



SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

THE REVEREND STEVEN P. ZORZOS, D.MIN., PROTOPRESBYTER & PRESIDING PRIEST
THE REVEREND DIMITRIOS J. LEE, M.DIV., PRESBYTER & ASSISTANT PRIEST



Combined Letter to Parents of Saint Sophia Cathedral Sunday School Children from Father Steve, Diane Cerniglia, and Stracie Maniatis

From Father Steve:

Dearest Parent,

It's that "time of the year again" and Sunday School is right around the corner. We have been extremely hard at work planning our upcoming year. The teachers, administrators, and I take great care to provide your children the best possible experience in their Orthodox Christian development.

Over the years we have tried and tested various models and approaches to this great task. Some worked, and others did not. Every upside also created an unforeseen challenge. And so, we've decided to adopt the prevailing Archdiocesan model of corporate family worship combined with catechetical instruction. The model we will follow this year will be very clear and easy for everyone to follow (please see Diane Cerniglia and Stracie Maniatis below).

Truly, the foundation of faith, belief, and love for God always originates in the home. Sundays are a time to hone, sharpen, and deepen our children's connection to God and to the Church. Without your full support in this endeavor, our efforts are in vain. We are investing in you as active members of the Body of Christ so that you, in turn, may lead your child/children on the salvific path to eternal life. It is our utmost desire to help our precious young ones to develop into the most loving, compassionate, and faithful people possible, but we cannot accomplish this without you.

Please join us in making this the best year possible by consistently coming as a family to Liturgy from the start, sitting together, and praying together. It is critically important for children to experience divine worship with family, at least through the Eucharist, and then proceed to class for catechetical instruction. Then, after picking up your child from class, you can help enforce the lesson by discussing it with your child on the way home.

We hope you're as excited about the coming new year as we are. Our renewed focused attention is to the participation in, and transformative experience of, the beauty of Orthodox liturgical worship, combined with the best catechetical instruction we can provide.

May God bless us and our great task of the spiritual formation of our children.

Father Steve

From Diane Cerniglia and Stracie Maniatis:

The threefold mission of our Sunday School program is as follows:

1) to educate our children spiritually and morally, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the faith traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church; 2) to develop in our children the habit of regular church attendance, Scriptural study, and conscientious participation in the worship and sacramental life of our Church; 3) to cultivate in our children a Greek Orthodox conscience and devotion to our Orthodox Christian ideals and to prepare them to become faithful, devoted, and dynamic members of our Church, our community, and our country.

From the first days of our catechetical program, we have faithfully and consistently fulfilled the first and third elements of our mission; however, we have sometimes struggled to integrate fully the “habit of regular church attendance and conscientious participation in the worship and sacramental life of our church” into our program. Attendance at Liturgy once a month does not advance this part of our mission. We had hoped that a Sunday School Liturgy in the Frosene Center would be the answer, but it became clear from your comments and increasingly poor attendance that this program was not successful.

Therefore, in keeping with the direction of Sunday School programs throughout the Archdiocese as well as remaining true to our own core beliefs, the following schedule will be in place permanently, starting with the first day of Sunday School on Sunday, September 8, 2019:

- a. All Sunday School students will attend Liturgy through Holy Communion and then proceed to their classrooms for 40 minutes of instruction. Rows will not be reserved; rather, all children will sit with their families. Young adults are encouraged to do the same or sit together with their classmates. After Communion, teachers of the youngest children will meet them in the Narthex and escort them to their classrooms.
- b. This new initiative will allow the return of three popular and important programs periodically throughout the school year: “Face Time with Father” for the youngest children; “Faith Time” for grades 2-6; and “Teen Talk” for grade 7-12.
- c. The importance of the parent-teacher partnership in ensuring that your children attend Liturgy and Sunday School, and of regularly asking your children about their lesson that day, etc., simply CANNOT be overstated. Without this cooperative effort, all is in vain.
- d. Our annual “Welcome Back Picnic” is on September 22. At the conclusion of the Liturgy on that day we invite all members of the Saint Sophia community to join us at a picnic lunch to celebrate the opening of Sunday School.

As we look forward to the coming Sunday School year, we thank you in advance for helping us to help your children.

Most gratefully,

Diane Cerniglia, Academic Dean, Upper School
Stracie Maniatis, Academic Dean, Lower School