

Department of Theological and Pastoral Education

Report to The Archdiocese Convention, Chicago, Illinois
July 25-31, 2011

- by Father Joseph Allen, Director

The Department of Theological and Pastoral Education is responsible for the following three programs:

1. The Antiochian House of Studies,
2. St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, and
3. The Biennial Clergy Symposium.

The following are the highlights in each program.

1. *The Antiochian House of Studies*, which remains an educational forum for “Applied Theology,” includes three (3) faculties in each of the following: St. Stephen’s Diploma Course of Study; The House of Studies Residency Program; and the Doctor of Ministry Program. The total number of students spread across these three programs is 226.

A. St. Stephen’s Course of Studies in Orthodox Theology.

This is the 31st year since we began this theological education program in 1980 with a mere thirteen (13) students. This began our “school of theology without walls.” What has always characterized St. Stephen’s Studies is a pedagogy which matches, at once, our current technological capabilities and the aim of our Archdiocese. From the very outset of this program, which remains constant today, our student body is very diverse: coming from various trainings and places, some have finished Masters and Doctoral degrees e.g. in education, medicine, psychology, law, etc. Others were ordained in the Roman Catholic and Protestant communions, having studied theology in non-Orthodox schools. Still others, because of their life-circumstance and career development, were precluded from attending an Orthodox seminary, etc. Whatever the case, each student was dedicated enough to undertake what was meant to be a very rigorous program, now comprised of 13,000 pages of study over the three years, three (3) Ministerial Field Projects (one in each of the three years) and three (3) Residency Units at the Heritage and Learning Center in Ligonier, PA. That dedication to “stay the course” is—as it has always been—conditioned by the hard work and the willingness to serve Christ’s Body according to the oversight of the Hierarchy.

This year Metropolitan PHILIP will present sixteen (16) Master of Arts Degrees in Applied Orthodox Theology and one (1) Doctor of Ministry Degree. These two accredited degrees are presented every July, one year at the Clergy Symposium, one year at the Archdiocese Convention.

- B. A fifth new “specialization” tract has been added this past year: *Guidance and Counseling* (for Orthodox Clergy only). This is added to *Youth Ministry*, *Iconology*, *Musicology* and the *Seminarian Tract*. Each can lead to the Masters Degree if the qualifications are met, e.g. holding a Bachelors Degree, completing the St. Stephen’s course, followed by the Master’s thesis in that field. The following mentors direct these tracts and deserve our thanks: Father John Abdalah (Guidance and Seminarian), Father Joseph Purpura (Youth Ministry), Father Elias Bitar (Musicology) and Prof. Nicolae Gavriiliu (Iconology).
 - C. It should be remembered that no student will receive the St. Stephen’s Diploma unless he or she completes the entire three-year course, three Residency Units and three Ministerial Projects. It should also be remembered that no student will be accepted into the Masters Degree Program unless he or she completes the entire diploma program (with no failures) and has earned an accredited BA or BS degree. Those applying to the Doctor of Ministry Degree Program must have served a three-year ministry and hold a MA or MDiv Degree.
 - D. The Masters Degree Program functions as a graduate program of the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology at the Balamand University. The Doctoral Program is the Eastern Christian Program of The Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, with whom we are in academic partnership, an official academic title. All classes are held at The Heritage and Learning Center at Ligonier, Pennsylvania.
2. *St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology*. Father Jon Braun (President) and Mr. Paul Goetz (Administrator) report from February 1, 2011 to January 31, 2012, the following:

A. **Prisoner Education Project**

We currently maintain 100 Active Prisoner Students throughout the United States. We grade on average 80 – 120 prisoner student lessons per month. We have issued 30 Certificates of Completion this past year. Not one of our students has returned to prison for violating parole and two who became Orthodox in prison, now on parole, were first considered beyond rehabilitation.

Our program uses essay questions to which we offer detailed comments, corrections, and follow-up questions. We take their salvation seriously, and so do they. We also understand prisons are being used by some as a breeding ground of hate, making our program even more needed than ever before.

One goal for this year is to improve our working relationship with Prison Chaplains. Rules keep changing and we need their help, for both State and Federal prisons. This includes adding material to their libraries. A former prisoner-student, once a prison librarian, is helping us.

B. Correspondence Studies

Our emphasis is to reach out to the laity. Many of the laity are eager for disciplined study, and there is an urgent need to reach out to them with the knowledge of the Church—her philosophy and theology. Our new presence on the Archdiocese web site should prove most helpful. We currently have students in Israel, Greece, and Canada as well as here in the United States.

We are also using the web-cam to reach our students. Currently we have two weekly one-hour classes. This one-on-one approach offers more detailed discussion and better questions and answers. We are planning to build two new correspondence courses this year.

We also provide one-hour in home-study classes. There are currently six such teaching sessions, and are open to all seeking Christians.

C. Research and Publications

We are publishing booklets offering detailed and expansive study notes on Scripture. Our current focus is on the book of Genesis, the Gospel of John, the Book of Romans, and the Letter to the Hebrews.

The purpose here is to make available for publication the philosophical and theological understanding of the ancient Church. This will help deepen the historical understanding of Old and New Testament Scripture, as well as the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

D. ST. ATHANASIUS ACADEMY LIBRARY

In light of the falling asleep in the Lord of Fr. Richard Ballew and Fr. Jack Sparks, it was decided that the many thousands of volumes of the St. Athanasius Academy library would be donated to the Heritage and Learning Center at the Antiochian Village. This exceptional library was collected over a period of some fifty years and was indispensable for the Evangelical Orthodox

Church making its journey to Orthodoxy in this Archdiocese. Now that library is available to many more people.

3. *The Clergy Symposium.* The Sixteenth Biennial Clergy Symposium was held last year, July 19-23, 2010. The theme was The Priesthood: Diakonos, Presbyteros, Episcopos. The main speakers were Father John Chryssavgis, who spoke on “The Diaconate;” Father Nicholas Apostola who spoke on “The Presbyter;” and Bishop Michael Dahulich who spoke on “The Bishop.”
 - A. The afternoon workshops numbered thirteen (13) and varied according to the needs facing our clergy. Each attendee chose three workshops (one each afternoon) as electives for the Symposium. Daily Orthros, Divine Liturgies, Vespers and Small Complines were celebrated, followed each night by “Evening Meditation.”
 - B. Preparation for the Clergy Symposium begins a full year in advance, at the Archdiocese Convention, e.g. at the Wednesday afternoon Departmental Meeting, July 26, 2011 here in Chicago, Illinois. The next Symposium is scheduled for July 16-20, 2012.
4. Finally, the Department of Theological and Pastoral Education, under the oversight of His Grace, Bishop THOMAS, continues to attempt a very close communication with the Ordination Review Board, chaired by His Grace, Bishop ANTOUN. We do remind all students that a MDiv from an accredited Orthodox Seminary is normative for ordination to any major Order in this Archdiocese. Others who have earned a MDiv from a non-Orthodox School must finish all three years of the House of Studies’ St. Stephen’s Diploma Program in order to apply to the Ordination Review Board.

We want to especially thank the following: Deacon Peter Boulukos, Genevieve Mandalakis and Cheri Mullins, Registrars for the St. Stephen’s Diploma Program and the Masters Degree Program; Amy Stiffler, Registrar for the House of Studies Residency Program; Paul Finley, General Manager of The Heritage and Learning Center; Father George Kevorkian, Administrative Assistant; Father James Dougherty, Research Director for the MA Thesis Program; The Symposium Planning Committee; our Hierarchical Overseer, Bishop THOMAS and, of course, Metropolitan PHILIP for his continued interest and support in the Theological and Pastoral Education of the Clergy over these many years.