Grade 7: Uniting with God

In Grade 7 the emphasis is on the sacred mysteries, also called sacraments. The seventh grader, as an early adolescent, is moving beyond security of late childhood. He or she begins to search for personal identity, shows new reasoning abilities, and seeks to be oneself, while conforming to peer values. Through the study of the sacraments in the light of personal faith, the seventh grader is challenged to form a conscious Christian identity to pray for the sanctification of all life by divine grace, and to have personal communion with God. (This definition is taken from the Scope and Sequence of our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.) This tells us that a seventh grade student is beginning to search for his/her own understanding and connection to God and the Orthodox Faith. This is a very crucial time for young people, since they are trying to form their own identity as individuals. It is a very important time for the Church and teachers to emphasize the Sacraments of the Church in a way that the student is able to understand and find their identity in the Orthodox faith, Church, and Church community. As teachers, we need to help students grow in God and develop a personal relationship with Him (Theosis).

During the Seventh Grade Catechetical School year, students should learn:

I. God the Father
   Students will learn that God is the supreme mystery of communion of the Holy Trinity. Students will have learned that God revealed Himself to Moses on Sinai. Students will learn about the Prophets of our faith and learn that the Prophets were the tools God used to instruct the people and help them learn about God.

II. God the Son-Jesus Christ
   Students will learn of the Incarnation of Christ as the union of divine and human. They will understand that God came to Earth as a human in order to bring man salvation. Students will learn that Jesus’ baptism at the river Jordan by John the Baptist, was the revelation of His divinity, the manifestation of the Trinity and the Kingdom of God is a reality for mankind. Students will learn about Christ’s words about His Body and Blood and learn of Christ’s resurrection and how Christ dwells in the hearts of those who believe in Him. Students will learn of Christ’s mystical appearance to Paul in Damascus and become aware of Christ’s command to be baptized and to participate in Holy Eucharist.

III. God the Holy Spirit
   Students will learn of the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit is an ongoing Pentecost and serves to guide the Church. Students will learn that the Holy Spirit is a personal gift given through the Sacrament of Chrismation and that the Holy Spirit is in the Liturgy and all of the Sacraments.
IV. Church
Students will understand that the Church is the mystical Body of Christ visibly formed by Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist. They will understand that the Church is the communion of “saints” and the holy people of God, seeking to live the life of the kingdom on earth. Students will learn that the Church militant and triumphant. Students will understand that the Church is the Ark of our Salvation.

V. Worship and Prayer
The revelation of God’s Kingdom is emphasized, as well as the mystical encounters of the living God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit

VI. Liturgy
This section discusses the parts of the Liturgy and the meaning of each. All revolve around the preparation of the Holy Eucharist.

VII. Sacraments and Other Services
Sacraments are explained, as well as the liturgical services that are used in each

VIII. Prayers and Hymns
Students study the key prayers and hymns of the sacraments and learn to chant the main hymns of the sacraments. Students learn to repeat the Creed from memory.

IX. Saints, Feasts, Cycles
The lives and hymns of Saints in Scriptures are studied. These saints exemplify a theme of being in communion with God.

X. Scripture
The meaning of a covenant with God is explored. Aspects of the Old Testament give examples of the sacramental qualities and blessings. Early Christian baptism is discussed and biblical passages pertaining to biblical figures are used as examples of obedience to God and being in Communion with God.

XI. Tradition
Traditions and customs related to celebrations of the sacraments are emphasized.

XII. Christian Family
Emphasis of the concept of family as a small church in the home. Specific directions on praying as a family are explained. Also, an emphasis on the family being based on a Christian marriage is discussed.

XIII. Ethics and Spirituality
Personal faith and divine grace are discussed. Students learn that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit and that God calls us all to live a sacrificial life.
XIV. Service and Mission
   Students learn about serving God and humanity. Students are encouraged to take on service project to do for others.

XV. Other Faiths, Society and World
   God’s presence in the beauty, wisdom and ongoing life of creation is discussed. Students commit to a communion with God and glorifying God through their own bodies. Students are cautioned against peer pressure and substance abuse.