

August 1, 2009

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

As Rector of the Orthodox Theological Seminary of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, I would like to address myself to three important points relating to our seminary:

First, I would like to dispel any rumor that St Tikhon's Seminary is closing this Fall or at any time in the future. The Holy Synod of Bishops has confirmed this fact in a recent press release which can be viewed at the official OCA website, oca.org.

I would like to add that, although there have been informal and personal discussions between individual members of St Tikhon's and St Vladimir's communities, none of these discussions have reached the level of concrete proposals, nor have they been reviewed or endorsed by the Board of Trustees of St Tikhon's Seminary.

I will speak in a minute about the future possibilities for cooperation between our seminaries, but I would like to be clear in stating that St Tikhon's Seminary is not closing nor is it merging with any other school.

For my second point, I would like clarify some confusion surrounding the financial health of St Tikhon's Seminary.

Contrary to some statements that have been circulated, our Seminary is audited and has been audited by a professional auditing firm for the past six years. The audit for the latest fiscal year is being completed by the firm of Parente and Randolph as we speak and will be posted on this website as soon as it becomes available.

The audits for the past five years have also been accessible on this website, and can be found in the section labeled "audited financials" on the navigation bar to your left.

When this year's audit is posted, it will reveal that the seminary ended the fiscal year on a very positive note, thanks to your generosity and the generosity of many other benefactors, in spite of the world-wide economic downturn.

As almost every institution and individual did, our investments suffered during the past year, but thanks to some professional guidance from our financial advisors, our losses in this area were minimal.

As we prepare for the new academic year, we are pleased to have been able to offer a modest salary increase to all of our regular full time faculty, in addition to a cost of living increase that was provided for all members of our staff and administration.

In addition, again, thanks to the generosity of several of our trustees and benefactors we have also devoted some time this summer to improving our physical plant, including some major painting projects, the replacement of large areas of carpeting and the upgrading of several classrooms and restroom facilities.

Most importantly, we are continuing the sacred work of preparing young men for service to Christ and ministry in the Church. By the grace of God, during the past academic year, 17 St Tikhon's seminarians and graduates were ordained to the Priesthood and 7 others were ordained to the Diaconate. Two of those deacons will be ordained to the priesthood in the coming months, as we prepare for the new academic year.

This leads me to my third and final point, in which I would like to offer some thoughts about the future of theological education on this continent.

In the press release, to which I referred earlier, the Holy Synod blessed and encouraged the faculty and boards of all of our seminaries to further discussion regarding cooperation and the future of theological education in the OCA.

But what is meant by theological education?

Theological education is not simply one academic discipline or one program of studies among others as we find in other colleges and universities.

Theological education refers to the process by which we become theologians, that is, the path we follow to attain the Truth. Concerning this, the greatest theologian of our Church proclaims: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

As we know, Christ Himself is the Truth incarnate. But St John reminds us that all of us have access to this Truth and that the path to this Truth is the apostolic experience of the revelation of the glory of God: *and WE beheld his glory...*

This apostolic experience of the glory of God has been shared by all the saints and it is offered to all who would enter onto the path of spiritual and ascetical struggles which is the foundations of theology.

All of our theological institutions are engaged upon this ascetical and spiritual path leading to the experience of God and the truth of Christ. I know that, regardless of the real or perceived differences between our theological institutions, every person involved with them shares the same goal and is walking on that same path.

What separates us from one another along this common path to the truth?

Sometimes it is the passions that each of us struggles with personally and sometimes it is the divisions that separate us from one another. The first step to overcoming the passions in our heart is to know ourselves better; and the first step to overcoming our separation from one another is to begin to know one another, to know one another as persons and to know one another as institutions made up of persons.

The Holy Synod has especially encouraged St Tikhon's and St Vladimir's Seminaries to enter into closer cooperation. It is no secret that from the time both institutions were founded in 1938, there have been distinctions between the schools. Historically, these distinctions may have taken the form of rivalry, or of theological differences, or simply independence of operation.

Regardless of what may have taken place in the past, the important thing is to move forward today and truly establish an open and honest dialogue about our common path to the Truth of Christ, our common vision of theological education.

As I mentioned earlier, some very preliminary and exploratory personal discussions have taken place, but the time has come for the entire Church to reaffirm the central reality of theology and to focus on the important challenges that face theological education, precisely because they are challenges that face each of us as Christians.

So let us all enter into this theological dialogue, striving to know ourselves and to know one another as we walk together towards the Truth of God. Let us lay aside any preconceived notions of the outcome of our conversation, but let us enter into it with brotherly love and humility, asking God to bless our Christian fellowship and strengthen our cooperation with one another.

Above all, let us begin with prayer and repentance, so that, by the grace of

God, we may all enter into the glory of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.