



Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Thank you for your faithful prayers, generosity, and support. Without you, St Vladimir's Seminary can't continue the work its founders dreamed into reality.

**Because of you, we continue to press forward—
even as the world grows dark and disoriented.**



Amid the many nondescript church buildings which populate North Texas, **St Sava Orthodox Church's** new dome in traditional Byzantine style rises in stark relief above land which only five years ago was suburban prairie. Its clean white lines and appealing arches are not what anyone would expect to see—not here. Yet, there it is . . .

. . . An Orthodox parish (OCA) on the 21st-century American frontier, quietly growing, in spite of the pandemic. In 2020, 26 new members were received by baptism and chrismation, the biggest influx ever. And the movement continues. During the weeks leading up to Pascha 2021, between 16 and 21 catechumens were received—almost all adults.

Father Photius Avant, (class of 2011) the rector of St Sava, described them as:

*“**seekers hungry for meaning.** They come from different demographic backgrounds, different socio-economic backgrounds, different ethnic backgrounds . . . I think that they are like most Westerners living in the modern era—they are hungry for meaning. Everybody needs it. But they are unique because they found the pearl of great price which ties all things together.”*



**Your generosity makes it possible for Orthodox engagement to expand even
in the midst of a global pandemic.**

“We had all kinds of inquirers, people curious about Orthodoxy in particular, from all different backgrounds. Some were from evangelical backgrounds, some were agnostics or atheists, some just hadn’t really had much experience with church. So, we had very churched people, semi-churched people, and unchurched people. They were all eager to know about Orthodoxy and to embrace Christ in the fullness of the Church. It was really interesting,” said Fr Photius.



The pandemic has stirred a desire for reorientation around that which matters most. Seekers want something authentic and meaningful that will give them a sense of purpose, mission, and significance. Unless we champion the Gospel and reduce the barriers to bring it to them, they will be forced to consider alternatives to the Eternal Truth that will leave them, ultimately, unsatisfied.

One priest, one growing parish, one mission: to bring Orthodoxy and the joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those ready to be transformed into His image.

Imagine what could happen if St Vladimir’s Seminary could prepare even more leaders like this graduate. Orthodoxy could bloom and grow across the fertile soil which is America.

Together, we can build an Orthodox future to push back the darkness and point to the Light of the World—one that is eternal and will last forever.

The most compelling stories in Scripture are that of individuals called by God—during times of great strife—to proclaim God’s Truth amid rampant unbelief, uncertainty, and uneasiness about the future.

Like those individuals, seminarians come to St Vladimir’s because they are compelled by God to go into the world and proclaim God’s Truth—to shine Light into an increasingly anti-Christian world.

I have often thought about how our seminarians are compelled like Esther was in the Bible. She was compelled by her uncle Mordecai’s admonition:

For if you keep silent at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

Saint Vladimir’s isn’t a place where seminarians come to sit. Because of you, it is a place from which men and women of God are sent into the world to point a disoriented world back to That Which is Eternal.

Today, St Vladimir’s is preparing men and women “for such a time as this,” as the Esthers of our world. In our time, Christianity is being blotted out of every facet of culture: law, media, government, public education, and the arts and entertainment. And your courageous support is needed to bring out of these individuals what God has already placed within them.

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“Comfortable Christianity” is over. Extraordinary courage, wisdom, and vision will be necessary if we are to remain faithful to the Truth we have received. The type of courage and leadership like that of Esther, who prayed constantly, pursued continuously, and proclaimed courageously to save her family and defend her Faith.

**TOGETHER, WE ARE COMPELLED
TO PRAY CONSTANTLY.**

Prayer, especially corporate prayer, ensures we never lose sight of the reality that we are participating in God’s plan to redeem the world. At St Vladimir’s, our seminarians are taught to restore within everyone a sense of the Holy centered on the communal experience of the Eucharist. **As a residential community, we lean into the Liturgy and offer constant prayer to God, for the life of the world.**



**TOGETHER, WE ARE COMPELLED
TO PURSUE CONTINUOUSLY.**

Personal transformation into the likeness of Christ is the solution to the growing desperation in the world. **At St Vladimir’s, our seminarians are taught to desire personal transformation by inspiring a profound and ongoing conversion in Christ.** This transformation is not just an abstract idea—it is an authentic, personal, ongoing relationship with Christ.



**TOGETHER, WE ARE COMPELLED
TO PROCLAIM COURAGEOUSLY.**

The Gospel must be spoken—even when the words fall on deaf ears. **At St Vladimir’s, our seminarians are prepared to share Hope with the world by demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the Truth of the Gospel.**



For such a time as this, the world needs pastors who are missionary-minded, courageous, and compassionate. Leaders who are also committed to being the “guardians of the Truth” that Metropolitan Leonty (1876–1965) knew would be essential in America.

You are sending Orthodoxy to the edges so that the whole world might know the Truth.

Over the last year, I have heard many stories from our alumni in Norway, South Korea, Guatemala, Mexico, Texas, Nashville . . . men and women who are exhibiting this type of missionary leadership. Their stories, enclosed in this letter, I believe will stir something in you that can only be satisfied by action.

To be compelled does not suggest obligation. Instead, to be compelled means in the face of current reality we have no other choice but to band together to shine the Light and Hope of Christ in an increasingly dark world.

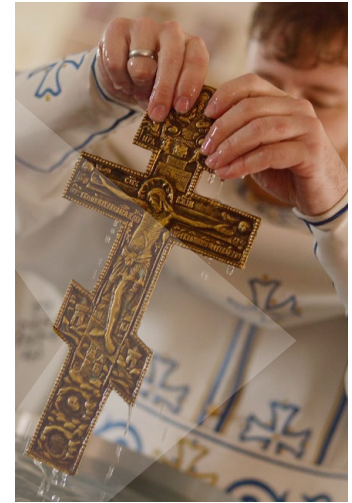
But we can’t do this alone.

In New Testament Greek, the idea of *ekklesia* suggests Christians have been called out of this world to live differently. And because of your generosity, we’ve been able to provide Orthodox parishes and causes in the United States and around the world with trained priests who are prepared to call others into a life of disciplined faith.

It is through the calling of ordinary, willing individuals that God is able to move and bring people, families, communities, and nations back to life.

Through your faithful support, we've been sending courageous priests willing to follow Jesus into the farthest and darkest places. It is your generosity that is ensuring the future of Orthodoxy, the strength of individual parishes, and the ability to continue to send priests on mission to be catalysts for the Gospel until the whole world hears and knows the hope that is eternal and the light that will never grow dim.

I ask you to consider what YOU can do for such a time as this. Like all of us at St Vladimir's, and like Esther, I ask you to pray with us constantly, pursue Christ continuously, and proclaim His Truth courageously.



We need your prayers and commitment to our Faith now, more than ever.

**THE WORLD
NEEDS PASTORS
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MISSIONARY-
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And for such a time as this, we also need your financial support. Through your generosity, St Vladimir's will continue to prepare men and women to go out into the world and proclaim God's Truth to those who are lost in unbelief, who lack Hope, and who are caught up in today's spiraling darkness.

Will you make a donation to St Vladimir's, for such a time as this?

Your generosity will support the missionary work for which God has called us. We at St Vladimir's are compelled to pray constantly, pursue continuously, and proclaim courageously.

Will you join us by making a donation to St Vladimir's—and the future of the Church?

Visit www.svots.edu/compelled, call 914-961-8313 x360, or simply use the enclosed envelope and card to return your generous gift in the mail.

Your generosity will change people, families, and communities forever.

May God be with you during this time. And may His unwavering Truth compel you to cling to Him and proclaim with joy, the Hope of our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

Compelled to Pray, Pursue, and Proclaim,

The Very Rev. Dr Chad Hatfield
President of St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary

P.S. Your remarkable generosity has sent generations of priests into the world to serve the hurting, the hopeless, and the helpless. You have built strong churches that are changing individuals, families, and communities. But we can't continue to push back the darkness without your generosity. Visit www.svots.edu/compelled, call 914-961-8313 x360, or simply use the enclosed envelope and card to return your generous gift in the mail.

P.S.S. Enclosed, you will find the Troparion we pray for students beginning a new year of studies. I hope you will keep this and pray with us as we continue through the 2021-2022 Academic Year.