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Religion professor creates animated video lessons to help children learn the Orthodox faith from home



The coronavirus pandemic did not only generate panic and fear. It was also the source of constructive, useful projects, a true materialization of Christian love and creativity.

The “Minute of Religion” is one such example, an atypical way for a teacher to address his students on religious topics using short animated videos.

“In the context of isolation and distance teaching, I considered that I would be able to reach children more easily in this way,” the project’s creator, Florin Zărnescu, told the Basilica News Agency.

Florin Zărnescu, the teacher who brings the Minute of Religion

Florin graduated from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest and currently teaches religious education classes at the "Matei Basarab" School in Brebu, Prahova.

Most likely, the initiative is unique in the Romanian Orthodox space, but Florin keeps a modest attitude and says that the idea is not original. "I picked it up from other educational YouTube channels I'm watching."

At first, he looked at the activity as a way to repeat the subject with his students and chose to present the information in a concise style, in which the graphic element plays a vital role so that children "do not feel the burden of writing."

And for success to be complete, he chose the online environment, the place where young people want to live longer and longer, even in the absence of a pandemic.

"Compared to other learning methods, I think it is more accessible, reaching where children spend most of their time. It also offers a fairly large volume of information concisely and, I hope, as visually pleasing as possible, being easy to assimilate."

In addition to the project's strengths, Florin also highlighted some shortcomings. "It cannot, in any way, replace the personal presence of the priest or the religion teacher. The same way, it can not replace the listening of children, their understanding and the collective effort to find practical ways to apply knowledge, according to the spiritual needs of each."

Why a Minute of Religion?

"Because the capacity to focus decreases drastically, in the absence of personal presence and in front of the phone, tablet or computer screen. Not only the attention of the children but also of us, adults. I wanted it to be as concise, approachable and playful as possible, but to be associated with religion classes in children's minds."

The first five videos deal with existing religious topics in the school curriculum: the Bible, the Creation of the World, the Fall of the First Fathers and the Promise of a Saviour, the Biblical Flood, and the Tower of Babel.

“I wanted it to be, first of all, a recap. And I wanted it to have logical continuity. So we started with an overview of the Holy Scriptures, followed by a look at the main biblical themes and events. I want to reach a better understanding of the importance of the Nativity, the Sacrifice and the Resurrection of the Saviour,” said Florin.

In the future, Florin is thinking of presenting in his videos information related to the main Orthodox feast days.

“If it proves useful, I would like to continue and address other important topics, such as the great Christian holidays.”

Although the videos are short, the work behind them is extensive; for one minute, the preparation can take even more than an hour. “Indeed, at least now, in the beginning, it involves quite a lot of time,” said Florin, who presented the stages of making an episode.

“The first step is documentation, first biblical, and then checking the textbooks to see what is needed for children to remember. I make up the text, as short as possible, together with the sketches. Then I film the unfolding of the drawings on the tablet. First, I record an audio reading of the text. And then I record the guitar. I end up mixing them on the computer.”

The project is in Romanian, and the Romanian Patriarchate’s TV Station will broadcast it.

Photography courtesy of Florin Zărnescu / Facebook

Source