

THE TIKHONAIRE

— Spring 2023 —



THE TIKHONAIRE

Spring 2023



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SAINT TIKHON'S THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
*Training the next generation of
Orthodox pastors & teachers*

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Cover and interior design by Priest Mikel Hill

A Word from the Seminary President

By means of technology, human beings have learned to wield power so immense, so life-shaping, so pervasive, that we have come to take it for granted. Our electric grids enable the enterprise and entertainments of whole continents. We harness vast networks of satellites in orbit and great lengths of fiber-optic cable under the ocean for the sake of mass communication.

But in the person of Jesus Christ we encounter a different sort of a power, one which seems lesser but is, in fact, far greater. When Our Lord was captured in the garden, he did not



call legions of angels to his defense. In his silence and humility, he seemed confusing and despicable to the Roman governor. He allowed himself to be led out to die.

And in this total self-offering, this abandonment of all the power that the world has on offer, this kenotic surrender to death, Our Savior in fact empties the world and death of all their power. Death could not grasp him; it could not hold him. By laying down his life on the Cross, he destroyed death forever.

The power that Our Lord wields, the power of his Pascha, remains available to us today. The world is created good and is full of blessings, but it is also full of seductions and disappointments. If we learn to imitate the Lord, to lay down our life, to offer ourselves up, then we can experience his liberating power, freeing us from all unwholesome attachment to the power of this world. One word for this state, which we encounter especially in the ascetic fathers, is dispassion.

And there is no better route to dispassion, to identification with the Lord in his humiliation and *kenosis*, than the road of worship. The Son offered himself on the Cross out of reverent obedience to the Father. Likewise, in worship, we set aside all worldly power—concerns with productivity, with action, with striving, with our own will and preferences—and we say, “Father, thy will be done.”

At St. Tikhon’s Monastery and St. Tikhon’s Seminary, daily worship is at the center of communal life. But frequent worship is not just for monastics and seminarians; frequent worship should be the priority in every parish and every family, too.

+Metropolitan TIKHON

A Word from the Seminary Rector

Beloved Members of Saint Tikhon’s Seminary Graduating Class of 2023:

The Fathers of the Church tell us that the office of the priest is much greater than that of the king. The spiritual direction of souls, the duty of the priest, is “the art of arts and the science of sciences.”

Saint Ignatius writes in the second century: “The priesthood is the apex of all good things among men. He who opposes it dishonors not man but God...” And St. John Chrysostom tells us: “The priesthood is greater than the monarchy. . . . The king partakes in the administration of earthly things; the ordinances of the priesthood are established on high.”



How do we live up to such a high calling? What must the priest do to bring these words to fruition? The most important responsibilities of a priest of the Church are:

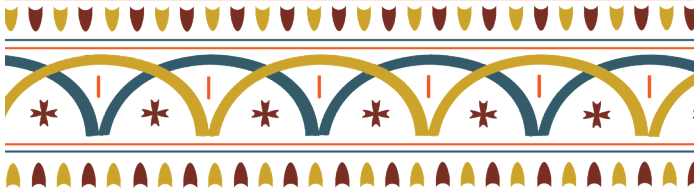
To lead the people in prayer; to preach and teach, by both word and example; to administer the Holy Mysteries of the Faith; to care for the spiritual needs of the flock; to shepherd souls by exhorting, guiding, correcting, comforting, and advising as need be; to bind and to loose sins; to apply corrective discipline where necessary; to carry out and oversee administrative tasks in the parish.

All these duties, and any others, have as their ultimate purpose to bring the people of God to Christ, and to offer them to Him as a pure and unblemished sacrifice.

Saint John of Kronstadt, the “Pastor of all Russia,” wrote: “Every priest is an apostle in his parish, and ought to go about preaching the Kingdom of God, instructing the ignorant, awakening the careless, encouraging the devout, strengthening and comforting the downcast. We must preach that Christ came down to earth in order to lift us up to Heaven, that it is not right to attach ourselves to anything worldly, and that we must value time, filling it with as many good works as possible, in order to win eternity.”

Go out, my sons, and do the work of Christ the High Priest, and may He go with you, and may your life and priesthood be to His glory.

With love and prayers,
+ Archbishop MICHAEL



SAINT TIKHON'S MONASTERY

WE WELCOME you once again to the annual pilgrimage of our beloved St. Tikhon's Monastery and Seminary. We are so very glad to see you and for you to partake of the great grace of the Lord that is present at St. Tikhon's. Indeed, we feel that the work done here is incredibly important and your prayerful support of this work is essential! Five canonized Saints walked, talked, and loved St. Tikhon's and your love continues their vision, work, and heritage.

The monastic community continues to offer prayers, services, teaching, and work on behalf of the entire Church, providing a cornerstone: the act of bearing the Cross of the Lord, which is our salvation. The one thing needful is for us all to carry this common Cross together. Our "yes" to God is a "yes" to our salvation and the growth of the Church. To lose our life for this endeavor is to save it and to continue to help the process of growth within the life and culture of the Church in America. It is amazing what we can do when we pray together, united in a common work with love. Let us pray that God would continue to be with us. Let us pray for

our bishops, priests, and fellow parishioners that we would be strong and full of love. Let us pray for our families, that God would bless them and keep them close to the Lord and His Church. And most importantly, let us pray that God will keep us all till that last and great day so that we can all together enter into the joy of our Lord.

Be assured of our prayers for you for all these things as we continue the work begun by the saints here at St. Tikhon's, aided by your important and essential support. May God bless and keep each one of you in the faith, hope, and love of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ.

With much love in Christ,
Archimandrite Sergius
—Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery



ALL THE GOOD—

Well, Some of the Good—that God is Doing at St Tikhon’s

—Fr. John Parker, Dean

“And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen” (John 21:25, 11th Matins Gospel Reading).

CERTAINLY in this Paschal season, we are remembering, one by one, all the marvels of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as you, dear reader, are reading this spring 2023 edition of the *Tikhonaire*, we will have just finished the Pilgrimage, and will have just read the passage above as the Gospel lesson appointed for Saturday, June 3, 2023.

The truth be told, while the daily struggle is real at St. Tikhon’s (since the devil doesn’t want any of this, or us, here...), certainly, all the good that is happening at St. Tikhon’s Seminary could not be contained in many editions of the *Tikhonaire*, much less this one—certainly not in this short essay.

Here at St. Tikhon’s, we commemorated the 10th Anniversary as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, of our dear President, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon. And our esteemed Rector, His Eminence Archbishop Michael celebrated his 50th anniversary of ordination to the holy priesthood.

We have graduated 12 into the fields, white for harvest. Our seminarians, now not just seeds, but blooms, are being sent across the land to Alaska, Ohio, Florida, New Jersey, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, to name a few.

We will have ordained 15 deacons and priests since Christmas Day, including three deacons on Graduation/Pilgrimage Weekend. Our rising seniors are off to their amazing summer internships across North America—from California and Mexico, to South Carolina, Pennsylvania and New York, and everywhere in between—not to mention Australia.

Our rising Middlers are beginning a June term course, the first in recent memory. Ethics is being taught by Dn. Sampson Nash, M.D., in residence here at St. Tikhon’s for the first two weeks of the month.

Portions of the campus continue under renovations, as we reclaim all sorts of corners, rooms, walls, and spaces for the sacred task of spiritual formation and community building on our campus. We are completing a major, mostly paved walking path from the orphanage to the seminary. The beautification of the seminary courtyard is on the horizon. We continue to work towards a new library—but in the



meantime, a generous donor is installing split-unit, high-efficiency air conditioning in all six rooms of the current library. And there is even better news that we can’t yet print.

St. Nikolai Chapel, in the seminary, is undergoing beautification as well. In December, the ceiling was painted midnight blue, with 24k gilded stars, and we are awaiting a new set of windows, which will coordinate with the monastery church.

Metropolitan Platon’s chapel in the cemetery is under renovation, and we have set aside and named a beautiful sitting room in his honor in the seminary, as we get to know his dear, living relatives, and receive some of his personal treasures as gifts to St. Tikhon’s.

And there is also the amazing St. Nikolai Shrine, every day more beautiful, in honor of our departed and canonized rector, St. Nikolai Velimirovich. Connections with St. Nikolai abound, and the shrine will surely become a site of serious pilgrimage.

July 1, we welcome long-time adjunct, Fr. John Kowalczyk, for a two-year position as Assistant Professor and Interim Chair of the Department of Pastoral Arts and Praxis. And, as we say goodbye and thank you to Dr. Christopher Veniamin for three decades of service and to Benedict Sheehan for thirteen years, we congratulate Fr. Demetrios Harper on finishing his first year as Associate Professor of Dogmatic Theology and Fr. Paul Witek on one year as a priest.

There is more—much more. But I invite you: come and see all the good that God is doing here at St. Tikhon’s. And, dear reader: thank you. Thank you for your prayers, offerings, scholarships, goodwill—indeed, for all that you do to make St. Tikhon’s what we are today.



St Nikolai Shrine



Photo of Archbishop Michael by Alexander Zarynow

Honoring
HIS EMINENCE
ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL

CELEBRATING the 50th anniversary of Archbishop Michael's priestly ordination, we are reminded of his many years of dedicated service to the Lord and to the Church. Despite facing unimaginable loss and hardship early in his ministry, Archbishop Michael has remained unwavering in his commitment to serve. One particularly poignant moment in his journey came when, after a terrible automobile accident left him in a coma for three months and took the life of his young bride, his own bishop blessed him to continue his education and provided for the cost of his studies. This act of kindness and generosity allowed Archbishop Michael to continue his journey of service to the Lord, and he has never forgotten it. In fact, he has made it his mission to pay this kindness forward, offering support and assistance to other clergy and seminarians in need.

As we celebrate this important milestone in Archbishop Michael's ministry, we invite you to join us in supporting the vital work of St. Tikhon's Seminary. Your contribution will help to ensure that our students have the resources and support they need to succeed, and that the Orthodox Church in America continues to thrive and grow.

Please consider making a generous contribution today, and help us to support His Eminence Archbishop Michael and the essential work of St. Tikhon's Seminary. Your generosity will make a meaningful difference in the lives of our students and faculty and will help to ensure that the next generation of clergy and lay leaders are trained in the rich traditions of the Orthodox Church. Thank you for your commitment to this important work.

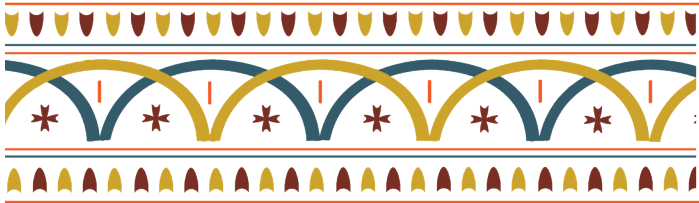
To make a generous donation please scan the QR code on the right or visit abp.anniversary.stots.edu



Many years,

MOST REVEREND MASTER!

We thank God for your fifty years of faithful service as a priest and thirteen years of tremendous service as the rector of St. Tikhons Seminary and the Archbishop of New York and the Diocese and New York and New Jersey.



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Seminary Dean and COO



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Lecturer in Spirituality



V. Rev. George Alberts
Lecturer in Byzantine Liturgics
and Byzantine Chant



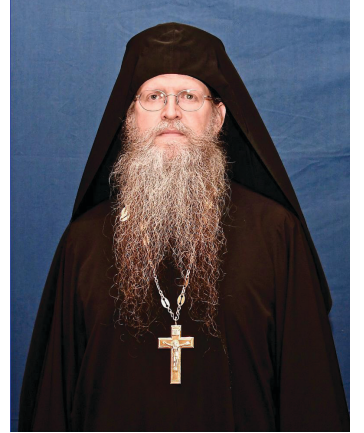
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to the Dean



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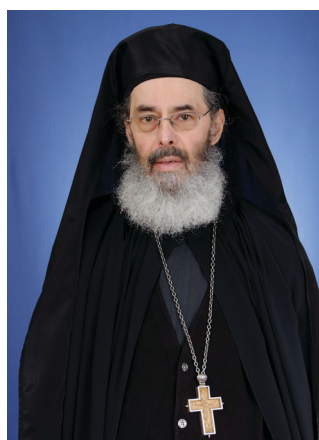
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Professor of Patristics



Rev. Paul Witek, Ph.D.
Assoc. Dean of Academic Affairs
and Registrar

Leaders from the Orthodox Church in America gathered in November, 2022 at St. Tikhon's Seminary to discuss all aspects of seminary life, from application to ordination.



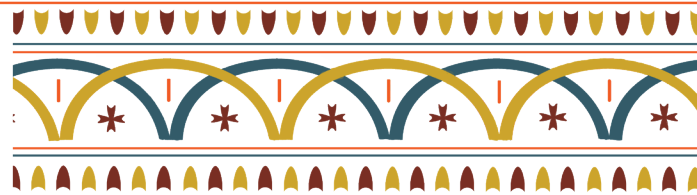
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ORDINATIONS



Dn. Herman Belt was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on December 25, 2022

Dn. Joseph Whittaker was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on January 6, 2023

John York was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on January 6, 2023

Dn. Gabriel Aldridge was ordained to the Holy Priesthood January 7, 2023

Dn. Solomon Longo was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on January 21, 2023

Dr. Gregory Fedorchak was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on January 21, 2023



Dn. Nathan Clausson was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on January 27, 2023

Kirill Zawatski was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on January 27, 2023

Dn. Michael Rehmet was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on February 2, 2023

Dr. Caleb Lewis was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on February 2, 2023

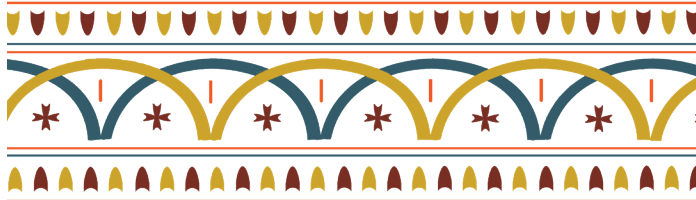
Mark Solomon was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on February 11, 2023

Jordan Kingery was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on February 26, 2023

Reuben Thomas was ordained to the Holy Subdiaconate on September 17, 2022

Renin Cherian was ordained to the Holy Subdiaconate on September 17, 2022





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 The Very Rev. Alexander Rentel—Chancellor (OCA)
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David C. Ford, Ph.D.

Meet Fr. Martie Johnson

—St. Tikhon's Seminary Board Member



How did you become involved with St. Tikhon's Seminary? Please tell us a bit of your story.

I got involved after I had a great conversation with Protopodeacon Michael Wusylko and Matushka Mary Wusylko at a support dinner in their home. These two long-term legacy board members shared the story of St. Tikhon and his efforts to evangelize North America. They shared about their life, love, and support of the seminary in its early days and how the future can benefit from more voices and support of the faithful. I wanted to know more and learn more about it!

I had heard of St. Tikhon's and I knew it was a seminary and that there was a monastery but not much else. I wanted to know more and do more to learn of the faith and effort of the Church with the seminary and its growth here in the United States.

Please share with us a time you were particularly blessed in a visit to the monastery and/or seminary.

I was blessed to visit the seminary a few years ago over the Memorial Day weekend near the time of a recent commencement and I had a chance to be part of a powerful pilgrimage for the 80th anniversary of the Seminary. It was a great time of fellowship, faith, and looking to the future of possibility for the Institution. I made great friends and had a chance to worship with people from around the country.

Many folks reading this issue of the Tikhonaire have never had the opportunity to visit St. Tikhon's. Inspire them in a few words to visit.

With all that God has done for those who have gone before us, visiting St. Tikhon's is a way to step into the future of the Church and see how the seminary can move the world. You will see, be served by, and worship with the people doing what they can to respond with their faith in God and something bigger than themselves—that is, St. Tikhon's Seminary. You will hear the voices (some of those folks can really sing!) of people whose journeys in life return them to Church to give thanks for every step on their road to Christ. You'll meet students, faculty, staff, and even monks, and while they will be busy or on their way this way and that way, they will stop and offer you a smile and cheerful hello. Oh! And you'll be sure to enjoy some great coffee at the bookstore.

In our day, there are many competing voices and significant needs in the world. What inspires you to make a generous commitment of your time, talent, and treasure to St. Tikhon's?

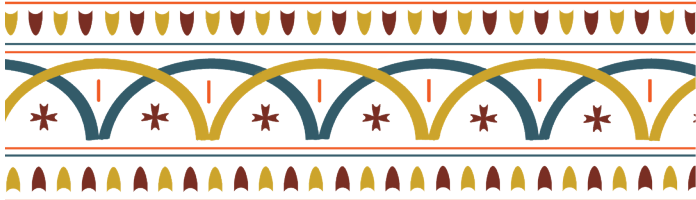
I am privileged to offer what I can to the seminary, because I believe in service before self. I think, as in decades and centuries past, life in the world requires that everyone find their way through the ocean of life's joys and pains, prudence and prodigal, common sense and nonsense, faith and despair. How we navigate this course and set our direction is what St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary is training people to do for the life of the world. Life is simple, but that doesn't make it easy; so sharing and encouraging the world to see farther than this life and to recognize that, in Christ, whose yoke is easy and burden is light, are always necessary no matter the time or place in human history.

St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary is a place where those who led before us invite us to join them in service of a higher purpose which is to "commend ourselves and each other and all our life unto Christ our God." So, as a person who has served, I continue to try to do just that with my time and talent.

Rev. Dr. Martin Johnson, Jr.

—St. Anthony Antiochian Orthodox Church





Meet Dn. Luke Carpenter

—St. Tikhon's Seminary Board Member

I AM A 63-year-old man who was born and raised in rural central Pennsylvania. I attended college in Amherst, Massachusetts where I met my bride, Judy. We attended medical school at Yale in Connecticut. I also obtained a M. Div. at the Yale Divinity School during my time in New Haven. We moved to Philadelphia in 1986 to begin our medical careers at the University of Pennsylvania and started our family (a son, John and daughter, Katie). I left Pennsylvania in 2008 to help found the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University (Camden, NJ) and currently serve there as the Chairman of the Department of Surgery and Chief of Surgery for Cooper University Health Care. Judy and I have been serial inventors and entrepreneurs throughout the years, founding several medical device companies.

We came into the Orthodox Church as a family in 1996 at St. Philip Antiochian Orthodox Church, Souderton, Pennsylvania. Finding the fullness of faith in the Orthodox Church has been the greatest blessing ever bestowed on our



marriage and our family. My wife homeschooled our children and it was such a joy to our family to be able to raise them (and us!) in the rhythm of the Church calendar. In 2021, His Grace, Bishop Thomas ordained me to the diaconate. This opportunity to serve has been a grace and privilege, and a source of immeasurable joy and growth in the Lord.

I was invited to explore the opportunity of service on the Board of Trustees at the invitation of Archbishop Michael four years ago. I had known of the monastery and seminary through a number of faithful priests who had been formed there and from seminarians who had served at St. Philip as part of their field education, but I myself had never visited St. Tikhon's.

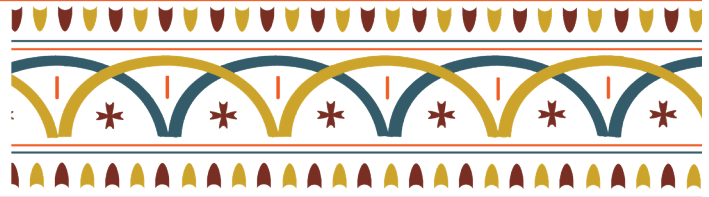
My first visit to St. Tikhon's made a lasting impression, one that is repeated every time I return for a Board meeting or retreat and personal refreshment—an impression of holiness. There are a few places on earth which greet me immediately with a sense of the Holy—an electricity in the air—and St. Tikhon's is such a place. There is a great sense of history and the past presence of great saints of the Church who have walked the grounds and taught in this seminary; but there is also a present and immediately palpable presence of the Holy Spirit permeating the campus here and now. The collegiality, friendship, and love among the seminarians and their families and children is also a joy to see and share. The community itself is a beacon of Christian love and witness to the world.

“The true theologian is the one who prays,” and there can be no better formation for a priest than to breathe the air of the monastery at the same time as he pursues the scholarly preparation of the seminary. This balance is essential and the greatest strength of the St. Tikhon's seminary experience.

I can think of no better way to invest time or treasure than to invest in the formation of our priests. They lovingly give all of themselves entirely to the service of the Church, following the example of Our Lord who gave himself for the life of the world and its salvation. It is a great privilege that God allows us to be able to share in a small way as partners in their future ministry and in the advancement of his kingdom.

Dr. Christopher Veniamin

— Dr. David C Ford,
Professor of Church History



WHEN Dr. Christopher Veniamin arrived at St. Tikhon's Seminary to begin teaching in the fall of 1994, we had eager expectations! Not only did he have his doctorate from Oxford University, one of the most prestigious universities in the whole world, but much more important to us, we knew that he had very close connections with the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Essex, England, founded by the recently canonized Saint Sophrony of Mt. Athos. In fact, Dr. Mary remembered seeing Dr. Christopher and his family at that monastery from her many visits there, beginning back in the late 1970s! What a wonderfully extraordinary thing that we both should end up at St. Tikhon's!

Dr. Christopher also brought with him his dear Anna, whom he married at the beginning of his second year at St. Tikhon's in the monastery Church. Anna is also from England—in fact, from Yorkshire, the land of James Herriot and *All Creatures Great and Small*. And she became a wonderful addition to our community, as well as each of their five children as they came along!

From the very beginning of his time at St. Tikhon's, Dr. Christopher proved to be a very congenial, conscientious, and diligent colleague, eager to work with us all for the good of our students, from his labors to build up our library holdings to his many hours of personal mentoring of students—especially those blessed to write their honors theses under his careful supervision. We came quickly to deeply appreciate his theological expertise and his very high standards for academic excellence that were always centered in the spiritual and liturgical life of our Holy Church.

How many times through the years did we sit together, we three, in our sunroom, sharing tea (of course), and talking for hours about life at the seminary—especially about how things could be improved, above all for the students' sake. For there were some serious difficulties along the way with how things were being handled, at least from our perspective. And by our Lord's wondrous grace, things in general did keep improving, although there were certainly ups and downs along the way. But Dr. Christopher always kept reminding us all of the highest way, blending excellence in academic endeavors with a strong focus on spiritual and liturgical life and blending firm discipline, when necessary, with tender compassion, when our students needed both!

Very remarkably, during his 29 years in the seminary, in addition to all his teaching responsibilities, his carefully mentoring of many students, his many public speaking

engagements around the country, as well as all his literary efforts, along with being a dedicated family man, raising five children, plus having multiple long-term health problems, Dr. Christopher has been able to make very impressive literary contributions of spiritual benefit for the entire Orthodox world. Most especially, his 760-page critical edition of St. Gregory Palamas's celebrated sixty-three homilies, for the first time translated into English, providing, along with his superb translation, over twelve hundred footnotes and almost 90 pages of indices, is a veritable treasure and triumph in the history of patristic studies in the English language. We all are greatly indebted to him for this work, as well as for his recently published book on the Transfiguration of our Lord in the Church Fathers, which flows from his doctoral work at Oxford.

He has also managed to create his own publishing house, Mount Thabor Press, which has made available a host of outstanding works for spiritual edification. Many of these books are written by Archimandrite Zacharias of the Essex Monastery, who entrusted these writings to Dr. Christopher to publish. And as if all this were not enough, he was the major figure in the establishment of, and the early administering of, the doctoral program at the Antiochian House of Studies, and guiding it to accreditation.

So we stand amazed, dearly beloved Dr. Christopher, at all these tremendous contributions to the life of our beloved seminary, and to worldwide Orthodoxy, that you've made through these years.

For all of this, we thank you mightily, dear friend and brother in Christ, and our close professorial colleague at St. Tikhon's Seminary for twenty-nine very rich and dramatic years! And now, we pray that you may have many, many more very fruitful years of service in our Lord's Vineyard, in this next era of your life!



The future Dr. Christopher Veniamin (left), Saint Sophrony (Sakharov) and the future Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou) at St. John's Monastery in England

Visiting Saint Porphyrios

—Dr. Christopher Veniamin

ONCE UPON a time, when I was a student of theology at the University of Thessalonica, Fr. Zacharias asked me if I would like to accompany him to see Elder Porphyrios in Athens to receive his blessing. I enthusiastically agreed.

We flew down to Athens by plane, and it was a joyous flight, as we were singing the hymns of Holy Thursday (the Antiphons of the Twelve Gospels) all the way. The very last part of the journey was scary, however, because the plane, in its descent before landing, turned on its side.

We stayed at a small house that night, and all I remember was that when I awoke, I heard Fr. Zacharias praying. I thought of joining him but decided instead to remain in my room, because his prayer was so fervent. The only other thing I remember about that morning was that we ate some of the most delicious apples I had ever tasted.

We got ready and made our way to where the Elder lived. When we got there, it seemed that we could see him straight away, which is unusual, because usually there are people waiting to see him outside his hut.

The Elder received us immediately, and soon after we entered his hut Porphyrios asked Fr. Zacharias if he knew how to make incense. Fr. Zacharias calmly responded by saying that he did and that it used to be one of his obediences at the monastery for a number of years. “Tell me how you make incense” Elder Porphyrios asked him.

I was puzzled, as I imagine Fr. Zacharias was also, as to why the Elder was interested in such a subject at that particular moment. Nevertheless, Fr. Zacharias patiently continued to describe how he used to make incense. Quite honestly, the details were beyond me, since I myself had never made incense. At a certain point, however, the Elder interrupted Fr. Zacharias’ description and said something like, “Ah there, if you do it this way, the incense will burn more slowly.”

“Yes, I see!” said Fr. Zacharias. “Thank you, Elder; but that’s not what I came to talk to you about.”

“Yes,” Fr. Porphyrios replied. “Your sister. She cannot have a baby. It is psychological. In a year’s time, she will have one.”

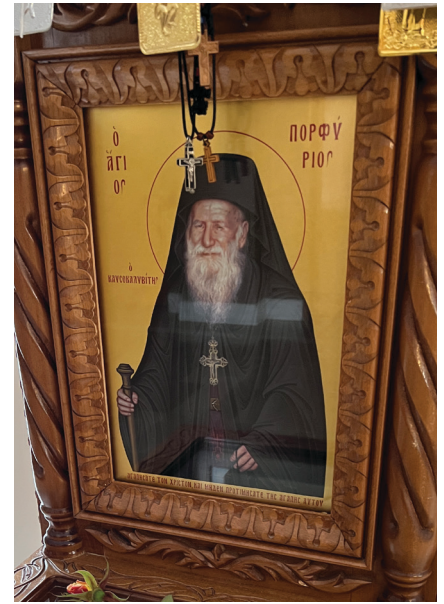
Fr. Zacharias and I looked at each other in amazement. Fr. Zacharias had told me about his sister on our way down from Thessalonica, so I knew his concern. But how did the Elder know?

In response, after a brief stunned silence, Fr. Zacharias asked the Saint if it might perhaps be a blessing not to bring children in to the world, with it being as it is.

The Elder shook his head and said, “No. ‘Go forth and multiply.’”

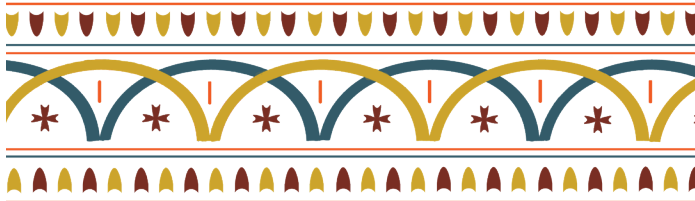
Many other things happened that day, and subsequently, related to this event. But I often wonder how it is that God allowed me to be a partaker of this revelation. I could see that my prayer was too weak to even stand with Fr. Zacharias that morning, and yet God allowed me to be an eye-witness of the Elder’s insight, foresight, wisdom ... and most of all, his Christlike humility.

Glorify to God, who is wondrous in His saints!



Images from the Holy Transfiguration Monastery founded by St. Porphyrios of Kavso, including the bed and personal articles of St. Porphyrios.

Photo credit: Fr. John Parker



GRADUATING CLASS OF 2023



Fr. Gabriel Aldridge



Fr. Herman Belt



Karsten Boyer



Renin Cherian



Fr. Nathan Clausson



Fr. Solomon Longo



Stephen Mathew



Elias Rehmet



Fr. Michael Rehmet



Reuben Thomas



Justin Varghese

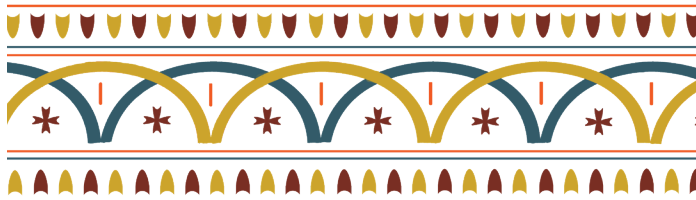


Fr. Ephraim Vest



Fr. Joseph Whittaker





MEET OUR STUDENTS

CLASS OF 2024



(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

Nick Nunu
Seraphim Chang
Kevin Pimpinelli
Michael Pak

Dn. Jordan Kingery
John Easo
Dn. Caleb Lewis
Dn. Mark Solomon
Phillip Dage

Seraphim Robertson
Dn. Kirill Zawatski
Mark Tiitinen
Dn. Gregory Fedorchak
Micah Breland

Damian Kulp
Paul Garcia
Basali Mathew

(not pictured)

Dn. John York
Timothy Paproski

CLASS OF 2025



(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

Paisios Hamann
Alexis Clodfelter

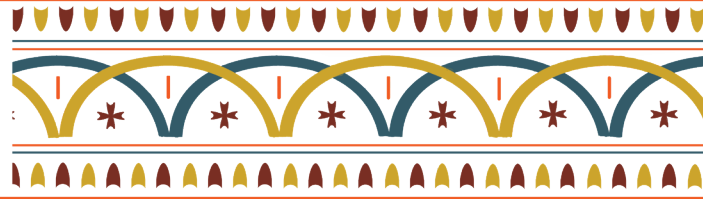
Davede Thompson
Nicholas Johnson
Thomas Coon

Zachary Price
Justin Wehbe
Moses Ryerson

Ashich Mohan
Mathew Varughese

From St. Tikhon's to the Inner City: One Priest's Reflection

—Fr. Paul Abernathy, STOTS 2013



“FREELY you have received. Freely Give.” (Mt. 10:8) The words of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ permeate my heart as I reflect on my journey from St. Tikhon's to being a mission priest in inner-city Pittsburgh. The divine beauty I experienced as a seminarian in “the place where saints have walked” has, from the very beginning of my ministry, served as the foundation of my priestly ministry among the poor and suffering. No words can express how profoundly the truth, wisdom, and beauty I experienced at St. Tikhon's have impacted me, and I have a deep sense of unworthiness when I truly consider how blessed I was to spend three formative years in that holy place. During that time, I received more grace, love, and holy wisdom than words can express. I received it freely, even undeservingly. Mindful of our Lord's words, I ponder the question, “How can I freely give what I have received in our most challenged communities?”

I now find myself pastor of St. Moses the Black Orthodox Church, a mission parish established in a predominantly African-American community in the heart of Pittsburgh called the Hill District. The parish of St. Moses the Black also anchors the Neighborhood Resilience Project. Rooted in the Gospel and teachings of the Orthodox Church, inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, the mission of the Neighborhood Resilience Project is to support the transformation of neighborhoods from trauma-affected communities to resilient, healing and healthy communities through Trauma Informed Community Development. In addition to my role as pastor of St. Moses, I am also blessed and privileged to serve as the founding CEO of this ministry.

When considering the growth and magnitude of this ministry, people often ask, “How did this all begin?” I remember being in sacred music class with Fr. Sergius Boyer at St. Tikhon's one day as he prompted us to consider how we were to share the beauty of our holy Orthodox Christian faith with our beloved country. It was a fitting question, especially since his prompt was in line with the vision of St. Tikhon when he established the monastery in South Canaan a century before. For me, his challenge made me think of many of our communities that are often neglected, where people may not, for a host of reasons, have the opportunity to find Orthodoxy on their own. I remember raising this concern, which Fr. Sergius affirmed. The words he then spoke to me I will never forget: “So what are you going to do about it?” The words seemed at

that moment to be a Divinely inspired charge to go forth and bear witness to holy orthodoxy in a community that otherwise would not have the opportunity to encounter the faith of the apostles.

By that point in my life, I was well aware of the kind of suffering that plagued many American communities. As the son of a single mother social worker, I had the privilege and blessing to benefit from my mother's profound insight and compassion while at the same time learning the value of service. By the time I reached St. Tikhon's, I had been exposed to housing projects, people experiencing homelessness, Palestinian refugee camps, the ugly face of racism, the horrific legacies of injustice, and even war in Iraq. In all of these experiences I encountered great pain in people suffering beneath the weight of every imaginable kind of trauma. Immersed in the mystery of the Church, I was ever mindful of the countless masses who in their suffering did not know the same divine beauty that I was encountering daily at St. Tikhon's.

I was familiar with the kind of conversations taking place across the U.S. about what our most challenged communities needed. Certainly they needed opportunity and many people needed food. Many more needed crisis interventions of various sorts, to include an emphasis on addressing the gun violence that was continually gripping our nation. Although there was indeed merit to all of this, I could not help but remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Mt. 6:33) I graduated from St.



Tikhon's with a keen awareness that it was the Lord's divine grace, love, and mercy that our most suffering communities needed most of all. Having experienced this personally in that holy place, I knew this was the only way.

Within months of my graduation, I found myself in a small, dilapidated storefront in the heart of the Hill District in the city of Pittsburgh. The priestly formation I had received gave me perspective informed by divine truth that gave understanding when encountering extreme pain in the people I was interacting with daily. They came as rape victims, abuse survivors, formerly incarcerated, homeless, mothers who had lost their sons to gun violence, and wives whose husbands died early from medical reasons that were completely preventable if not for the lack of access to health care. They came to our humble store front seeking help. Although they had significant material needs, and often came for that purpose, I was also incredibly humbled by their desire to pray. We established a small icon corner and began to pray readers services. Although they did not know holy orthodoxy, they seemed to recognize it with their hearts. They prayed "Lord have mercy" with a kind of faith and radical sincerity that awed me. At the time, I was absolutely certain it was a taste of the divine beauty I had experienced at St. Tikhon's, the seeds of something heavenly in the Hill District.

These brokenhearted prayers would inspire great action and a ministry would flow from countless hours of fervent supplication. In time, we would encounter many believers who, having a particular talent, would join with us in offering it to the Lord. This laid the foundation for a mission parish, as well as what would become the Neighborhood Resilience Project.

Eventually, I was married and ordained to the holy priesthood. My wife Kh. Kristina and I labored to establish St. Moses the Black as well as found the Neighborhood Resilience Project, an Orthodox ministry to address the multi-generational, complex trauma we were facing every day. We engaged with local universities to better understand this issue of community trauma. With many hours of research, lectures, presentations, one on one meetings with trauma survivors and experts, it became clear to me that taking a eucharistic approach to heal the brokenness of our communities was the clear path forward.

It began with the Liturgy, and the altar would be the heart of the Neighborhood Resilience Project. Daily services would inform and inspire a framework we now refer to as Trauma Informed Community Development (TICD), a process by which we would work to facilitate the transformation of neighborhoods from trauma affected communities, to resilient, healing, and healthy communities.

Over the years, the Neighborhood Resilience Project has



grown significantly. With a beautiful facility, we offer food and clothing to people in crisis, even feeding thousands of children during weekends over the years. We have crisis interventions that we have developed which are informed by scripture and patristic teachings. Of course we also give emergency relief, to include offering electric, gas, and rental assistance for families facing household challenges.

Beyond crisis intervention, we have further developed more comprehensive long term community-based intervention strategies that we can scientifically demonstrate have improved health and well-being over the course of a year. This work is supported by a free health center (that offers free primary, behavioral, and dental care for the uninsured), a trauma response team that responds to homicides as a result of gun violence, public health interventions led by community health deputies, and a trauma-informed school-based intervention that focuses on children who are most likely to shoot or be shot.

By God's grace, our ministry now has spread beyond our most immediate neighborhood. The Hill District itself, according to God's mercy, has also experienced significant change. By God's grace, this neighborhood is no longer on the list of Pittsburgh's most violent communities as it was when St. Moses and the Neighborhood Resilience Project were first established. As I see this, I remember the words of Fr. John Finley, who, when serving vespers in our humble store front church years ago, said, "You will never know how many lives are saved from the grace that flows from this altar."

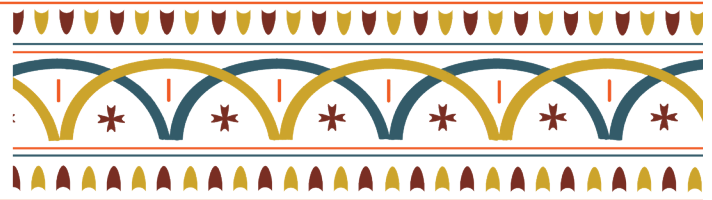
This success has afforded us the opportunity to bear witness to our Holy Orthodox Faith by training groups (Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike) in TICD and parish outreach. They have come from Columbus and Indianapolis, Sarasota, and Petersburg. We have trained Americans from rural Pennsylvania and Arapajo elders from Wind River Indian Reservation. African-Americans, Hispanics, government

and community groups from across the nation have all come seeking answers to some of the most pressing social problems of our day, and I pray, at the same time refreshing their souls.

When I reflect on that first Liturgy by which St. Tikhon, Enlightener of North America, established St. Tikhon's, with St. Raphael of Brooklyn presiding, I cannot help but ponder the undeniable wave of divine grace that began to pour over the United States. The hearts that have been stirred by the fire of the Holy Spirit are immeasurable. I write this to bear witness that this Divine fire is sweeping across our land,

healing the broken-hearted and transfiguring pain to joy. I have seen this on the streets of our most challenged communities and, God willing, by ministries of the Holy Orthodox Church, the future of our beloved and beleaguered nation will be sealed in holy Orthodoxy. As we celebrate this holy monastery and seminary, let us not keep the grace and mercy we have freely received to ourselves; but let us rather as unworthy servants of the most High God freely give, especially to the least of these our brethren.

IN MEMORIAM



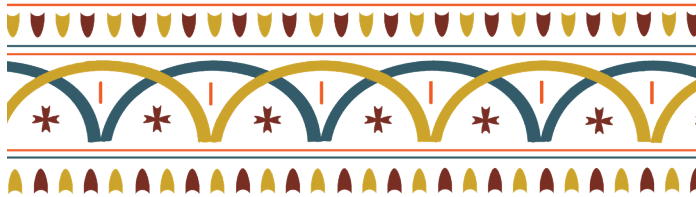
Rev. Andrew T. Diehl, Jr. (STOTS 1996)
October 15, 2022

Matushka Emily Shuga
wife of alumnus Fr. Stephen Shuga (STOTS 1957)
December 7, 2022

Isaiah Luke Fedorchak
son of seminarian Dn. Gregory Fedorchak
February 6, 2023

Very Rev. Daniel Rentel, (STOTS 1961)
February 7, 2023

Memory Eternal



VISITING DIGNITARIES



Holy Synod meets in St. Nicholai Chapel, November 2022



Presbytera Dr Jeannie Constantinou delivers the Founder's Day Lecture in October 2022

Visit of His Holiness Moran Mor Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, the Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan, with His Grace Zachariah Mor Nicolovos, Metropolitan of the Northeast American Diocese



Fr Daniel Geeza delivers the 3rd Annual St Nicholai Lecture in March 2023

MEET GINGER SMITH & TIMOTHY SCHEITLIN



I started at St. Tikhon's in March 2022 and love the work I do, knowing I'm making St. Tikhon's a better place while it grows. I have many trades here with maintenance and even jumping into the kitchen to cook if needed.

Before joining St. Tikhon's, I worked on an Army base in Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) for 16 years. I managed many restaurants and warehousing there as assistant food and beverage manager. I earned numerous awards for providing service to government officials including the U.S. president. I always wanted to take my skills to a higher level and applied for an executive sous chef position at Mohegan Sun.

Once I received the call that I had been selected, I worked under the executive chef, building and creating many food operations and improving others already in effect. My knowledge and that of others created major profit, and customer appreciation grew. When the COVID-19 virus hit, we closed 80 percent of operations, and there was a major layoff.

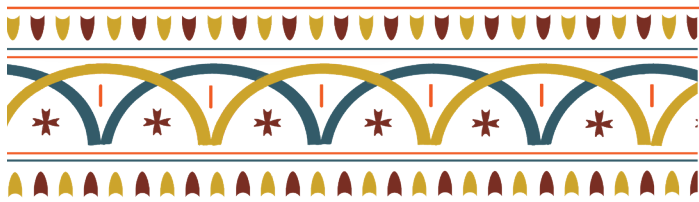
I did not need to look far for my next adventure once I was hired by the St. Tikhon's Seminary. St. Tikhon's has a strong team, but even more, it's the first place where I feel my coworkers are family. I see my future is here forever, helping to keep St. Tikhon's growing.



I was born in Baltimore but moved up to the family homestead in Pennsylvania when I was three years old. I've lived my entire life, except for about two years, on the family homestead. In 1984, I graduated school and went straight to work for Keystone (which now works closely with St. Jude's), working with children with special needs. Working with the special needs children is my true love.

In 1986, I began working food services on an Army base. I started in food service, moved to administration, became an assistant manager, and moved on to finance. For a time, I served as chief of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR). There, I took care of guest houses, gyms, libraries, and more and still worked for the restaurant. Whenever there was turnover in the kitchen, I would go back over to manage. My focus was the mental and physical well-being of the spouses and children left behind during deployment of their soldiers. I loved working with the families. At other points in my career, I managed an auto shop, a community pool for military families, and The Landing, an officers' club. I retired early at age 52. I am blessed to have two children: a son Christopher (34), a daughter, Trisha (31), and two grandsons: Lukas (5) and Tanner (1).

I came out of retirement to work at St. Tikhon's, first to help the head cook. Now I am the cook. St. Tikhon's is so happy, peaceful, and mellow. It's a blessed place.



ALUMNI *Good News*

Archpriest Andrew D. Nelko—Class of 1981

Fr. Andrew retired from active parish ministry on November 1, 2022. He had served at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Campbell Ohio for the past 12 years (2010–2022) following his retirement from the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps. His final Divine Liturgy in Campbell (October 30th) was joined by his son, Priest Andrew P. Nelko (Class of 2017), son-in-law, Priest John S. Parker (Class of 2019) and brother-in-law, Archpriest Dimitri D. Ermakov.

In November 2022, three graduates of St. Tikhon's, Archpriest Andrew D. Nelko (Class of 1981), Priest Gabriel Bilas (Class of 2015), and Priest Andrew P. Nelko (Class of 2017), were part of a tour which visited the Holy Land (Jerusalem). While visiting, they also spent time with St. Tikhon alumnus (Class of 2017), Fr. Khader Baramki, who is the priest at St. James in Old City Jerusalem. Many holy sites were visited with the highlight being the blessing to concelebrate the midnight Divine Liturgy at the Holy Sepulcher on Sunday, November 27th.



Deacon Mark Makarios (Class of 2022) was ordained to the holy priesthood on October 2, 2022

Deacon John Holoduek (Class of 2022) was ordained to the holy priesthood on August 29, 2022

Protopresbyter Andrew Koufopoulos, Class of 1975, with the blessing of his Metropolitan, was given permission to retire as of May 1st and will continue to serve Holy Trinity-Saint John the Theologian in Jackson, Mississippi.

Archpriest Vasily Gilbert—Class of 1979

This season finds me with two milestones in my life. The first is Matushka Nancy and I will be celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary on October 10th. We were married at St. Michael's Orthodox Church in Jermyn, PA by Archpriest Dennis Swencki and Archpriest Joseph Gallick. The second is on November 22nd, I will celebrate the 25th anniversary of my ordination to the holy priesthood. I was ordained by the ever-memorable Metropolitan Theodosius at Three Saints Orthodox Church in Ansonia, Connecticut where I was choir director.

Fr. David Subu—Class of 1999

My good news is that I was asked to lead the Regional OCF Retreat at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA last weekend (Feb 24-26). My talk was entitled "Deep Calls to Deep: Enchantment, Embodiment, and Ecology in the Orthodox Biblical Worldview." About 40 college students participated.

Fr. Joseph Lucas – Class 2010

On September 9, Fr. Joseph Lucas (STOTS 2010) received his PhD in Theology from Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen in the Netherlands. He successfully defended his thesis titled “Offerer and Offering: Cyril of Alexandria on Jewish and Christian Sacrifice.” His supervisors were Fr. Andrew Louth and Fr. John Behr, and his examination panel included Fr. John McGuckin and Lewis Ayres. Fr. Joseph is the rector of Christ the Saviour Orthodox Cathedral (OCA) in Miami Lakes, Florida. He is also a Senior Editor of *Rule of Faith Journal*.

Fr. David Morrison—Class of 2013

St. Anthony the Great Orthodox Church in Bozeman, Montana was excited to host a retreat with Abbess Melenia and Mother Macrina from Holy Assumption Monastery entitled “Be Who You Are in Christ,” and later to host their dean, Fr. Anthony Karbo (Colorado Springs) the following week. Plans are underway to build a new temple, as our current building is very crowded on Sundays. Thanks be to God!

Fr. Daniel Geeza—Class of 1959

On March 5th Father Daniel observed his 63rd anniversary of ordination to the Holy Priesthood. On March 3rd after Liturgy at All Saints in Olyphant they surprised him and his matushka with recognition of that fact and gave him a beautiful wooden pectoral cross and matushka a beautiful silver medallion of the Theotokos.

Archpriest Yaroslav Sudick— Class of 1957

On March 13, 2022, was awarded the right to wear the mitre by His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon at Saint Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, D.C.



Deacon Mark Boshush—Class of 2012

He was awarded the right to wear the double orarion by His Eminence Archbishop Michael on April 1, 2022, for 10 years of service of the Holy Diaconate.



Fr. Vjekoslav Jovicic – Class of 2020

On April 19, 2022, Great Tuesday, right before Pascha, Archbishop Mark visited St. Michael's parish in Mount Carmel, PA. The Presanctified Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, and at the end of Liturgy Fr. Vjekoslav was awarded the right to wear nabledrenik and skufia.



Fr. Scott Ceraphim Mitchell—Class of 2010

All is well in Maine where I pastor Christ the Savior in Bangor. This work was started from nothing and has prospered by God's grace.

Our parish was set back by COVID-19 but is regaining the lost ground, and we stand amazed in seeing God build His church here. Everyone is a convert, and we are seeing much energy in the newly illumined as they enter the Orthodox life.

EXPERIENCING the Rich Life of the DIOCESE OF MEXICO

—Michael and Carlyn Pak, Class of 2024

On the morning of December 20, 2022, our plane touched down at Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City. This was the beginning of a three-and-a-half-week excursion in the Orthodox Church in America's southernmost Diocese. My wife and I, having just been newly transferred into the Diocese of Mexico, were encouraged by His Eminence Archbishop Alejo to go down and experience life as it is in Mexico and to see some of the challenges that the Diocese faces.

I'll be the first to admit that I embarked on this trip with some misconceptions about Mexico. My prior experiences in this country were isolated to a few homebuilding trips in Rosarito. It was easy for me to assume that the needs for the rest of the Diocese of Mexico are simply more of the same—a people in need of others to provide a service for them. The naiveté of this perspective was instantly squashed as soon as I set foot into the Ascension Cathedral. I immediately sensed and saw the rich 50-year history of the OCA's presence and work in the United Mexican States. This is not a Church that is struggling to bring itself into existence and legitimize itself. This is a Church with solid roots that is beckoning for others to come and help build upon what has already been set down, a firm foundation in faith.

After a week of immersion into the life and culture of Mexico's largest metropolitan area, my wife and I were driven out to Tepeitic, which is in the State of Hidalgo. Home to about 1,600 residents, this mountain town, which sits at



approximately 6,700 feet in elevation, is the site of the Diocese of Mexico's newest project, the San Basilio Orthodox Academy. We were given a tour of the property and saw firsthand the beginning stages of the construction of the academy's chapel.

After Tepeitic, we returned briefly to the Cathedral in time for Nativity and were then driven to the Mexican State of Veracruz the following day. We met one of the diocese's senior priests, Hieromonk Serafin, at La Santa Cruz Mission in the town of Pisaflores. A group of six of us then drove two and half hours to a remote mountain town called San Esteban. San Esteban, which is also the name of the parish in town, is one of two missions in this region that are officially listed as churches in the OCA. We were given some history and a brief tour of the mission by the full-time sacristan who lives there.

The most memorable portion of our stay in Mexico occurred following our visit to San Esteban. My wife and I sojourned for a week in a mountain town called Zapote Bravo. This town is inhabited by people descended from the Otomi and is an active mission site for the Diocese of Mexico. It is one of several missions within the diocese that lacks a full-time priest. We were told that if you can work as a clergyman or a missionary in Zapote Bravo, you can work anywhere. The week we spent in Zapote Bravo was one of the most challenging and most blessed times of our lives. During this short stay, we assisted Padre Luis Antonio with at least five marriages and eight baptisms. We served a *panikhida* at the town's cemetery and helped conduct a catechism class for



Chapel for San Basilio Orthodox Pastoral Academy under construction.

the youth. In the midst of the hardship and need, we experienced grace among a people that genuinely desire God. They want the Church to be there with them. They are ready to be shown how to worship.

When we left Zapote Bravo, I couldn't help but feel that our return someday would be inevitable. I desired it. I want to pray with the Otomi. I want to help build a foundation so that one day a priest could reside there and pastor them full time. While traveling out of the mountains of Veracruz and heading back towards Mexico City, the faces of the Otomi people in Zapote Bravo occupied my mind. In a people hidden away from the rest of the world, Christ revealed Himself to us in each and every person we encountered there.

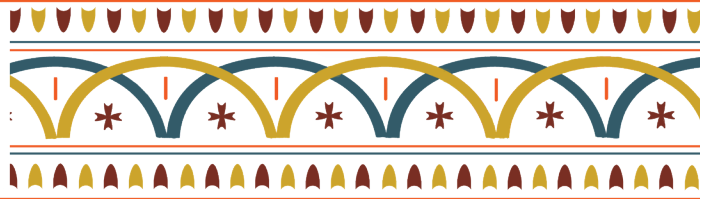
There were many takeaways that my wife and I experienced on this trip. We felt a surge of inspiration and hope when shown the beginnings of San Basilio. We were encouraged upon meeting the many warm, loving, and welcoming people within our Diocese. With love and admiration, we observed Archbishop Alejo's involvement with the people and his clergy, a true people's bishop. Our overall experience can be described in one word—epic.

My wife and I fell in love with the people, the country, and the Diocese. This trip not only opened our eyes to the work that needs to be done in Mexico, but more so, it brought us into an encounter with a land that is full of people who have

a deep and profound faith. Our visit to the Diocese of Mexico was a life-changing experience. Returning, so that we can begin serving full time, is all we can think about. Thanks be to God.



SAINT TIKHON'S SEMINARY CENTURY ASSOCIATION



THE St. Tikhon's Century Association was established in 1971 by a group of dedicated Orthodox Christians to insure the best possible future for the Orthodox Church in America. From these humble beginnings and driven by a deep concern for the spiritual development of all Orthodox Christians, including the various jurisdictions, the Century Association has quickly grown to become a vital financial arm for the work at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

For over 85 years, St. Tikhon's Seminary (established 1938), has met the challenge of preparing worthy candidates for the Holy Priesthood. Graduates serve the spiritual needs of and witness to the Orthodox Faith throughout the world. Alumni also serve the Church in educational and musical positions such as church school coordinators, teachers, and choir directors.

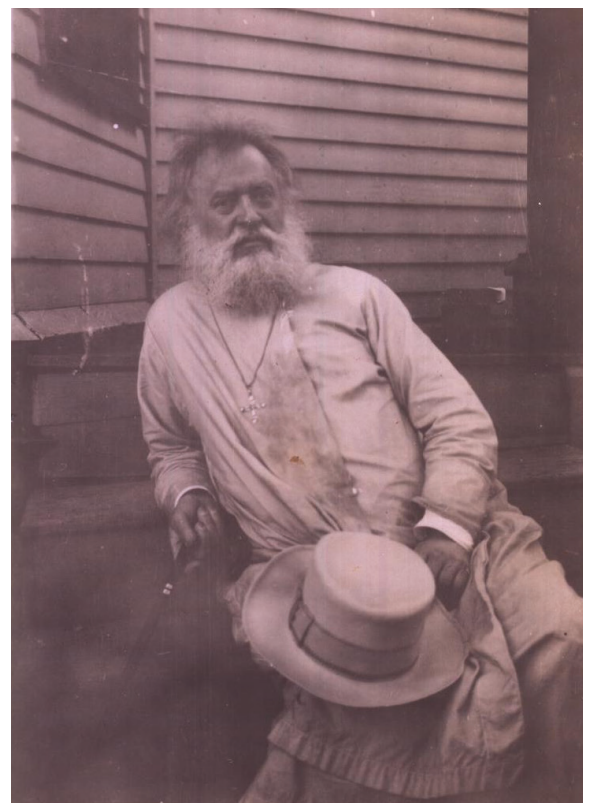
Annual membership contributions of at least \$100, and fund raising projects, such as the Hospitality a la Russe festival and the cookbook publication of Hany's Kitchen-The Orthodox Herald Recipe Collection, enable the association to contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Seminary. The Founder's Day dinner and annual meeting are held each October at the seminary.

St. Tikhon's Seminary thanks the Century Association for decades of devoted financial support

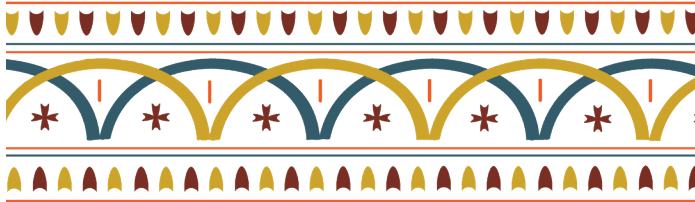
This funding allows the seminary to continue to provide the highest quality of theological education and spiritual formation to men who are preparing for ordination to the holy priesthood.

Please consider joining the Century Association in our mission to help protect the true faith with its rich tradition. Our children, their children, and the generations to follow are depending on us. If you are already a member, **THANK YOU!**

A membership form can be found on the seminary website (www.stots.edu) under the "Support" tab. Additional information can be obtained by calling the seminary at 570-561-1818, extension 101.



Metropolitan Platon, successor to St Tikhon of Moscow, relaxes on the front porch of his family's summer home at St. Tikhon's Monastery.



Archbishop Michael's
 FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
 of Ordination to the Holy Priesthood

*With thanks to all who made generous contributions to
 support seminarians in honor of Archbishop Michael*

William Cullinan
 Carol Wetmore
 Catherine Milanoff
 V. Rev. and Mrs. Alexander Koranda
 Jed Schoucair
 V. Rev. and Mrs. Vasily Gilbert
 John Slanta
 V. Rev. and Mrs. Joseph A. Woodill
 Debra Forster
 Melody Holman
 Fr. John C. Henderson
 Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Bratic
 V. Rev. Rodney E. Torbic
 Robert E. Weger
 V. Rev. and Mrs. Daniel J. Skvir
 Dora Daley
 Rev. and Mrs. John Oliver
 Diane T. Penola
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 Matushka Evelyn Hubiak
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 Wayne Tatusko
 Fr. John and Kh. Elizabeth Sommer
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 Rev. and Mrs. David Morrison
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 Mary Hvizd
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St Tikhon's thanks Reader Benedict Sheehan, Class of 2012, for thirteen years of service on the faculty of the seminary. We wish all the best to Benedict, along with his wife Talia, as he pursues his vocation composing and conducting in the broader music world.

A WORD FROM OUR STUDENTS



DN. GREGORY FEDORCHAK—Diocese of New York and New Jersey, Class of 2024, Second Year

At St. Tikhon's, we are formed not by our classes, but by our teachers. Our teachers—the faculty, staff, fellow seminarians, monastics, community members, the Saints who have walked here—all become for us the Divine Seamster's hands, tailoring us for our purpose: to love God's people. As we learn to become "weavers of the tapestry of eternity," we must first let God weave together the tapestry of our hearts, something that happens in communion and community at St. Tikhon's.

My wife and I are already lamenting our future "expulsion from Paradise" (i.e., Graduation). In the meantime, we plan to cherish each interaction with the many unforgettable personalities around here. Having received Christ in abundance in this hallowed place, we shall go forth, telling of all the good that God has done for us, and, by grace, teaching others "the width and length and depth and height" (Eph. 3:18) of Christ's love.



FR. EPHRAIM VEST—Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese Class of 2023, Third Year

The education at St. Tikhon's Seminary is not merely an intellectual endeavor. It is spiritual discipleship. We read the Fathers, we are educated in the classroom, but we are also disciplined by monastic spiritual fathers, devout clergy and lay educators, and especially through the words and actions of our rector, Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey. A student at St. Tikhon's has every opportunity to grow intellectually, psychologically, and spiritually. Every day, every class, every monastery service is an opportunity to be equipped for the call to Christian life and for the call to the priesthood.

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