

Remarks of the Metropolitan at the Conclusion of Liturgy
Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs
Saint Vladimir's Seminary
January 30, 2026

Joyous Feast!

I greet all of you with the words of the Apostle Peter from the epistle appointed (but not read because of the feast) for today: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

That grace and peace is indeed multiplied today as we celebrate the feast of the altar saints of our beloved chapel here at Saint Vladimir's Seminary: the three holy hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom.

The grace and peace of these three great saints is multiplied twofold through the presence of the venerable hierarchs and brothers who join me, six in number, for our concelebration today:

His Eminence Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey, Secretary of the Holy Synod and Rector of our sister seminary of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk,

His Grace Bishop John of Worcester and New England of the Antiochian Archdiocese, to whom we offer our gratitude for the encouraging word he offered our community in his sermon.

Bishop John is a member of our Board of Trustees, along with another friend and alumnus of the seminary, His Grace Bishop Irinej of Washington-New York of the Eastern America Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and His Grace Bishop Nikodhim of Boston and the Albanian Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church in America.

We are also pleased that two other alumni of the seminary have also joined us today, His Grace Bishop Benedict of Hartford and New England, and His Grace Bishop Vasily, recently elected and enthroned as Bishop of San Francisco and the Diocese of the West, all of them well-known to the seminary community.

The grace and peace brought to our gathering by these brother bishops, six in number, is multiplied threefold by the glorious presence of the saints who join us in worship, not only the three preeminent saints we commemorate today but also the eighteen saints who have shone forth in the lands of North America, crowned just last year with the addition of a 19th, Saint Olga of Kwethluk and Alaska. May their intercessions strengthen especially the faculty, the staff, the seminarians and their families as they labor in the sacred work of theological formation.

A fourfold multiplication of those 18 saints yields the number 72, the number of scholars who, in days of old, were tasked with translating the books of the Hebrew Scripture into Greek which we know as the Septuagint. It is (perhaps) concerning some of those very books that we will, later this evening, hear from the Very Reverend Dr. Andrew Louth, our distinguished speaker for the 43rd Annual Father Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture. Fr. Andrew, who joins us in concelebrating today, will speak on the topic of Shadow and Darkness in Patristic Theology, through which we have the hope and expectation that will guide us, through the haze of neoplatonic thought, back to the mystery of this moment, this very liturgy, in which we encounter the living God. Welcome, Father Andrew.

I will risk stumbling into neoplatonic and Pythagorean number mysticism by offering a final five-fold multiplication of the number 72, which yields the number 360, the symbol of ideal perfection and wholeness. And yet, to save us from the fog of philosophy, a number perhaps more fittingly applied to each of us, as an imperfect expression of the 365 days of the year, each of which brings to us new or recurring challenges, glimpses of light in the midst of darkness, brief extensions of hope in the middle of despair and sorrow.

Each of us, whether bishop or priest, seminarian or faculty, husband or wife, bears the weight of the burdens of life, perhaps every day of the year. And yet each of us, who as St Sophrony of Essex reminds us, is equal because we all share the same commandments, receives the great and precious promise of our Lord who by his divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

And so we return to the Apostle Peter he exhorts us, not only to multiply, but to add: *Giving all diligence*, he says, *add to your faith virtue*,
to virtue knowledge,

to knowledge self-control,

to self-control perseverance,

to perseverance godliness,

to godliness brotherly kindness,

and to brotherly kindness love.

Not an easy task for those who rely solely on themselves, but a task made lighter through the mutual support and love that we find in community. And then, whether through addition or multiplication, God's grace abounds and gives us courage, as we hear in these final words of the Apostle:

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.

Amen.