



St. Sophia Seminary is offering this Certification Course for everyone who works with children and youth!

The course is comprised of four classes (each class costs \$200):

Fall Semester:

- **Introduction to Youth Ministry w/ Natalie Kapeluck-Nixon.** Natalie runs our youth encampments at All Saints Camp and is the Youth Director for the UOC-USA. The class meets via teleconference on Sunday evenings.
- **Theology for Youth Ministry w/ Fr. Gregory Jensen.** Fr. Gregory has a PhD in Spiritual Formation. This class is done through active electronic correspondence.

Spring Semester:

- **Youth Ministry Practicum w/ Natalie Kapeluck-Nixon** (as above)
- **Ethics in Youth Ministry w/ Fr. Gregory Jensen** (as above)

See Fr. Anthony Perkins for more information and an application!

Two Church Fathers on Today's Gospel of the Talents

St. Cyril of Alexander (On Evangelism). The man who is the landowner is actually the Creator and Lord of all. The Word compares the time the landowner spends away from home in the parable to either the ascension of Christ into heaven or at any rate to the unseen and invisible character of the divine nature. Now one must conceive of the property of God as those in each country and city who believe in him. He calls his servants those who according to the times Christ crowns with the glory of the priesthood. For the holy Paul writes, "No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God." He hands over [his property] to those who are under him, to each giving a spiritual gift so that he might have character and aptitude. We think that this distribution of the talents is not supplied to the household servants in equal measure because each is quite different from the other in their understanding. Immediately they head out for their labors, he says, directly indicating to us here that apart from the procrastination of one they are fit to carry out the work of God. Surely those who are bound by fear and laziness will end up in the worst evils. For he buried, Jesus says, the talent given to him in the earth. He kept the gift hidden, making it unprofitable for others and useless for himself. For that very reason the talent is taken away from him and will be given to the one who is already rich. The Spirit has departed from such as these and the gift of the divine gifts. But to those who are industrious an even more will be presented.

St. Gregory the Great (On Salvation). The man setting out for foreign parts entrusted his goods to his servants, for he granted his spiritual gifts to those who believed in him. To one he entrusted five talents, to another two, to another one. There are five bodily senses, sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. The five talents represent the gift of the five senses, that is, knowledge of externals; the two talents signify theory and practice; the one talent signifies theory alone. **The person who received five talents gained another five.** There are some who, even without knowing how to probe into inward and mystical matters, use the natural gifts they have received to teach correctly those they can reach to strive for their heavenly home. While guarding themselves from physical wantonness, from striving after earthly things and from taking pleasure in things they can see, they restrain others too from these things by their counsel. **And there are some endowed with two talents,** so to speak, who comprehend both theory and practice. They understand the fine points of interior matters and accomplish astonishing things outwardly. When they preach to others by both theory and practice, their business venture, so to call it, yields a twofold gain...**But the person who received one talent went away, dug in the earth and hid his master's money.** Hiding a talent in the earth means employing one's abilities in earthly affairs, failing to seek spiritual profit, never raising one's heart from earthly thoughts. There are some who have received the gift of understanding but have a taste only for things that pertain to the body. The prophet says of them, "They are wise in doing evil, but they do not know how to do good."

Simonetti, M. (Ed.). (2002). *Matthew 14-28* (pp. 222-223). InterVarsity Press.

Parish Politics Threaten Evangelism – A Parable on Ukraine

It was a long Summer.

It all started when I got an e-mail from someone asking if he could come to Liturgy. He also asked about membership and taking Communion. I did my usual thing, underscoring that everyone was welcome to experience God and fellowship here, and explaining what I would do to help him prepare for Communion and membership.

A great start, right? Well, it ended well, but it wasn't easy.

Come to find out, Tom (not his real name) was born and baptized at our parish. However, as with many urban parishes, ours went through some serious problems. I won't go through all of them, but for about a decade the neighborhood was dangerous (no parking lot, cars broken into, people threatened on the street even during Pascha and Nativity) and membership dropped. For a while we even went without regular priestly coverage. During that time, his family joined a parish in the Northern suburbs that was safe, was growing, and offered regular access to the Mysteries. Still, it wasn't easy. Tom's family never fit in. When, as an adult, he finally got sick of people making fun of his accent and calling his family racists (they were originally from the South), he left and worshipped on his own. That was fine until he had kids. As with many in this situation, he wanted his children to be brought up in the tradition of their family. His wife was up for it, too.

He went once, by himself, to the suburban church and was attacked by the priest (the priest confirmed that Tom was excommunicated according to the Canons of the Church because he had voluntarily refused to come to Communion for more than three weeks and had worshipped for so many years on his own) and the laity (the lay leaders of the parish reminded him that he was twenty years in arrears on his dues and he was not welcome until he paid up; they also made fun of his pickup truck). They all wanted their pound of flesh. I'd love to say that this was out of character, but that is the culture of that parish. I guess it works if you're on the inside.

Tom did some research and found out that our neighborhood was now safe and that our parish was thriving (we haven't done great about getting our neighbors to come, but we have attracted many families from various other areas of the city and Western suburbs) and that's when he decided to get in touch.

I invited Tom and his family to start worshipping with us and we worked out a program of individualized catechesis/preparation to bring him back into Communion and to prepare his wife and children for Baptism and Chrismation. I've done this before, and it's awesome to be a part of. So awesome. It went better than you can even imagine.

However, when the other priest heard about it, he started a smear campaign against me, against my parish, and against Tom and his family. This was very painful, but that pain was

completely trumped and transformed by the joy of bringing a family into such a deep relationship with God through Christ and the Holy Orthodox Church (Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia)!

Due to the way they demonized us and the many walls they built between us (Canons! Propriety! Parish Order! Pound of Flesh!), I doubt that the relations between that priest and me and between our parishes will heal any time soon, but who knows? I look forward to the restoration of our brotherhood. Until then, they do their thing and we do ours.

Looking back, I don't see how I could have acted any differently. This was a family that needed Christ and there were just too many stumbling blocks put in their way at the other parish (and remember, he was baptized here!). And they have really thrived and we with them, Glory to God!

For Youth with Cameras and a Good Eye (which is... all of you!)

The Consistory Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry wants to encourage youth and young adults to explore their creative talents and to glorify God through art, with the 3rd Annual Ukrainian Orthodox Church Faith and Photography Contest.

Part of our mission, is to provide youth and college aged young adults the opportunity to become more involved with their faith, while showcasing the

talented and creative youth we have within in our Ukrainian Orthodox Churches. We want our youth to realize that having fun and utilizing creativity can be manifested in a project that shows how they correlate their life with their faith.

Deadline for entries is November 15. Prizes will be awarded for first and second place. A People's Choice winner will also be awarded in each category.

