



ST. DEMETRIOS UNION RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Summer 2023



CATECHESIS DIRECTORS:

Irene Melachrinos
Nikos Papadopoulos

Dear Parents and Parishioners,

The past year was a busy time for our Catechesis School! After the COVID disruptions, we were grateful to resume our normal schedule and activities.

In November, we did our annual **Thanksgiving project**. The children wrote thankfulness messages on paper leaves, which we hung on branches to decorate the entrance of our church. We also hosted a **Youth Singers Workshop** offered by the Eastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians.

In December and in March, we organized our **Prison card project**. The children made greeting cards to send to Christian prisoners through the **Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry**.

In January, we celebrated St. Basil and the New Year by cutting the **traditional Vasilopita**.

When Great Lent started, all our classes worked on **Lenten activities** to learn about this most important period of the church calendar. We all faithfully participated in the icon procession on **Sunday of Orthodoxy**. The older classes also took part in an **international Pascha Exchange**: The children prepared greeting cards, videos, and little gifts which they exchanged with children from other Orthodox communities around the world, learning about their Pascha customs and traditions. We exchanged greetings with communities in

the United States, Uganda, Serbia, and Australia.

The weekend before **Holy Week**, we learned about Holy Week and Pascha, and helped our community prepare the palm crosses. Fr. Emmanuel gave a moving lesson to the children on Holy Wednesday, after the Holy Unction. On Holy Friday, our Myrofores did a wonderful job honoring the Epitaphios; we are really proud of them!

After Pascha, we collaborated with GOYA to organize a **fellowship meal for the seniors** of Union. Our students did a great job making placemats, preparing, serving, and entertaining our guests!

On **Mother's Day**, the children prepared a special gift to honor and thank their mothers for all their love and care.

We concluded the year with an edifying pilgrimage **trip to the St. Nicholas Shrine** in NYC.

We are very proud of our older students who diligently served our Lord and His Church throughout the year as **Altar Servers and readers!**

We **extend heartfelt thanks** to the parents and grandparents who have been making an effort to bring the children to class on Sundays! Having a full classroom makes our catechists' voluntary work so much more meaningful.

May our Lord bless and guide us all, until we meet again in the fall!



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CATECHISTS

PREK-GRADE 1

We had a great year in our class! At this age, our students are in the process of understanding who they are and who God wants them to be. We learned about kindness, prayer, doing our cross correctly, how to behave in church and some of the major themes of the Bible. We reinforced these lessons with lots of fun projects. We believe the students now know that God loves children deeply, and that they can talk to God and go to Him with all their fears. They know that we are all God's children and are able to experience church as a welcoming community.

Sophia Orphanidou-Koukoutsis & Popi Zavola

GRADES 2-4

We always try to do hands-on activities in our class. Throughout the year, we did a kindness project, where children were assigned small acts of kindness to complete at home. We also used prayer stations, to get more specific in our prayers. We started the year learning about the Proskomide, the prosphoron, and the parts of the Divine Liturgy. Then we explored fundamentals of the Orthodox Christian life: Kindness, prayer, humility, repentance, the Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion and Confession. We worked on themes of the Nativity season, then on Lenten themes. We explored Holy Week and Pascha, and finished the year working on the Feasts of Ascension and Pentecost, then discussing the Saints. Finally, we exchanged Pascha greetings with a homeschooling group in Maryland, and with a class in Australia. I am extremely proud of all the students who did a wonderful job! Have blessed summer!

Natalie Tzobanakis-Theocharopoulos

GRADES 5 & 6

The highlight of the year for our class was the new and updated Fifth grade curriculum from the Greek Archdiocese. Our students used brand new, fully illustrated and very readable "zines" which added to the lesson, along with some audio and video resources. We used the Church calendar to make special projects, notably the Great Lent folder lapbooks which spanned Great Lent. For the first time this year, our class participated in the worldwide Pascha Exchange with students in Missouri and Serbia! We sent them Pascha cards and a video with the students chanting "Χριστός Ανέστη!" We'd like to bid farewell to Alexandra, Sophia, Theohari and Constantino who are moving up - we'll miss you dearly! Enjoy your gifts and have a wonderful summer!

Despina Lachanaris & Lisa Bukuvalas

GRADES 7 & 8

We were very busy this year! Early in the year, we discussed our talents and our God-given treasures and how they may be used in the service of God. We explored the importance of living in light rather than darkness. We also discussed the importance of spiritual discipline. Our class delved deeper into the meaning of the Nativity, Christ's baptism and how Christ was presented to us. Students had a better understanding of how things that happened during Christ's time relate to what we do today in church. We also had a very special Pascha exchange with two Orthodox churches, a church in Uganda and a church in Australia. Overall, it was a very exciting year for us!

Alexandra Barnat, Christine Drivas & Sarah Melachrinos

HIGH SCHOOL

In the High School class, we like to look at the new challenges our children face and how to overcome them. Many of our teens feel various pressures from friends, teachers, and parents to keep good grades, be involved in various activities, and even negative influences. We focused throughout the year on how our Orthodox Faith can keep us grounded and on the path with God, using lessons from the Martyrs of the church. Additionally, we did a Pascha exchange with a church from Uganda and learned how they too follow the same Orthodox traditions.

Stephanie Nikitiades & Angelo Vrohides