Hello, Parents,

Welcome to the first issue of *Seeking Perfection*. Over the last year, your church school teachers have worked hard to build upon the foundation of previous church school planners, while pushing ourselves to update the program with more intentionality in curriculum and higher expectations in planning. We have designed a 14 year scope & sequence to make sure that your children receive the best comprehensive Orthodox Christian education that we are capable of providing. As we watch this unfold over the next few years, we are now turning our eyes to the parents. We have asked ourselves what we can do to better partner with you as you model the faith for your children. Because Church School should reinforce what is going on at home, we have started *Seeking Perfection*, a newsletter to help our parents know what is taking place at school and where you can learn more to help your students understand their faith. It will also be a place to advertise upcoming events and activities for our kids.

To help make things clearer, each class has adopted a patron saint for the year. Check out your child's class section to read what they will be learning for the first 6-weeks. Finally, learn some more about your child's teacher on the last page.

We hope this becomes a useful resource for you and your family. If you have any ideas or requests for future issues, please let either Courtney Unruh or Katie Gaspard, your SSOC Church School Coordinators, know. We'd welcome the input!

(Why *Seeking Perfection*? Check out the Chrysostom quotation on the back page)
St. Anna's Corner

The patron saint of our youngest class (the 4 and 5 year olds) will be St. Anna, the mother of the Holy Theotokos. Over the next 6 weeks, they will be studying the Gospels. For a great review of the Gospels and their major themes, visit http://oca.org/OCchapter.asp?SID=2&ID=118. Also, The Orthodox Study Bible has a wonderful overview and outline before each book. With kids this age, they may not be able to understand the major themes, but as you know, they LOVE stories. Perhaps, over the next 40-or-so days, you can take turns picking out Gospel stories from a children's Bible at breakfast or before bed, discussing how Jesus is not just a figure in a story, but the Savior of the World.

The Holy Archangels

It is fitting that our Kinder and 1st grade class will have for its patrons the Holy Archangels, as Sts. Joachim & Anna, along with the Holy Theotokos were all visited by these Heavenly Messengers. In previous years, the younger kids were put together in one class, but due to the amount of students in this age group, we have divided them into two classes. However, the curriculum plan will be the same, only this class will be challenged a little more as their older age allows.

If you have a child in this age group learning to read, why not allow them to read the Gospel for the day during family prayers? This will encourage them that the story is intended for them, just as their faith should be their own.

St. Jonah’s Spot

Over the next 6 weeks, the older elementary students (3rd-5th) will be reviewing History Literature. This covers the period of time from the settlement in the promised land to the centuries right before Christ. That is a large period, so we only have time to hit the highpoints. We will be discussing God’s protection in Joshua & Judges, the Story of Ruth, the Judge Samuel & the King David, Solomon’s temple & Elijah’s mission, Isaiah, and finally, the fall of Jerusalem. If you would like an overview of these topics and a brief history lesson, check out http://oca.org/OCchapter.asp?SID=2&ID=114. Often, students want to know WHY history is important. During these 6 weeks, as we review God’s faithfulness to Israel, consider playing a family game during dinner or before bed to tell family stories of God’s faithfulness. History can be a great way of reminding us of God’s love.
St. Mark’s Ascetics

The middle school students, age 6th to 8th, have adopted St. Mark the Ascetic. Over the course of the next 6 weeks, they will be reviewing St. Paul’s letters. Because his letters cannot be studied out of context of Paul’s life, they will also be reviewing the highlights of Paul’s calling and ministry. Each week, they will review a major life event in St. Paul’s life, as well as review two of his letters. It will be a fast pace, so be sure to ask them what they studied and see what stuck out to them. Perhaps they were drawn to his writings and are curious to read more of a particular book or letter. On the other hand, they may have a desire to learn more about a particular event in Paul’s life or learn more about a particular period in history (early Roman life, for example).

To read more about St. Paul’s letters, take a look at http://oca.org/OCchapter.asp?SID=2&ID=120

Here is the teaching schedule:

- God Calls Paul (Romans/Galatians)
- Paul & Barnabas (1st/2nd Corinthians)
- Paul & Silas in Prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians)
- Paul in Athens (1st/2nd Thessalonians)
- Paul’s Journey to Rome (1st/2nd Timothy, Titus)
- Paul’s Letters (Philemon/Hebrews)

The Teens

As we all know, our teenagers are an amazing group of students. As they continue to make their faith their own, we are allowing them to vote and pick their own patron saint. In the meantime, we will generically refer to them as “The Teens”. Next week, they will start their Bible unit with the book of James, then continue to study 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, and finally wrapping up with the book of Jude. If you would like to read more about these books, the Orthodox Study Bible has a great introduction and commentary.

Additionally, check out the link at the bottom of the page to find individual, informative background information on each of them. James, in particular, is where we get to discuss the relationship between faith and works. Perhaps this would be a good time to make sure your child understands why we fast, why we go to confession, why we go to church, etc. It is not to gain points with God in a merit-based system, but rather to heal our souls and show our love.

If we seek the things that are perfect, the secondary things will follow... For generally the children acquire the character of their parents, are formed in the mold of their parent's temperament, love the same things their parents love, talk in the same fashion, and work for the same ends. If we order our lives in this way and diligently study the Scriptures, we will find lessons to guide us in everything we need! St. John Chrysostom

ANNE GALLIMORE: Anne was born in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, has lived all over Texas, but finally settled in Dallas 13 years ago. Her patron saint is St. Anne, mother of the Theotokos (hence, her choice for the classroom patron of the youngest class). She works for a private equity firm in downtown Dallas, but considers her first and foremost job to be mommy of Sebastian. For fun, Anne enjoys playing piano (by ear!) and singing. Her gift of music will definitely be an asset to her classroom. Anne will be teaching the 4’s and 5’s.

LORI CONLEY: Lori is originally from Michigan, but has been attending SSOC for 7 years. Her patron saint is St. Hilaria. She loves being with children and enjoys teaching them because of what she learns when she is with them. She works at Children’s Medical Center as a nurse, while also being a wife to our Deacon Gregory and a mom to four children, two teenagers at home and two married daughters. She is also a grandmother to 3 (soon to be 5!) grandchildren. Thankfully, one of Lori’s favorite activities is taking care of her grandchildren, so she’s pretty happy with her current situation! She teaches our 3rd-5th graders.

TYLER WOODS: Tyler was born and raised in South Carolina, but moved to Texas 20 years ago. Before Dallas, she lived in San Antonio. Her patron saint is St. Sophia, mother of Faith, Hope, and Love. She teaches English Language Arts for 7th graders, but loves working with children of any age. She is excited to be able to talk with our Kinder and 1st graders about what matters most! Tyler has been attending SSOC for over about a year now (though she came 12 years ago during the summer after college). She loves to travel and has been all over the world. Ireland is her favorite!

MICHAEL UNRUH: Michael is originally from El Segundo, California (in Los Angeles), but he moved to Dallas after finishing his masters degree in Chicago. He now teaches high school downtown in a liberal arts charter school. His patron is St. Peter, and he loves working with high school students, leading them in discussions on faith, culture, and art. After working and taking care of his wife and two sons (age 2.5 and 11 months), there’s not much time left for a hobby, but when he gets the chance, he loves to read, write, watch movies, and compose music.

DEMETRIOS GALLIMORE: Doug "Demetrios" was born in San Antonio and spent most of his early life in South Texas near Corpus. His patron saint is St. Demetrios (which most people at SSOC call him). He loves kids and appreciates the great need there is for church school teachers. One of his favorite quotations "It's no sin to be ignorant, but it is a sin to stay that way" might explain his passion for teaching our SSOC middle schoolers. Though he works in software development for Texas Instruments, he loves the guitar and is a very gifted musician.