesan Educators who have stepped up to the plate to be Workshop Presenters:

Deacon David Donch has been serving the Church and his parish of St. Nicholas in Auburn, NY as a deacon since 2016. There he leads a Men’s Study Group and co-directs the Choir.

He has been a Church School Teacher for many years, certified since 2018 as a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Catechist for Level 1 and recently certified in Level 2.

Ms. Olga Ptach is a member of Holy Trinity Parish in Yonkers, NY. She has been teaching Church School for over 30 years. She is a Certified Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Level 1 Catechist since 2018 and is currently halfway through her training to be certified in Level 2.

Olga is our Diocesan Coordinator for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and held a successful CGS Level 1 Part 1 Training at Holy Trinity Parish in Yonkers in May for 10 new catechists. We are grateful to Fr. Vlad and Mka. Jeanne Zablotskyy and Holy Trinity Parish for their gracious hospitality. Olga is planning the Level 1, Part 2 Training to be held in June 2024.

Ms. Chris Wood is a member of Holy Trinity Parish in Randolph, NJ. She has been teaching Church School for over 25 years. Since 2018, she is a Certified Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Level 1 Catechist, and is currently halfway through her training to be certified in Level 2. This is her 2nd year teaching full time at St. John Chrysostom Orthodox Academy in Bethlehem, PA, working with 5th and 6th graders, also serving as the Registrar.

Mrs. Kristy Zaitseva is a member of Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Herkimer, NY, as well as its Choir Director. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Theology from Canada Christian College in Toronto. She is a homeschooling mother of 4, teaches upper level classes for St. Raphael Orthodox Online School, has taught Church School for several years, and is Co-Director of 6 weeks of programming at our beloved St. Andrew's Camp.

All of these great teachers have this in common... our motto: **"Making Memories Makes a Difference!"** The key to children's programming is the excitement it brings and the memories that youth carry in their hearts. They have wholeheartedly devoted their lives to this--helping youth and adults alike to grow closer to Christ.

In closing, we thank God for our beloved Archbishop Michael, who continues to pray for us, support us, and encourage our efforts to do the work of the Lord!

Glory to God for All Things!

Respectfully submitted and with love in Christ,



Matushka Tamara Cowan
Chair, Department of Christian Education
Diocese of New York and New Jersey