

REMARKS OF METROPOLITAN TIKHON
75TH ANNIVERSARY BANQUET
ST VLADIMIR ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DELIVERED IN ABSTENTIA BY ARCHBISHOP NIKON
NOVEMBER 7, 2013

Your Eminences and Your Graces,
Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers and Matushki,
Distinguished Members of the St Vladimir Seminary Family:
Administration, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, students and families and Board of Trustees;
Honored guests and friends;

Christ is in our midst!

I offer my sincere regrets at my inability, because of poor health, to join you this evening for this historical and memorable gathering. Though my pneumonia has temporarily restricted my breathing, it does not prevent me from rejoicing with you in spirit (*pneuma*) and to celebrate the truly excellent legacy of pneumatophores that have contributed to the 75 years of pastoral, educational and theological excellence at St Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary.

For these past 75 years, St Vladimir's Seminary has welcomed, nurtured and formed, many bearers of the spirit. From the founding vision of Dr Basil Bensen and the delegates at the 6th All American Church Sobor to the development of a serious theological and pan-Orthodox approach to seminary education under Fr. Georges Florovsky; from the energetic and enduring influence of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann to the world-respected scholarship of Fr. John Meyendorff; from the memorable Deanships of Fr. Thomas Hopko and Fr. John Erickson to the exemplary current leadership team of Fr. John Behr and Fr. Chad Hatfield, St Vladimir's Seminary has always provided a place where these inspired leaders, together with those who taught, counseled and administered at their sides, could share the life-giving truths of Christ and His Church with all who came, and continue to come, to this institution for spiritual and intellectual refreshment.

Indeed, we are not simply recognizing 75 years of an earthly institution and its material output, but rather 75 years of personal accomplishments by gifted individuals who have

labored in a deeply Christian way to form other individuals into pastors, leaders and teachers, to write books and compose liturgical music that would touch people in a personal manner and, in general, to build the community of the Church through their common commitment to the life in the Spirit.

When Fr. Sophrony set out to write the biography of St Silouan, he noted the meager picture presented by the Monastery Register concerning the saint's exterior life, of which there was little to tell. Nevertheless, he went on to pen a 500-page description of St Silouan's "rich and sublime" spiritual and inner life. The dash between the date of the Seminary's founding and the date of tonight's celebration might perhaps provide a humble parallel. From the point of view of eternity, 75 years is not a long time, Yet within those 75 years is contained a wealth of theology and learning, of trials and growth, of failures and successes. Everyone who has participated in even a part of that history is at once a contributor and a benefactor of the richness of those years.

In closing, I offer an exhortation to Fr. John and Fr. Chad, to the past, present and future Faculty Staff, Alumni and Board Members of St Vladimir's Seminary. May the next 75 years of the Seminary's existence bear as much fruit as the previous 75 have and may the Holy Spirit inspire all that you have done and continue to do, each in your own personal way, for the continued growth of St Vladimir's Seminary and the glory of Christ and His Eternal Kingdom.