



*Christ
is born!
Glorify
Him!*



ST VLADIMIR'S
ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Glory to Jesus Christ!
Glory Forever!*

The seminary students, faculty, staff, and their families wish you a very blessed Nativity season!

May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and your loved ones with peace, good will, and love during this joyous feast of the Incarnation and in the coming New Year!

With love in *the Word Made Flesh*,
St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary



Glory to God
in the highest,
and on earth peace,
good will
toward men.

(Luke 2.14)





Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. *And be thankful.*

(Colossians 3.15)



December 5, 2022

Beloved in Christ,

May the blessing of the Lord be upon you!

Thank you for your faithful prayers, generosity, and support. Without you, St Vladimir's Seminary cannot continue the missionary work of training over 100 seminarians, *this year alone*, for priesthood and lay leadership.

Thank you!

The great joy of the Nativity season is upon us as we celebrate the Birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Soon we will proclaim loudly,

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

It is a time of excitement that matches our joy at Pascha, but it is also a time of reverence and holiness, a time to turn inward, to examine our hearts and minds.

As the days shorten and embrace darkness, we too must enter into our own darkness





Top: Protodeacon Matusiak serving the Divine Liturgy in the Metropolitan Philip auditorium at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, preceding the Theological Convocation in November 2018. **Bottom:** Protodeacon Matusiak serves as deacon at the Orthodox Cathedral of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in Wrocław, Poland.



and ask God to enter in and shine His Uncreated Light into our hearts, dispelling the darkness! Just as the Theotokos welcomed God's divine presence in order to bear His Only Begotten Son, we too must welcome God.

Together, we journey through the darkness, toward the Light of Christ.

At times it's nearly impossible to see and feel the awe of God's divine plan and to be open to His salvific peace *which pass all understanding* (Philippians 4.7), especially when the world around us seems to be falling apart. Everywhere we turn, we see suffering—physical, emotional, and spiritual—from war, conflict, death, destruction, persecution, slavery, and poverty.

God did not promise an easy life on earth. In fact, Christ tells us that *nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places* (Matthew 24.7).

Despite the turmoil around us, there is hope! Through our faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And, just as Paul reminds us, we are able to boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God* (Romans 5.1). God calls us to share His peace with the world.



God calls us to *share His peace*
with the world.

**Your faithful support and prayers ensure
St Vladimir's continues to send men and women
into the world to share God's everlasting peace.**

In the midst of great upheaval, one such deacon has shared Christ's peace for a community in desperate need of it. **Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak** (Class of 2006), lives and works in Wrocław, Poland.

For the past two years, Archdeacon Joseph has served as deacon at the Orthodox Cathedral of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God, and has experienced the painful outcry for help as hundreds of thousands of refugees surged into Wrocław. Having grown 29% in the last year, it is a city bursting at the seams with those who are lost and without hope.

With the rush of refugees to the city, the Orthodox Cathedral of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God has expanded as well. In 2014, approximately 150 parish-

ioners were from Ukraine. Now, more than 500 Ukrainians fill the cathedral and worship.

Archdeacon Joseph remembers the first Sunday welcoming the newcomers: "The first service has a special place in my memory. It was beautiful; everyone felt a flood of emotions. There was hardly a dry eye that Sunday. Church was the one place they could come to feel normal, feel important, feel loved, feel at home."

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

Archdeacon Joseph's time at St Vladimir's Seminary prepared him for the important ministry he is now leading in Poland. He talks about his experience as a time of immense transformation and growth:

I thought I knew who Jesus was. But St Vladimir's was so important to me in finding Christ through patristics, through Scripture, and not only encouraging me but giving me the passion to want to help other people in finding who Christ truly is—to truly know Him.



Top Left: Thousands of refugees surge into the Wrocław train station fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. **Top Right & Bottom:** On Sunday, June 5, 2022, following the Divine Liturgy at the Orthodox Cathedral of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in Wrocław, with His Excellency Jerzy, Archbishop of Wrocław and Szczecin presiding, a special picnic was held to welcome Ukrainian refugees. Archdeacon Joseph helped organize the event and also raised the majority of the funds needed to make the event possible.

As an educational institution, you learn how to serve, participate in the spiritual life of the chapel, and have an academic life. St Vladimir's is unique in that it not only has great theology classes but also gives you practice in the chapel and grows your personal spiritual life. There aren't seminaries out there like this. St Vladimir's is a great pearl in the Orthodox world.

Your generosity allows men and women to prepare for ministry at St Vladimir's Seminary—developing the spiritual maturity to guide others closer to God.

The work of Archdeacon Joseph continues with his own missionary work. He organizes *Suprasl: A World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth*. This organization brings together young Orthodox people to share in worship and fellowship, to love one another, and to bear witness to the gospel. His team of advisors at *Suprasl* are all fellow St Vladimir's graduates.

Today, St Vladimir's is preparing men and women with more than just an education. We are preparing them to be courageous and wise

leaders committed to upholding the Orthodox faith in an increasingly anti-Christian world.

As a residential, pan-Orthodox community, our seminarians learn and collaborate with men and women from all over the world and from dozens of Orthodox jurisdictions, supporting one another for future ministry with people from different cultures, ethnicities, and perspectives. This year alone, we have seminarians from the United States, Canada, China, India, Uganda, Serbia, Romania, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, and many others.

Most of our seminarians have taken great leaps of faith to study at St Vladimir's. For example, **Pavlo Kurganov** (Class of 2024) originally from Kyiv, Ukraine, faced an agonizing decision. Should he remain in his home country with his mother and five siblings during this time of unrest? Or should he listen to the urging of his family, friends, and professors and further his education in America? *And how was he going to pay for it?*

Without the support of donors like you, St Vladimir's cannot continue to provide tuition-free education for seminarians preparing for future ministry.



St Vladimir's is a *great pearl*
in the Orthodox world.

He answered God's calling to study at St Vladimir's Seminary, and through God's grace he was able to obtain the proper documentation in order to travel to the U.S. Now here, Pavlo explains why he wanted to come to St Vladimir's:

I want a scholarly education that can teach me to think, to closer research my faith, and experience missionary work. Not just the history, rules, and laws, but something that is alive. That I will be able to carry God's word to the world. I knew I could not do this at any other seminary.

At St Vladimir's, seminarians are taught to desire personal transformation, through daily life in the church and through a life of constant prayer. This transformation is not just an abstract idea—it is an authentic, personal, ongoing relationship with Christ.

In the face of adversity and affliction, when peace seems out of reach, Pavlo encourages everyone to simply pray:



“We can pray. I can ask God to help my family and my country. I can make things better with my presence, but I can make it even better with prayer.”

Right now, your prayers and financial support help seminarians answer God’s call to shepherd parishes through prayer and strengthen the Church.

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. Sharing the gospel—God’s truth—brings peace to this world, peace with one another, and peace with God.

Through your generosity, St Vladimir’s will continue to prepare individuals to go out into the world and proclaim God’s truth, and to build healthy parishes, which in turn build healthy communities, healthy people, and a healthy world.

The world needs pastors who are missionary-minded, courageous, and compassionate. The world needs people like Archdeacon Joseph and Pavlo to answer God’s call to



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ministry. More than ever, the world needs trained leaders who will face the challenges ahead. In the OCA alone, approximately 20% of parishes are waiting for a priest. People continue to seek and find God in Orthodoxy like never before, but with no one there to serve them, they will turn away.

God has called St Vladimir's to prepare priests and leaders for the salvation of the world. This year, St Vladimir's Seminary has taken on a full class of seminarians—one of the largest in its history!—with many more desiring to come next year. And due to our tuition-free program, we have given out over \$500,000 in scholarships, nearly depleting our scholarship funds.

Without your help, we cannot continue to equip priests to lead these vacant churches and support them financially through their journey at the seminary. Your support will help bring people, families, communities, and nations back to life. Your support will share God's message of peace to those who need to experience it.

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

And we also need your financial support. Through your generosity, St Vladimir's will continue to send men and women into the world to proclaim God's truth and share His peace with those lost in chaos, war, and poverty, and to those who lack hope.

As the feast of the Nativity draws near, and as you see the hurt in the world and in your own heart, I encourage you to remember the promise Christ gives us all: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid* (John 14.27).

Will you make a donation to St Vladimir's this Christmas?





Your generosity will support the missionary work for which God has called all of us—to proclaim the gospel-sharing God's peace with people around the world. Pray and ask God how He wants you to give to St Vladimir's for such a time as this. Together, God compels us to pray constantly, pursue continuously, and pray courageously.

Please consider making a donation to St Vladimir's and the future of the Church, today.

Visit www.svots.edu/compelled, call 914-961-8313 x328, or use the enclosed envelope to return your generous gift in the mail.

May God bless you this Christmas season. May His assurance and steadfast love compel you to hold close to His eternal peace. In this confidence, declare with joy the hope of the Birth of Christ, our risen Lord.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

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 continues to send generations of priests into the world to serve the demoralized, the desperate, and the downtrodden, proclaiming the peace that only God can bestow upon us. You have helped build strong churches that continue to strengthen individuals, families, and communities. Visit www.svots.edu/compelled call 914-961-8313 x328, or use the enclosed envelope to return your generous gift in the mail.



The Church is in great need of ordained and lay leaders!

Please support St Vladimir's mission to fulfill that need.

1

Pray

Please include the seminary, its students, faculty, and staff in your daily prayers.

2

Support

Support the work of the seminary and grow in your faith by engaging with free educational resources and purchasing books and music from the SVS Press Bookstore. The press profits go straight to the seminary!

3

Give

Invest in the future of the Church by contributing your financial support. Some of the ways to give:



VISIT

www.svots.edu/compelled



MAIL

the enclosed envelope



CALL

914-961-8313 x328



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