



"I AM THE VINE,...

...YE ARE THE BRANCHES"

THE GRAPEVINE

Vignettes of Seminary Life

Spring 2018

No 1

www.spots.school

ST. PHOTIOS ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY • 510 COLLIER WAY • ETNA, CALIFORNIA 96027-9578 • U.S.A.

With this introductory issue of *The Grapevine*, a student publication of the St. Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary, we are pleased to share with our friends and benefactors some insights into the Seminary experience.



When all knowledge and all the thoughts of men are concentrated in the cry of the Paschal salutation, "Christ is Risen!," then immortal joy embraces all beings and in joy responds: "Indeed He is Risen!" —St. Justin of Čelije

What truth is not. The subject of Dogmatic Theology, a core class, is by its nature rather difficult to understand and, perhaps even more so, to teach. How can one give a formal lecture on things that surpass the human intellect? Our instructor, Father Jiří Ján, has adopted a very appropriate method, a kind of "apophatic" approach. Instead of attempting to provide a precise definition, he spends much more time expounding the errant teachings about the subject, which highlight the inutterable truth which these falsehoods fail to grasp. Such a method is in line with Orthodox theological texts, which are almost always a refutation of some sort and are often expressed apophatically, that is, describing things by saying what they are not—apophatic pedagogy, if you will.

Brother Gregory, Student

Learning about learning. In our studies I have often found most impactful, not answers to long-standing questions, but to questions I didn't know to ask, such as "How did the In-

carnation affect the angels?" or "What is wrong with an ethical understanding of salvation?" I was also surprised that I could not readily answer simple questions—"What is beauty?" or "What is justice?" But the resulting inward search turned out to be more illuminating than a given answer.

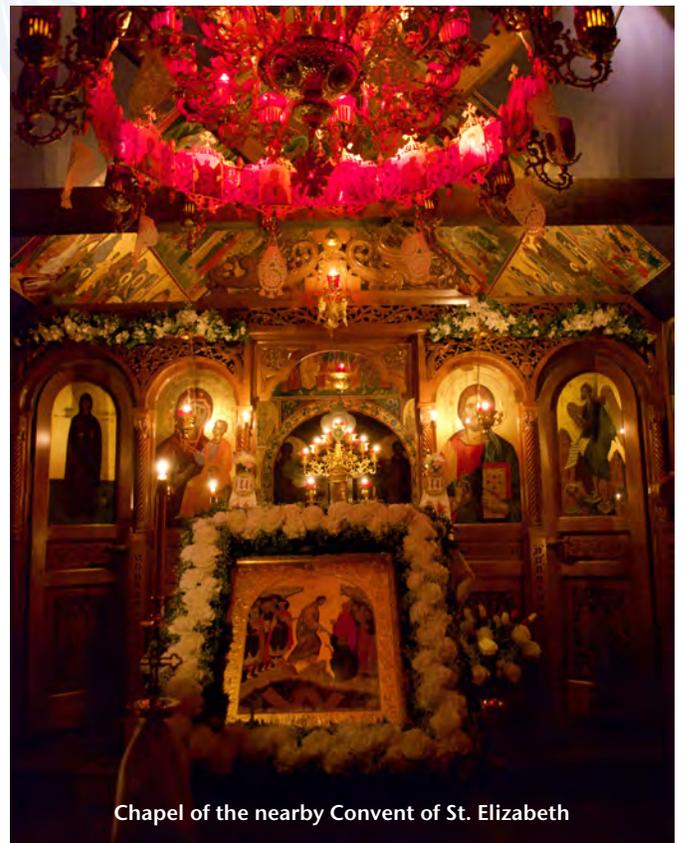
It can be easy to lose sight of progress in the learning process, but sometimes little things show it best. Recently, reading aloud, I came upon a Latin phrase and stumbled over it. Not that the stumbling is strange, but since we've been learning Latin, I figured I ought to try, I backed up, and—stumbled again. But I found myself saying, "Oh, it's misspelled!"—and it was! I know when Latin is misspelled? I guess I do now.

Mother Eupraxia, Student

After recently reviewing some six hundred pages of reports and documentation submitted by the Seminary, the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education has scheduled an evaluation team to visit the Seminary this fall. The report of the evaluation team will allow the Commission to determine whether or not it grants the Seminary candidate status. Candidate status is the next crucial goal the Seminary must achieve toward its eventual full accreditation. The timeline for our accreditation process is currently as follows:

- ✓ 2016 — Seminary achieves applicant status
- 2018 — Evaluation team visit
- 2019 — Candidate status
- 2020 — Evaluation team visit
- 2021 — Full accreditation

Father Chrysostomos, Treasurer



Chapel of the nearby Convent of St. Elizabeth

Worship enhances education. The curriculum here is ever enhanced with the rich tradition of Orthodox Services. It is an extension of the theological instruction at the Seminary. The churches and chapels are warm with iconography, the sanctity of song from the choirs, the spirit of communion and fellowship among the participants, the cycle of services, crowned with Pascha yet ever enhanced with Nativity, Theophany, et al., and the daily veneration of saints and martyrs.

The spiritual splendor and joy of the celebrants exhibits the teachings of the Seminary. To study Orthodox history, traditions, dogma, and liturgy truly is to attend services in beautiful churches with devout adherents. This supports all of the reading and instruction—it is another extracurricular activity of incalculable value.

Clifford Waniewski, Housemaster

Orthodox psychotherapy. This spring we are studying the healing tradition of the Holy Ascetic Fathers of the Church. The class, Psychology of Religion, is directed by Metropolitan Chrysostomos. The subject has been addressed variously in academic jargon, called “Orthodox Psychotherapy” and elsewhere “Patristic Psychology.” This Orthodox soul-therapy is designed to help us realize the new man in Christ.

I was not particularly interested in psychology when I came to the program. However, having started out this spring, I am very enthusiastic. I feel the books I am reading now about Orthodox therapy are very important. I highly encourage reading His Eminence’s work *A Guide to Orthodox Psychotherapy*. It seems a key text for orientation in Orthodoxy’s approach to man’s healing. Other key books are referenced there. Psychology is completely unavoidable, as we all have to deal with our own psychic (soul-ic) selves.

Orthodox Psychotherapy is also indispensable for students in the Bachelor’s Program. The prospective graduate should be aware of just what “Theology” is, a lofty subject that one presumes to study. Approaching Theology is in fact impossible without healing. Saint Gregory the Theologian intimates this:

Not to every one, my friends, does it belong to philosophize about God; not to every one...because it is permitted only to those who have been examined and have passed on to spiritual vision, and who have been previously purified in soul and body, or at the very least are being purified... (First Theological Oration).

Support the Seminary

Your tax-deductible donation may be made using the enclosed self-addressed envelope or through the Saint Photios Society website:

www.saintphotios.org

Please make checks payable to:

Saint Photios Society

P.O. Box 797, Etna, CA 96027-0797

Under the sacred patronage of its namesake, please help us impart light, for “without schools, we walk in darkness.”

(Saint Kosmas of Aetolia)



Thanks to God, and to your prayers, the Seminary is a spectacular environment for spiritual growth, helping the student to reorient his pursuit of Orthodoxy which, more often than not, is a little misguided if still productive. Ample opportunity is given to apply the daily lectures in a spiritually vigorous community. I, being still at the starting-line of purification, out of gratitude to the Orthodox faithful would like to commend to you these thoughts—especially as I can give you no other gift.

David Claybaugh, Student

The art of piety. Among the differences between iconography and secular art, one of the most striking is the intimate communion the iconographer experiences with the saintly person whom he is trying to depict. While the value of artistic technique cannot, and should not, be underestimated, the iconographer must always remember that ineluctably he is in need of the holy person’s assistance if he is to complete an icon which will inspire others, by its spiritual and visual beauty, with love for the saint depicted and which will motivate those who venerate it to emulation of the virtues which emanate from the saint. But this can be achieved only through a confluence of spiritual striving and technical skill.

Father Photii, Student



Iconography class at the Seminary