

Professional Development Day for Teachers of our Greek Orthodox Day Schools in Sydney

At the initiative of the Greek Orthodox Board of Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, a Professional Development Day for the teachers of the three Greek Orthodox day schools in Sydney took place on Wednesday 27th January, 2016 at St Andrew's Greek Orthodox College in Redfern. This event was attended by over 200 teachers, including the the Chair of the Archdiocesan Board of Education, His Grace Bishop Seraphim of Apollonias, all Heads and Principals together with the respective priests of these schools.

Running for three years now, the aim of these professional development days has been to acquaint teachers with some of the core values and beliefs of the Greek Orthodox faith not only so that they may better appreciate the ethos of the schools in which they teach but also to be ready to respond to questions that students may have, since teachers play such a pivotal role in the formation of students. The day opened with prayer by Bishop Seraphim who, in his capacity as Sub-Dean of St Andrew's, also welcomed the teachers to the College.

This year the program included three speakers. The first was Professor Angelo Karantonis, Editor of *Phronema*, the scholarly peer reviewed Journal belonging to St Andrew's Theological College. His talk was entitled: "The Role of Orthodoxy in the Life of the Orthodox Day Schools." Prof. Karantonis stressed the fact that Orthodoxy is a way of life and that students best learn when they see the teachings of Orthodoxy being put into practice. Ample examples were given as to how this might best be actioned within the schools.

The second speaker was Dr Philip Kariatlis, Academic Director and Senior Lecturer in Theology at St Andrew's, whose presentation was entitled: "Ecological Vision and Initiatives of the Orthodox Church Today." His talk outlined some basic teachings of the Orthodox Church concerning creation, namely, the sacredness of the world and God's active presence in it. From this, he was able to highlight some ecological initiatives of the Orthodox Church which has been working together with academic disciplines since the late 1980s towards a solution to this major challenge of the world today.

The third and final speaker was Sr Dr Margaret Beirne, Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies at St Andrew's. The title of her presentation was "Upholding the Sanctity of Marriage in a Changing World." This presentation examined some key texts from the Orthodox Service of Marriage together with the key Scriptural passages that are read in this service. With her vast experience as a Principal of a Secondary School for over ten years, she identified various ways in which the rich symbolism of the Service could be used to convey to students the sanctity of marriage.

There was some brief time allocated to questions which enabled the teachers to critically engage with the material that was presented to them. Overall, the morning was a great success.