

## St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary

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### Mission

The main purpose of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary, as noted in the Seminary Bulletin, is "to provide the necessary theological, liturgical, spiritual, and moral foundations for Orthodox men to become, as God so wills, good shepherds of His Holy Orthodox Church." For almost seven decades, the seminary has humbly sought to fulfill this purpose, providing instruction in theology to all who have striven for this knowledge, and who have made room in their lives to enroll in the seminary program.

Although the primary function of St. Tikhon's Seminary is to provide "theological education for those preparing for the Holy Priesthood in the Orthodox Church," the school understands that there are also those who choose to participate in a formal theological program for the fulfillment of other needs - such as to prepare to become choir directors or teachers of theology, or even simply for the purpose of personal spiritual enrichment. St. Tikhon's Seminary, therefore, continues to support all honorable reasons for seminary enrollment and class participation.

St. Tikhon's has always excelled as a school dedicated to pastoral formation. The formative experience at St. Tikhon's encompasses not only personal and spiritual dimensions of preparation for the priesthood, but also embraces a focused curricular and co-curricular learning and teaching process, in which seminarians, like the Apostles of old, are called to deepen their personal relationship with Christ, and to answer Christ's call: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).

At St. Tikhon's Seminary, the experience of personal and spiritual life in Christ is most providentially illumined by the presence, across the road, of St. Tikhon's Monastery, with which the seminary has historically maintained traditionally deep ties. The special accord of spirit, interdependency, and mission that are shared by the monastery and the theological school have been traditional in Orthodoxy for at least a thousand years. The daily cycle of services and the presence of monks at work in the monastery, or teaching at the seminary, are constant reminders of "the one thing needful." On the fertile soil of the monastery, seminary formation flowers in each student as the Lord God sees fit. While the majority of our students take upon themselves the yoke of the Holy Priesthood, some find themselves responding to the monastic calling as well, thus bringing their personal vocation to serve Christ to fruition.

### Programs of Study, Outreach, and Service to the Church

At the present time, St. Tikhon's Seminary offers the following programs to those who wish to deepen their pursuit of theological knowledge:

- ♦ a **3-year Master of Divinity** (M.Div.) program is offered to graduates of North American accredited colleges, universities, or seminaries, who either have a baccalaureate degree (B.A., B.S., etc.), or who may wish to fulfill the baccalaureate equivalency requirement through articulated transfer of credit from any accredited two- or four-year college, university, or seminary.
- ♦ a **4-year non-degree undergraduate** program in priestly formation is offered to students who have not completed their undergraduate studies, and who are unable or do not wish to pursue degree work at the time of matriculation.

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- ♦ a special “**Extension Studies**” program is offered to those who are unable to attend the seminary as students in residence, but who may wish to pursue introductory theological study and/or take non-degree courses for purposes of personal enrichment and inner spiritual growth.

In order to better enable students to fulfill particular requirements of their academic programs, the seminary maintains articulation agreements and consortial arrangements with a number of institutions of higher education. Students who may wish to pursue academic options offered by such arrangements would normally consult in advance with the registrar and academic dean to explore the possibilities offered.

As part of its community outreach, each year in the months of September and October, St. Tikhon’s conducts an annual Adult Education Lecture Series for those residing within traveling distance of the seminary, allowing members of the wider community a rich opportunity to explore topics of contemporary theological and ecclesiastical significance. Continuing education units (CEU) are offered to interested registrants. In addition, invited lecturers and speakers offer occasional lectures and retreats to the seminary community.

Also affiliated with the seminary are St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, through which English-language service books, liturgical calendars, rubrics, and other theological and spiritual works for the wider Orthodox community are produced; and the St. Tikhon’s Seminary Bookstore, which is a major purveyor of Orthodox theological and devotional literature, as well as of artistic and cultural items expressive of Orthodox Christian spirituality and religious devotion.

## Demographics

Just as the People of God are central to every activity of the Church of Christ, so too the students of St. Tikhon’s Seminary are the primary constituency served by the school’s curriculum and programs. Together with the faculty, they constitute the community of faith, theological inquiry, and learning at South Canaan.

In the past several years, the seminary has experienced significant growth of its student population. During the academic year immediately past, a total of 89 matriculated and non-matriculated students and four auditors were enrolled in the seminary’s programs of theological education. Fifty-five students registered for courses in the Master of Divinity program, 20 in the non-degree undergraduate program, and 10 in Extension Studies. In general, students were registered from all dioceses of The Orthodox Church in America (48 total) except the Bulgarian Diocese and the Exarchate of Mexico, as well as from six sister autocephalous Churches (Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow, and Serbia). More than 50 percent of St. Tikhon’s students are married, many with families.

The faculty of St. Tikhon’s Seminary have been trained at a wide-ranging and impressive variety of both secular and religious institutions of higher learning, not only in the United States, but also in Europe. They are thus able to offer their students a broad spectrum of qualified theological opinion and academic scholarship in the particular academic fields of their expertise, together with extensive experience of practical ecclesial and pastoral service, contributing to their cognitive and scholarly growth not only in the classroom, but also by offering role modeling as a powerful force for formation and intellectual growth.

At the present time, the seminary faculty numbers 24 full- and part-time members, both clergy and lay, representing an incredibly rich faculty-to-student ratio of virtually 1:3, able more than adequately to satisfy the instructional needs of the seminary’s curricula and programs of study. Among the universities and graduate programs currently represented by the credentials of St. Tikhon’s faculty at the graduate level are: Drew University; Drexel University; Duquesne University; Fordham University; Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley; Marywood University; Oral Roberts University; Pennsylvania State University; Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome; University of Kent; University of Oxford; University of Rochester; University of Scranton; and University of Thessalonica. Among the theological schools that have contributed to the academic and theological formation of seminary faculty are: Holy Cross School of Theology; Institute of Theology, Bucharest; Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia; Moscow Theological Academy; Nashotah House; St. Petersburg Theological Academy; St. Tikhon’s Theological Seminary; Union

Theological Seminary, New York; and St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary.

## **Developments**

In the past two years, St. Tikhon's Seminary has, with God's grace-filled assistance, and a concerted effort by seminary staff, administration, and trustees, achieved in its fullness a most notable academic milestone. At the very dawn of autocephaly, in his report to the 14th All-American Sobor, which by virtue of historical events became also the first All-American Council (1970), the late Archbishop Kiprian of blessed memory, as Rector, noted that the seminary administration "had set a goal to strive for the right of charter to bestow upon graduates a Bachelor of Theology degree."

Providentially, at this, the 14th All-American Council, in keeping with Archbishop Kiprian's vision, we are pleased to note that in 2004 the seminary successfully attained full accredited membership in the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), the official agency recognized by the United States Secretary of Education for the accreditation of graduate schools of theology, and approval of its graduate first-professional Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program.

Significantly, in a parallel development on the undergraduate level, in 2005 the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has also approved the seminary to formally offer the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree with an undergraduate major in Orthodox theology. While ongoing discussions between the faculty and trustees with regard to a possible future configuration and implementation of this new program are not yet concluded, we are grateful to God for having been blessed with attainment of even more than Archbishop Kiprian envisioned.

## **Institutional relationships**

Apart from articulated agreements and consortial arrangements with other institutions of higher education, the seminary holds institutional memberships in the Association of Theological Field Education (ATFE), the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Theological Library Association (SEPTLA), the nation's largest theological library consortium. Through the libraries of SEPTLA, in particular, seminary students and faculty enjoy direct access to more than 2 million volumes of books and periodical literature in the various theological and related disciplines.

## **Resources and Operating Budget**

As the Church labors for the extension of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth through the best use of time, talents, and treasures by the People of God, so, too, the seminary fulfills its mission and achieves its purposes through the good stewardship of human, financial, physical, and institutional resources. Conventional wisdom assures us that denominational seminaries in the United States are generally run on tight budgets. In this respect, St. Tikhon's is certainly no exception.

Over the past few years, St. Tikhon's has maintained a sound fiscal equilibrium. The school's sources of income have shown a steady and progressive increase, and the projected revenues have been realistic and sufficient to maintain the educational quality of the seminary. For the past several years, the annual budget, though modest, has been viable.

At the same time, from the time of our last report to the All-American Council, together with a significant growth of the student population, and thus a concomitant growth of expenses, the seminary budget has also grown significantly, from \$752,000 in 1999/2000 to \$1,000,016 in 2004/2005 and \$1,045,000 for 2005/2006. It goes without saying that the seminary can always benefit from additional avenues of income.

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## Concerns

Besides the obvious fiscal and enrollment problems facing all theological schools - the need for more money and more vocations - there are several important spiritual concerns. The formational standard that seems to have been established by Orthodox seminaries in America granting graduate degrees is a three-year program that serves as both a foundational and graduate professional program. This simply is not adequate for a well-rounded and thorough training (both theological and spiritual) for future priests of the Church. In countries where the Orthodox population is sizable, several years of “seminary” training must be completed before one can even consider admission to an “academy” (graduate school). In Russia, for example, the current seminary formation standard is a five-year program.

In the United States, a four-year program for Master of Divinity students already has been established as the norm for Roman Catholic schools and for an increasing number of Lutheran schools. It should also be noted that the Greek Archdiocese and Holy Cross School of Theology have adopted the four-year norm, retaining the three-year program only for graduates of Hellenic College. Hence, if we are to be serious about adequately preparing candidates for the priesthood, St. Tikhon’s Seminary feels that a minimum four-year program needs to be adopted as the “standard” for ordination, with additional time spent in parish internship.

Of great importance in this consideration is the reality of the significant demographic shift among the wider Orthodox population. The majority of seminary students are now “converts” from other faiths, just entering the Church. This presents two challenges.

The first is to “reclaim” our own parishes as a primary source for vocations. The seminary must reach out to the young men – altar servers, readers, choir members, parish council members – and encourage them to consider Christ’s call to “follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Secondly, there is the need to ensure that every theological student has proper preparation before coming to seminary, that is, extensive nurturing in the faith in the parish setting, so that no candidate’s exposure to Orthodoxy is minimal, and that no candidate is significantly lacking in traditional Orthodox perspective and spirituality.

In accordance with guidelines of the Holy Synod, St. Tikhon’s admission policy states that candidates for priestly formation should have a general familiarity with ecclesial life at the parish level, and be communicant members of an Orthodox parish for at least three years prior to applying for admission to the seminary. In conjunction with this, we wholeheartedly maintain that no parish priest should recommend an applicant who does not have at least a working familiarity with the essentials of worship and the liturgical life of the Church, acquired through the experience of having previously assisted at the holy altar as an acolyte or altar server.

Finally, the seminary faculty and administration applaud the most recent statement of the Holy Synod that only candidates who have graduated from a seminary be considered for ordination to the Holy Priesthood. While we concede that the needs of The Orthodox Church in America, including the need for vocations, are pressing, we affirm the greatest need of all – adequately trained and catechized clergy, able to adequately and professionally deal with the many varied and complex issues facing the Church in North America.