



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY  
OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS  
FORMING LEADERS FOR THE CHURCH

# JOYFUL LIGHT

Spring 2020

*Joyful Light* is a semi-annual publication of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius  
3605 Perrysville Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15214 • (412) 321-8383 • www.bcs.edu • office@bcs.edu

## SEMINARY EARNS “A”

*Byzantine Catholic Seminary receives 10-year reaccreditation from Association of Theological Schools*

Father Robert Pipta, Rector of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary, has received from the Association of Theological Schools (A.T.S.) a letter stating that their Board of Commissioners “voted to reaffirm the accreditation of Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius for a period of ten years.” This news was received after an A.T.S. evaluation team conducted a 3-day comprehensive evaluation of the Seminary in November 2019.

Father Robert stated, “The uplifting and affirming visit from the A.T.S. comprehensive evaluation team left me thankful to God for such talented Seminary leadership and faculty. The team spoke of our Seminary community as hospitable and congenial. I couldn’t be more delighted.”

Ten years is the longest period A.T.S. affirms accreditation to a theological school. Accreditation, according to A.T.S., ensures “that institutions of higher education function according to standards of institutional and educational quality.” A.T.S. grants accreditation to schools in the United States and Canada.

Included with the A.T.S. Board report was the approval for the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Theology (MAT) degree programs. The MDiv degree program currently has 12 seminarians, three of whom are married. The MAT program currently has 21 students enrolled, most of whom take all of their courses online.

Father Christiaan Kappes, Academic Dean stated, “I cannot overstate how pleased I am. Not only were the professionalism and scholarship of our academic program affirmed, but the mature collaboration of our administration and faculty was praised as a Seminary hallmark. I could not have tranquilly welcomed our visitors save for the fact that our faculty, administration, and students were already living in a culture of transparency and collaborative assessment.”

Mrs. Helen Kennedy, Director of Accreditation, led the two-year preparatory efforts. B.C.S. was required to complete a comprehensive self-study. This was accomplished with the dedication of three sub-committees working with laity, students, faculty, alumni, staff, and administrators. Seminary professor and primary reviewer of the report, Dr. Matthew Miner, stated, “My work editing and organizing the content of our self-study helped me see a truly encouraging

fact: we have deeply integrated the various requirements of A.T.S. through this process. In looking at the results of the shared labor of all those who were involved in drafting our self-study it was edifying to see a unified picture of the spiritual, academic, and professional policies in place here, and I am heartened that the health of our institution has been recognized by A.T.S. in this manner.”

The A.T.S. Board report also identified other distinctive strengths including our commitment to be a center of learning for the Eastern Catholic Churches that encourages collegial, ecumenical, and collaborative engagement; and the implementation of a culture of comprehensive, data-driven assessment, committed to quality improvement across all sectors of seminary life.

Mrs. Kennedy stated that “during these past seven years, B.C.S. has shown significant scholarship and commitment to excellence. These qualities reflect the commitment of Fathers Robert Pipta and Christiaan Kappes, and all the staff and faculty.” The next comprehensive evaluation visit is to occur in fall 2029, one term before the period of accreditation expires on March 31, 2030.

“Coinciding with the beginning of our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, this announcement reminds us that we are forever accountable,” stated Father Robert, “and I’m eager to work with our team to develop a new strategic plan that will challenge and strengthen us over the next decade. I desire that B.C.S. be second-to-none when it comes to preparing future leaders for Eastern Catholic parishes in America.”



*Students at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary include seminarians, lay men, and lay women.*

# Seventy and Still Sowing

*Glory to Jesus Christ!*

Dear Friends and Benefactors:

Our Byzantine Catholic Seminary is grateful to God and to all of our supporters as we receive notification from the Association of Theological Schools (A.T.S.) that we have reaccreditation through March 2030. What great news as we begin the observance of our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year!

The A.T.S. visitation team, whose detailed review of the Seminary was the basis for the vote of confidence, not only left us with practical steps for growth (more on this in future months as we unveil a new Strategic Plan), but with a reaffirmation of the talent and robust commitment as well as the collegial, ecumenical, and collaborative engagement of our staff and faculty – a truly diverse team.

A Seminary is a seed bed, with God supplying the seeds of Church leadership and ministerial service to be sown, watered, and nurtured in that crucible which is priestly formation. As such, the Seminary must have Catholic priests on its staff and faculty. With parochial demands on priests, B.C.S. finds it a constant challenge to find priests (and bishops who must permit their association with us) who are willing and able to function in the unique ministry of formation.

As our Seminary Community of Formation serves seminarians representing various jurisdictions (e.g. Carpatho-Ruthenian, Melkite) and our School of Theology serves men and women of different denominations, I consider it a great blessing that our staff and faculty are made up of men and women representing clerical, monastic, and lay states, Catholic, Orthodox, and other denominations, and years of life representing a wide range of energy and experience.

I'm thrilled and ever grateful that our students learn in such a diverse atmosphere. As they are our Church's future leaders, such cooperation among their formative leaders bodes well for the future of interjurisdictional cooperation and ecumenical commitment. If God's people are to be one as God is One (cf. John 17:22), the requisite unity and cooperation must be embraced by Church leaders. That begins in the Seminary and with its leadership.



Father Robert M. Pipta  
Rector

# Under the Dome

**Rev. Joel I. Barstad, PhD**, Director of Human Formation, published “Eriugena as Translator and Interpreter of the Greek Fathers,” in *A Companion to John Scottus Eriugena*, edited by Adrian Guiu (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 267-295; and compiled for private use *A Simple Byzantine Breviary*, (Lulu.com, 2019).

**Rev. John (Ivan) Chirovsky, M.A.T.**, Adjunct Professor of Spirituality and Spiritual Director, has written a series of Catechetical Reflections on the Liturgies of Vespers and the Presanctified, with Matins forthcoming, in Ukrainian and English for the “Liturgical Resources” page of the website of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat. Draft translations from Ukrainian to English of newly promulgated Liturgical Propers were also prepared by him at the request of His Grace, Bishop Bohdan, for: June 27 – Blessed New Martyrs of Ukraine, Aug 5 – Commemoration of Dedication of Patriarchal Cathedral in Kyiv, and for the First Sunday of July – Our Lady of Perpetual Help. As part of the Deacon Formation Program of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, he led a Retreat on “The Mercy of God and Thomas Sunday: Do we need a separate “Divine Mercy Sunday” in our Byzantine Tradition?” – April 26-28, 2019. As part of the Ongoing Diaconate Formation Program of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St Josaphat, he led a Retreat on “The Mercy of God in the life of a Deacon and his Family” – September 20-22, 2019.

**Rev. Christiaan Kappes, SLD**, Director of Intellectual Formation, Professor of Liturgical and Dogmatic Theology, published *The Epiiclesis Debate at the Council of Florence*, (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2019); “The Doctrine of the Theotokos in Gregorios Palamas,” in *Oxford Handbook of Mary*, edited by Chris Maunder, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); and, “Greco-Roman Jurisprudence in Galatians 4:1-2, 4-5, 20-21 and 6:17.” *Alpha Christianity* 2 (2018).

**Rev. Stelyios Muksuris, PhD**, Professor of Liturgical Theology and Languages, recently published a two-part article he wrote on the international online editorial forum “Public Orthodoxy,” maintained by the Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University. The article was entitled: “A Historical and Pastoral Response to the Forty-Day Churching of Infants.” Part I focused on a historical survey of the manuscript tradition covering this pre-baptismal rite, and Part II offered suggestions toward a uniform practice that are theologically sensible and pastorally sensitive. Within the span of one week, the article has received close to one million reads.



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**20<sup>th</sup> Annual Ss. Cyril and Methodius Lecture**

Presented by The Very Rev. Dr. John Behr,  
author of *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology*

**“The Gospel of St. John as a Paschal Gospel”**

The Byzantine Christian tradition reads the Gospel of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian throughout Paschaltide. This is no accident. The annual celebration of the Resurrection seems to have originated in the circles around John, who looked back to him as the high priest of the mystery. Looking again at this gospel in the light of Pascha, Fr. John Behr will consider what is meant by Christ’s last word from the cross—“It is finished”—and show how the mystery of the incarnation includes us, today.

Fr. John Behr is the Fr. Georges Florovsky Distinguished Professor of Patristics at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, where he served as Dean from 2007-17, and the Metropolitan Kallistos Chair of Orthodox Theology at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. He has published numerous monographs with Oxford University Press and St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press (S.V.S.P.), most recently a new critical edition and translation of Origen’s *On First Principles*. He has also published various works aimed for more general audiences, such as his more poetic and meditative work entitled *Becoming Human: Theological Anthropology in Word and Image* (S.V.S.P., 2013). He is now working on a new edition and translation of the works of Irenaeus of Lyons.

**When:**

**Thursday, May 7, 2020**

**Lecture at 7:00 pm**

Reception to follow

This event is FREE  
but due to space limitations  
registration is required  
by April 24th.



**Where:**

St. John Cathedral Center  
210 Greentree Road  
Munhall, PA 15120

Please register on-line at  
[www.bcs.edu](http://www.bcs.edu)  
or complete and mail the form below  
or call 412-321-8383  
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If you prefer to register by posted mail, complete and return this form to address below by April 24, 2020

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Eparchy/Diocese (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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# JOYFUL LIGHT

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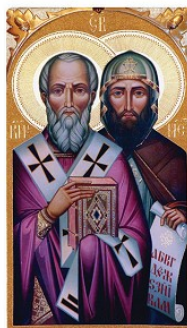
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Founded in 1950, the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius is a free-standing, English speaking theological seminary, welcoming all those seeking the knowledge possessed by the Eastern ecclesial traditions.

We are authorized to grant graduate degrees by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools.

We offer the following degree programs approved by the Commission on Accrediting:

Master of Divinity; Master of Arts in Theology.  
We operate as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in Pennsylvania, and are governed by a Board of Directors under the leadership of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh.