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13 November 2013

Very Reverend Dr John Behr, Dean
Very Reverend Dr Chad Hatfield, Chancellor
St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary
575 Scarsdale Road
Yonkers, NY 10707

My dear beloved in Christ, Father John and Father Chad,

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to congratulate you both, all the magnificent staff and the students of St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary on the wonderful occasion of the 75th anniversary of this blessed Orthodox institution.

As a former student, I count myself privileged to have benefitted from the rich Orthodox environment, dedicated and blessed teachers and high standard of Christian theological education that I experienced at St Vladimir's. I know first-hand the abundant gifts to Orthodox theology that St Vladimir's Seminary has provided through the exceptional works published by its own great scholars Fr. Alexander Schmemman, Fr. John Meyendorff, Fr. Thomas Hopko and indeed the current dean Fr. John Behr, the first author to be published in three series of Oxford University Press, and the exemplary academic standard it has maintained since 1938.

The seminary has been instrumental in the edification of many wonderful lay people, clergy and theologians who have received their instruction at St Vladimir's and in turn, become leaders and strong advocates for Orthodoxy, enriching the lives of their congregations and students and inspiring them in their own future endeavors.

This institution and all it stands for, inspired me in my own diocese to establish a Theological College in order to convey and impart the rich beauty of Orthodox theology. While we are still a fledgling college I pray that with time and God's grace it may one day be as highly esteemed in the Oriental Orthodox world as St Vladimir's Seminary.

I pray that the Lord grants you His abundant blessings, multiplies your success and continues to uphold you as a beacon of Orthodox theological education in the world.

In Christ,

Suriel
Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions
Dean of St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College