WHAT IS OUR GOAL?
Each family’s homeschool is as unique as each family. All of us have varying interests, strengths, experiences, needs, abilities, and resources. Just as we will not find another family with the exact same spiritual life as your own, we will also not find another Orthodox homeschooling family with an exact replica of our homeschool day either. Even within our own families, our oldest children will not necessarily have the exact same homeschool experience as their younger siblings, but we all share a common goal - the salvation of our children and ourselves as we strive for theosis.

Abba Poemen said that Abba John said that the saints are like a group of trees, each bearing different fruit, but watered from the same source. The practices of one saint differ from those of another, but it is the same Spirit that works in all of them.


Orthodox Wiki explains that salvation, “is the goal of Christianity, and the purpose of the Church...Orthodox Christianity strongly believes that God became man, so that man become like God. This concept of theosis, rejects that salvation is a positive result to a legalistic dilemma, but is instead a healing process.”

• Could I confidently explain to my kids what we believe as Orthodox Christians about salvation? If not, what steps am I going to take this year to learn more about theosis?
Orthodox Wiki elaborates on the view of salvation by stating, "Saint Cyprian of Carthage wrote, 'A man cannot have God as his Father if he does not have the Church as his Mother'. God is salvation, and God's saving power is mediated to man in His Body, the Church. This stated the other way around by Georges Florovsky: 'Outside the Church there is no salvation, because salvation is the Church.'"

• What are we doing as a family to work towards theosis? Is our salvation our priority or have we replaced it with other activities and goals?

• How have I incorporated striving for theosis into my homeschool planning for the year?
Dr. Constance Tarasar did quite a bit of research on the topic of how we educate and raise Orthodox Christians. She explained in her doctoral dissertation that it was through worship, teaching, and praxis (living our faith daily) that we learn about our faith from one generation to the next.

Worship is our active participation in living our faith and glorifying God. One of the ways we do this is by attending services as often as possible. The Divine Liturgy is a teaching service. We are engaged in the service through all five of our senses – touch: making the sign of the cross, lighting candles, kissing icons; hear: the Gospel & Epistle readings, sermons, singing the hymns; sight: reading the icons, watching the movement in the service, the different colors of the vestments; smell: the incense and candles burning; and taste: Holy Communion. The entire structure of the service is set up to teach us about God through participation.

- When do we attend services at our parish? (Sunday liturgy, Saturday vespers, weekday liturgies for family namedays or major feast days, Lenten services, and others)

- Do we attend these services regularly or infrequently?
Our spiritual journey is always about striving to grow closer to God. It doesn’t matter how many times we fall down, we get back up, seek forgiveness, and put forth all of our effort to improve. It would be unrealistic for any family to go from only attending liturgy on Sunday morning to going to every service offered at our parish. (It’s a goal for all of us definitely, but we can’t expect ourselves to lift the same weights as a professional weight lifter when we’ve never lifted weights before.) It would be overwhelming! In every goal we pursue, we have to gradually work towards it until we achieve that goal.

• On the previous page, you wrote down a list of the services your family attended last year. This coming year, what can you do to set the bar one notch higher for your family? Think about your current circumstances. If you attend liturgy on Sunday infrequently, could you make it a goal to go every Sunday except when someone is sick? If you go to liturgy every Sunday, could you add going to vespers on Saturday one or more times a month? Could you add going to liturgy, when offered, for everyone’s nameday this year?
Teaching is the active pursuit to passing along the knowledge we have acquired to our students, in this case, our children. It also includes teacher as perpetual learner.

“You can teach only that which you have made your own, and this means that there is always the danger that your personal mistaken judgment or insufficient knowledge will be reflected in your teaching.” - Sophie Koulomzin, Our Church and Our Children pg 19

There are several factors to keep in mind when it comes to our teaching:

• If we look at the Divine Liturgy as a teaching example, are we engaging as many of our children’s senses as possible during their lessons?

• If not, why?

There are many different learning preferences - Do my children thrive off of traditional school methods? (A linguistic and auditory approach: textbooks, lectures, question and answer worksheets) Do my children thrive with project based learning? (A visual and hands-on approach to learning) It’s unlikely that all of your children have the same learning preferences. It is also likely that you have one or more children who do not process and learn information in the same way you do.

• What is your preferred way of learning?
Do you have a child who you consider harder to homeschool than your other children? Why do you think this child struggles or fights you when it comes to homeschooling? Do you think it could be that the teaching method you’re using is not working for them? (Yes, there are moments when a child needs to just push through something difficult and do it, but if this is an almost every day occurrence that seems to take up your entire day - it’s more than just needing to “push through this assignment”.

What can you do this coming year to compensate for the different learning styles in your family? (Could you learn more about learning styles? Could you tweak your curriculum or assignments to include as many of your children’s senses as possible? Could you tweak your schedule? What has worked successfully for you in the past?) As parents, we need to remember, if we are unwilling to put forth the effort to make our homeschool days the best they possibly can be, why should we expect our children to put forth effort that we are unwilling to do? Let’s lead by example.
Praxis is the act of living our faith every day of our life - taking home and doing that which our parish priests have instructed us to do on Sunday mornings. It includes, but is not limited to, praying before every meal, fasting, giving alms, celebrating namedays, celebrating feast days, being respectful and loving to everyone, and seeking forgiveness.

• When do you pray as a family?

• What goal can you set for your family this coming year in regards to prayer? Can you aim to pray before dinner every night as a family? Do you pray before every meal, including when you’re not at home? Do you have family prayer time in the morning or evening?

• When do you make time to pray by yourself? Could you make the sign of the cross before you start your car? Could you say a prayer before your kids wake up or after they go to bed? Could you memorize a short prayer to say while washing dishes or folding laundry?
• What does your family currently do for fasting?

• If you are struggling with fasting, it’s always a good idea to talk to your priest about it. He can guide you with personalized instruction. Here are some questions to think about and possible take with you to talk to him. Is it that you’re new to Orthodoxy and you tried to take on too much too soon? Is it that some or all of your family do not want to eat the fasting foods you make? Is it that your current circumstances make fasting difficult? What is your situation? What could you do to add one new aspect of fasting to your family’s plate this coming year? Could you try to have everyone eat vegetarian on Fridays for dinner? Could you try having everyone eat vegan for Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent? What can you do to raise the bar one notch higher this year for your family?
• In what ways could our family live our faith more in our daily rhythm? What goal(s) would I like to work towards this year?