

**YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME, BUT I CHOSE YOU** and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

JOHN 15.16



September 15, 2022

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

Thank you. Your generosity has made it possible for St Vladimir's to continue to grow and bear fruit in the world for more than eight decades.

You are a constant reminder that God is redeeming the world in a special and unique way through St Vladimir's and the Church. And we thank God for you every day.

After so much uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, the heavy burden of loss, and now global conflicts between beloved nations, many of the faithful are questioning God's divine purpose, asking, "Where is God?", "Where do I fit?", "What is right?", "What are we to do?"

**BECAUSE OF YOU, THE WORK AND MINISTRY OF ST VLADIMIR'S KEPT GOING—EVEN IN THE MIDST OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC, WARS, AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY.**

You helped St Vladimir's continue the work to which it has been called. In spite of all the challenges, the number of seminarians grew, global distribution of SVS Press expanded, and online engagement with Christian education and spiritual formation through the work of world-class faculty, scholars, and leaders increased.

**NONE OF THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR FAITHFUL PRAYERS AND SUPPORT.**

Struggle heightens our awareness of our need for God and God's desire to use each of us to proclaim the hope that is in Christ alone.

Comfortable Christianity is over. We are not living in a non-Christian culture—we are living an *anti-Christian* culture. The demands of leading in such a hostile environment are great. And that's why your generosity can make such a difference for those whom God has chosen to lead the Church forward.

**EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE, WISDOM, AND VISION WILL BE NECESSARY TO BEAR FRUIT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.**

That means the world needs priests who are equipped, prepared, and ready to serve, lead, and love people, families, communities, and the world into spiritual health and vitality.

*A warm  
Welcome*  
to our new and  
returning students, and  
their families!

TOTAL  
NUMBER OF  
SEMINARIANS  
**87**

**29%**  
OF STUDENTS  
ARE MARRIED

**44**  
CHILDREN  
ON CAMPUS



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Such fruit is found amid the ebb and flow of busy New York City: St Vladimir's alumnus Fr Michael Ellias (class of 1985), rector of St Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church. St Mary's has served Brooklyn since 1917—over a century!—and has remained a beacon of hope for seekers and converts, discerning their place in the kingdom of God.

**“GOD HAS ALL MANNER OF WAYS TO GET PEOPLE TO BE WHERE HE WANTS THEM TO BE,” SAID FR MICHAEL, REFLECTING ON HIS OWN PATH TO PRIESTHOOD.**

“My path to priesthood was somewhat accidental. My plan was to study law in Pittsburgh. But, through the guidance of various faculty members at the Catholic University of America, I discovered a love and thirst for Patristics, which ultimately led me to St Vladimir's Seminary to study under Fr John Meyendorff, Fr John Erickson, and of course Fr Alexander Schmemmann.”

Like all seminarians at St Vladimir's, Fr Michael was assigned to a parish to be mentored by and serve under the guidance of an active, mature priest—St Mary's in Bay Ridge, the future flock that he would serve to this day. It was through his weekly service at St Mary's that Fr Michael met Laila and discovered his vocation of the priesthood.

**YOU CAN BE PART OF GOD'S REDEEMING WORK BY ENSURING EACH PARISH HAS A TRAINED PRIEST TO BE A CHAMPION FOR THE GOSPEL IN A DISORIENTED WORLD.**

During his tenure at St Mary's, Fr Michael has fortified the long-standing ministries of the parish by encouraging lay leadership and revitalizing their church school programs. The switch to online teaching was needed during the pandemic, but not effective post-pandemic, so St Mary's has begun to build the program back up through the leadership of lay people.

*St Vladimir's taught me how to lay a foundation of what Christian education should look like in a parish. This is one of the critical tasks of the Church. It's so important that you have effective and relevant church school programs. You are living in a world that is largely secularized. It is of the utmost importance that St Vladimir's continues to prepare seminarians how to encounter the world that is waiting for them, through world-class theological education and spiritual formation.*

**BUT THE WORK OF THE CHURCH DOES NOT END THERE, NOR DOES IT RELY ON THE PRIEST ALONE.**

Fr Michael's objective as priest has been to empower his parishioners to do the work of the Church. “That's where the action really happens,” he said. “The priest can't do everything, nor should he do everything. **Churches don't grow when there's only one person doing ministry.** You have to empower people and provide the resources and training they need to develop and live the life of the Church.”

**BECAUSE OF YOU, ST VLADIMIR'S IS A PLACE FROM WHICH GOD'S ELECTED ARE SENT INTO THE WORLD TO EMPOWER OTHERS TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S CHOSEN PATH FOR THEIR OWN LIVES IN THE CHURCH.**

In many ways, the pandemic has rendered to the Church an opportunity unlike anything experienced in modern history. And people are responding.



**(Top)** Fr Michael and Khourieh Laila Ellias on his graduation day from St Vladimir's Seminary, 1985. **(Middle)** Fr Michael on his ordination day to the holy diaconate, with Fr John Namie (class of '65), and Metropolitan Antoun (class of '62) presiding (New Kensington, PA, 1986). **(Bottom)** Fr Michael on his ordination day to the holy priesthood, with Metropolitan Philip (class of '65) presiding (St Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral, Brooklyn, New York, 1986).

# “ The priest can't do everything, nor should he do everything. **CHURCHES DON'T GROW WHEN THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON DOING MINISTRY.** ”

A spiritual renewal is happening across this country and around the world. People are making genuine and authentic faith commitments through Orthodox parishes like never before. But new believers need to grow, and that happens when they are connected to a local parish that is thriving.

Think about the Church of Corinth, the recipients of St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. The Christians in Corinth were new to the faith, new to the authority of God and church leadership. They argued constantly, were frequently confused, lived unhealthy lives, and relied on their own individual freedoms and authority.

They had yet to live into the structure Christ had laid out for them in the Church, and they had yet to recognize that he had chosen them to expand his kingdom on earth.

Paul writes to remind them, in love, that true freedom depends on God and on being active members of Christ's Body: the Church. He implores them with patient love that they are empowered by God with gifts of the Spirit, all of which, in every variety have a vital place in the Body of Christ:

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...*

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit you were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12.4–7, 12–13)*

## **YOUR GENEROSITY WILL BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

Today, more than ever, people need deep faith, wisdom, and a community of believers to help them navigate the uncertainty of life. At St Vladimir's, 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 actively participate in offering our God-given gifts back to God, as the chosen members of his Body.

## **BECAUSE OF YOU, ST VLADIMIR'S IS BEARING FRUIT IN A DISORIENTED WORLD.**

Personal transformation into the likeness of Christ is the solution to the growing desperation in the world. At St Vladimir's, 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, which bears fruit tenfold, affecting generations to come.

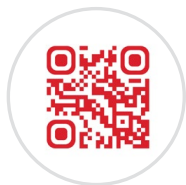
## **YOU CAN BRING HOPE AND TRUTH TO NOT ONLY A LOST GENERATION—BUT THE NEXT GENERATION.**

The gospel must be spoken. At St Vladimir's, seminarians are prepared to share hope with the world by demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the truth of the gospel.



While at the seminary Fr Michael learned how to lay foundation for Christian education in a parish. At St Mary's, Fr Michael has been able to fortify the long-standing ministries of the parish by encouraging lay leadership and revitalizing their church school program and youth group. **(Top)** As part of Teen SOYO service project, St Mary's youth collected school supplies for children in need.

## HOW YOU CAN GIVE TODAY



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the enclosed envelope

For such a time as this, the world needs leaders committed to being the “guardians of the truth” that Metropolitan Leonty (1876–1965) knew would be essential in America. **You need courageous leaders to lean into their calling as the chosen ones of God to participate in the Body of Christ, using their gifts for the glory of God.**

**THROUGH YOUR FAITHFUL SUPPORT, ST VLADIMIR'S BEEN SENDING COURAGEOUS PRIESTS WILLING TO FOLLOW JESUS INTO THE DARKEST PLACES FOR MORE THAN EIGHT DECADES.**

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

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.

**WE NEED YOUR PRAYERS AND GENEROSITY NOW MORE THAN EVER.**

Through your generosity, St Vladimir's will continue to prepare men and women to go out into the world and proclaim God's truth. **We will continue to build healthy parishes, which in turn builds healthy communities, healthy people, and a healthy world.**

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

Your generosity will support the missionary work for which God has called us. Pray and ask God how he wants you to support St Vladimir's for such a time as this. Together, we are compelled to pray constantly, pursue continuously, and proclaim courageously.

Visit [www.svots.edu/compelled](http://www.svots.edu/compelled), call 914-961-8313 x328, or simply use the enclosed envelope 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,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Chad Hatfield".

The Very Rev. Dr Chad Hatfield  
President, 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](http://www.svots.edu/compelled) call 914-961-8313 x328, or simply use the enclosed envelope and card to return your generous gift in the mail.**

(Photo on the first page) You are enabling trained priests to bring about transformation in individuals, families, and communities everywhere. One such community is St Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church, Brooklyn, NY, led by Fr Michael Ellias (class of '85) where the parish has been seeing a rising number of Baptisms and Chrismations.

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