

JOYFUL LIGHT

*Joyful Light is a semi-annual publication of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius,
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Degrees Conferred at Byzantine Catholic Seminary



Following a Moleben in honor of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Metropolitan William, Archbishop of Pittsburgh and President of the Seminary, conferred diplomas upon three Seminary graduates on May 12, 2016. Board members, faculty, alumni, staff, family and friends were in attendance as diplomas were conferred upon Stephanie Betsa, Deacon Stephen Casmus and Deacon Joseph Wargacki. Stephanie's home parish is Christ the Saviour Orthodox Cathedral in Johnstown, PA. Her future plans include working for the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox diocese, in education and chaplaincy work. Stephanie's experience at the Seminary was very positive. "The curriculum was balanced and I learned a great deal in most areas of theology." Stephanie continued, "The professors held a command of knowledge in their perspective areas and freely shared it with the students. They also displayed and demonstrated a real concern for the students and our grasp of the material."

Deacon Stephen Casmus' home parish is Our Lady of Wisdom Byzantine Catholic Church, Las Vegas, Nevada. Deacon Stephen felt that all of the courses he took at the Seminary will be helpful for his future ministry. "From a practical point of view, Homiletics, Pastoral Leadership, Pastoral Care and Counseling, Canon Law and the practicum courses were invaluable. From a theological point of view the Philosophy, Dogmatics, Christology, Scripture, Spirituality, and Liturgy courses were extremely enlightening," he said. When asked to sum up his years studying at the

Seminary, Deacon Stephen said they were very challenging and rewarding years. Deacon Stephen said, "I believe I am much better prepared to do what the Lord has chosen for me to do because of education I received and the experiences I had at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius."

Deacon Joseph Wargacki's home parish is St. George Byzantine Catholic Church in Lacey, WA. Deacon Joseph felt that the liturgical experience at the Seminary increased his love for the various liturgies and their parochial uses. During his time at the Seminary, Deacon Joseph enjoyed studying Christology. In addition, he also felt the leadership classes were very informative, while offering practical insights to parish administration and working with parishioners. Deacon Joseph said, "The Seminary experience strengthened my call to the priesthood. The intensity and rigor of the program required reliance on God's grace and the realization that success in the program without personal prayer and intercession on my behalf was impossible." Deacon Joseph continued, "I humbly thank all who supported me in prayer during my time at the Seminary."

The Seminary extends a joyous word of congratulations to these recent graduates. Thanks be to God!

Editor's Notes: Since this article was written, Deacons Joseph and Stephen have been ordained to the presbyterate.

Rector's Message

A week and a half for me to visit family in Southern California was a welcome part of late June and early July this summer. The love and support of my parents, siblings, nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, fellow clergy, and friends, as for any priest, is a necessary part of a healthy ministerial life. Perhaps more than most of the lay faithful, they get a clearer picture of what priestly life is like between Sunday liturgies.

As is the case with most parish priests and home-owners I know, a Seminary rector has to face the mundane realities of utility bills, leaking pipes, damaged floors, home improvements, and the many mysteries of a building that is 17 years his senior.

As is also the case with most priests and parents I know, we tackle and even embrace these challenges as we reflect on those who will walk on those floors, turn on those faucets, and benefit from a safe and healthy environment.

I'm eager to welcome back six seminarians for the new year, and to receive six additional new seminarians for the new year. I'm eager to welcome one new student in our School of Theology to join the five continuing students in our M.A.T. program.

Considering the many others who will engage in the life of our Seminary by taking courses on campus, taking courses in our online programs, or contributing to the upkeep of the building and the wellbeing of those who live, work, and study here, I don't think I could find myself more grateful for the opportunity to serve God as a priest and to have a role in the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius.



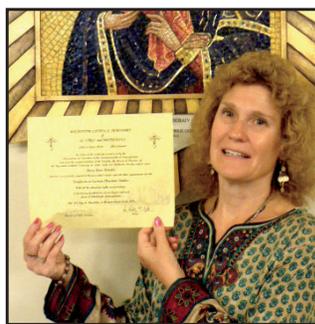
Father Robert M. Pipta

Seminary Sees Green



With more and more emphasis across the country on “going green,” recycling and taking care of our environment, the Seminary has taken some big steps in the right direction. Jim Knapp, Maintenance Manager at the Seminary, has seen significant changes in the Seminary over the past few years when it comes to going green. Over 400 fluorescent light bulbs at the Seminary have been replaced and new, more efficient bulbs are now being used. Bottles, cans and cardboard are all recycled at the Seminary. The Seminary library, kitchen, seminarian lounge and each of the classrooms have recycling bins for all to use. These items are picked up by the City of Pittsburgh for recycling. Any type of scrap wire or metal is collected and taken to a scrap yard for recycling. All paper at the Seminary is recycled using the convenient bins provided by Paper Retriever. And Jim said that the Seminary is now using new aerators in the sinks around campus. This helps to reduce water flow while saving energy. Overall, the Seminary community is taking steps to care for the environment while we reduce the environmental impact. Recycling and caring for our surroundings are good for our environment, our community and all that God has given to us. It is our hope that the Seminary can continue and expand these efforts in recycling and conservation.

In the First Person – Mary Ann Urlakis – Eastern Christian Certificate Graduate



On December 1, 2015, I had the distinct honor of receiving my Certificate in Eastern Christian Studies from the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Over the two-plus years of course-work, I have grown deeply in my faith.

In addition to my professional responsibilities, I am a home-schooling mom of eight children. I was so impressed by courses offered at the Seminary that for two years, I enrolled my home-school, high school seniors as audit students. My eldest son, Kenny, is now starting his third year in the seminary, and still talks about just how much these courses helped prepare him for seminary studies. Likewise, my eldest daughter, Grace Marie, thoroughly enjoyed both the didactics of the program and the online interaction with instructors and fellow students.

Over the years, both my spiritual and intellectual depth were stretched by such phenomenal courses as: The First Ecumenical Council and St. Athanasius, The Second Ecumenical Council and St. Basil the Great, and Incarnation Theology. Among my favorite courses were those taught by Abouna Justin Rose, which included: The Desert Monastics in Context, Byzantine Perspectives in Social Justice, and Sages Standing in God's Fire. The faculty is fabulous! Throughout the years, I found the faculty to be authentically concerned about their students, as well as extremely knowledgeable and engaging.

By training, I am a Bioethicist, and hold three graduate degrees in Medical Ethics, Applied Ethics, and Philosophy. Professionally, in addition to teaching at the graduate, undergraduate and high-school levels, I am often involved in Pro-Life advocacy at the legislative level, and philanthropic efforts for Catholic causes. The coursework throughout this fine program has truly aided me in these efforts.

Both professionally and personally, my spiritual journey is deeply influenced by line 54 of Pope Saint John Paul's Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, in which the Holy Father declared that “the Church must breathe with her two lungs.” My years of study in the Certificate Program at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius have prepared me well for this journey – so much so that even though I graduated a year ago, I continue to take these valuable courses each semester as an audit student.

Kudos to the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius for this fabulous program.

Under the Dome

Sandra Collins, Ph.D., Director of Information Services and Core Professor (Scripture) in May 2016, presented “The Pleasure of Sarah: Recovering Eden Again” at the Eastern International Regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion, held at the University of Pittsburgh. She also chaired at the same conference a session on how texts express gender specific dynamics of sexuality.

In June, Dr. Collins traveled to the University of Prešov in Slovakia for the Studium Carpato-Ruthenorum, an intensive 3 week Rusyn language and cultural program, affiliated with the Institute for Rusyn Language and Culture at University of Prešov.

Fr. Stelyios Muksuris, Ph.D., Core Professor (Liturgical Studies and Languages), presented a paper at the 2016 American Academy of Religion Eastern International Region Conference, 6-7 May, 2016, at the University of Pittsburgh. The paper was entitled “Holiness and Wholeness – Sacred Fulfillment of the Human: An Orthodox Christian Liturgical Perspective.”

Fr. Stelyios also authored a paper entitled “Reflection on the Pre-Conciliar Document: The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today.” He co-authored a paper with fellow scholars from the Orthodox Theological Society in America, entitled “Pastoral Challenges for Marriage in Contemporary Orthodoxy,” both of which were posted online on Fordham University’s “Public Orthodoxy” blog and also published in a special volume for the hierarchs attending the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete, Greece, 19-26 June, 2016.

Fr. Stelyios likewise presented both aforementioned papers at the special conference of the Orthodox Theological Society in America (Preparing for the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church), 27- 28 May, 2016, at the Interchurch Center in New York, NY.

Kyle Washut, S.T.L., Associate Professor, in the summer of 2016, taught an online course on Thomas Aquinas' understanding of faith and reason, and most recently toured the State of Wyoming as part of the Liberty Lecture Series, speaking on the relation between Alexis de Tocqueville's understanding of American Democracy and John Paul II's interpretation of Catholic Social Teaching

Recent Student and Alumni Ordinations

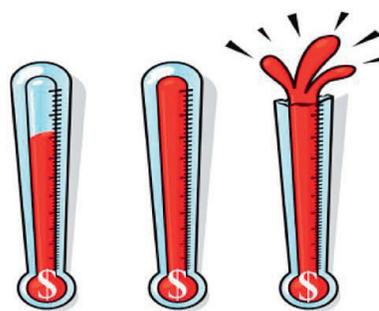
Adam Lowe to the diaconate May 2016
Michael Bezruchka to the presbyterate June 2016
Stephen Casmus to the presbyterate June 2016
Joseph Wargacki to the presbyterate July 2016

Check out our Website at www.bcs.edu and you will:

- Visit the Seminary's Upgraded Library Webpage
- Watch new video content (lectures and vintage retrospective)
- Look at the 25 Reasons to Consider an MAT at Byzantine Catholic Seminary
- See the latest Strategic Plan for the Seminary

Alumni Information Alumni from the Byzantine Catholic Seminary have a unique perspective on the Seminary, and its programs and traditions. We value their opinions, observations and suggestions on how we can best work toward the fulfillment of our mission. If you are an alumni, we would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes and complete the survey you will find on this link: (<http://www.bcs.edu/alumni-questionnaire/>). Your valuable input will help us as we plan for the future. Thank you for your thoughtful completion of this survey.

Wish List Update



In July, 2016, the Byzantine Catholic Seminary mailed the “Spring Appeal” letter which included a request for donations to cover our “Wish List.” Items on this list included the remaining cost of a seminarian washer and dryer, gymnasium repairs, travel costs for ATS Conference, “Golgotha”

cross and classroom air conditioning. The response to date has far exceeded our goal and we couldn't be more pleased with the results. The generosity of our donors has put the Seminary in a good position for the new year. We are now able to address all of the issues on the “Wish List” and also address other Seminary needs such as access issues and ongoing operating costs. We are grateful for this important assistance to us and our mission. Thank you.

New Project in Rare Books Room



Over the years, several collections of materials from our senior cantors and choir directors have been donated to the Seminary library. This summer, Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski began the cataloging of these materials to make them available to church musicians, researchers, and historians. The first collection, consisting of the papers of John Lessler, cantor and choir director of Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Endicott, New York from 1927 to 1977, is now complete, and a summary of the manuscripts in this collection will be posted on the seminary website later this month.

Jeffrey Mierzejewski is a deacon of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, and an M.A.T. student in liturgical theology at Ss. Cyril and Methodius; he also received training in historical musicology from the University of Pittsburgh. Parishes that have materials they would like to donate to this effort should contact Deacon Mierzejewski (mci@archpitt.org) or Seminary Director of Information Services Dr. Sandra Collins (scollins@bcs.edu).

Be Part of our Future – If you would like to remember us in your will, our official title is Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius

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Byzantine Perspectives on the Theotokos Conference 2017



Through a financial gift from a generous benefactor, the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA invites faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, independent scholars and professionals from both inside and outside academia to submit proposals for papers and panels to be presented at the Byzantine Perspectives on the Theotokos Conference to be held 15-16 May, 2017. Submit a proposal to present or register to come and listen to the latest scholarship on the God-Bearer from an Eastern perspective.

For information on proposed topics as well as registration and deadline information, visit <http://www.bcs.edu/theotokos-conference/>.