

PILLAR THREE

Clergy Formation and Development

If anyone aspires to the office of bishop¹, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his household well... for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

(1 Tim 3:1-7)

Over the next ten years, the Orthodox Church in America will need approximately 500 new priests! These priests will be needed to replace the 400 or so who will retire, as well as to staff the 100 new missions we hope to plant during this period. At present, only 20-25 priests a year are being ordained, so the situation is rapidly becoming critical. And not only do we need to recruit new candidates – we need also to support existing clergy in every possible way: financially, morally, and through continuing education.

In the pages that follow, key statistics are provided, as well as an extensive discussion of the history of seminary education and priestly formation in America. Even more important, however, is the discussion of what defines “the good pastor.” We hear from a bishop, from experienced pastors, from the laity, and from our seminaries as they grapple with this difficult issue. Finally, we are offered some ways forward in meeting these challenges over the next few years.

Of all the “pillars” being discussed at this All-American Council, the recruitment and training of our future priests and bishops is perhaps the most critical. Our parish priests are on the front lines. Without them, without the leadership and vision that they are asked to provide, all our plans and dreams for the future of the Church will come to naught. And this is a challenge that we must all face together, for none of us alone can solve the challenges, not the Holy Synod of Bishops,

¹ In the primitive church, the terms “bishop” and “presbyter” were used more or less synonymously, so we take this passage as applying to anyone ordained to the higher offices of bishop and priest.

not our seminaries. Praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must take action, and we must do so now.

The Historical Development of the Seminary System in North America

From the very early years of the Orthodox Church in North America, there was a commitment to the training of pastors. In 1841, St. Innocent of Alaska established the first pastoral school, the Sitka Ecclesiastical Seminary. When the headquarters of the Diocese was moved to San Francisco, Bishop John established a Missionary School there. This school was closed and in 1897, and a three-story building was built in Minneapolis that became the American Orthodox Missionary School. In 1903, Bishop Tikhon began the process of preparing for the creation of a seminary in North America. Continuing to bring pastors from “the old country” was not desirable for the church in North America. Bishop Tikhon also responded to requests from pastors in his diocese to have “an advanced ecclesiastical school for the preparation of students aspiring to the Holy Orders of priesthood, namely a theological seminary.” In 1905, the Minneapolis school was reorganized into the North American Ecclesiastical Seminary. In 1906, Fr. Leonid Turkevich (later Metropolitan Leonty) was appointed rector and dean of the seminary. Liturgical services at the seminary were all in English, and they used the new *Service Book* translated by Isabel Florence Hapgood. In 1913, the Diocese bought a large mansion with 14 acres of land, and the seminary moved to Tenafly, NJ and was renamed St. Platon’s Seminary. The course of study was expanded to four years, and students had to pass an entrance exam. When financial support from Russia ended in 1918, the seminary underwent a financial collapse. Students had to travel through the eastern states to raise money to keep the school open. In 1922, the school moved to New York City and, after training two generations of priests, closed in 1923. From that point until 1938, the Diocese had no seminary, and candidates for ordination were sent abroad for training.

In 1937, Metropolitan Theophilus asked Dr. Basil Bensin to prepare a plan for reopening the seminary. Dr. Bensin recommended that a college-level seminary be opened in New York City in association with Columbia University. The Sobor accepted his report, but with two amendments: 1) a school for the training of readers and choir directors was proposed for St. Tikhon’s Monastery in South Canaan, PA; and 2) the establishment of a seminary in association with the University of Chicago was also proposed. As a result, three separate committees were established to tackle these projects. After it was determined that the Chicago proposal was not financially viable, two

schools were established in 1938: St. Vladimir's Seminary and St. Tikhon's Pastoral School.

St. Tikhon's Pastoral School began with four students and a faculty of three. In 1948, the course of study was expanded from three to four years. As enrollment increased and more faculty members were added, a new building for offices and dormitories was built in 1951. In 1956, the Synod of Bishops approved new statutes which defined the goals of the seminary and its relationship to the Church. In 1967, St. Tikhon's Seminary was chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and given the right to grant certification of diplomas to its graduates. An agreement with King's College in Wilkes Barre allowed students to take classes at both schools and to get a Bachelor of Arts degree from Kings' College. In the early 1980's, St. Tikhon's Seminary began an extension program of study. In 2004, St. Tikhon's Seminary was awarded full accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools.

St. Vladimir's Seminary opened in 1938 and was located in several places in New York City before associating with General Theological Seminary. In 1946, the school moved to rented quarters at Union Theological Seminary. Two years later, in 1948, the Synod of Bishops transformed the seminary into a theological academy and it was granted a charter by the University of the State of New York. Over the next few years the prestige of the seminary was greatly enhanced with the addition of world-renowned faculty who came to teach at St. Vladimir's, among them Frs. Florovsky, Schmemmann, and Meyendorff. In 1962, the seminary moved to its present quarters in Crestwood, NY. That same year, the first women students were admitted, and a large new building containing classrooms, the library, and dormitory facilities, was erected. In 1973, St. Vladimir's Seminary was granted full accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools. In 1983, the new Three Hierarchs Chapel was consecrated; new faculty and married student housing was added in the 1990s; and in 2001 the new Rangos building was dedicated, housing the library, administrative offices, and an auditorium. In the summer of 2005, two new buildings for married students will be completed.

St. Herman Pastoral School was opened in February of 1973 near Kenai, Alaska. It was established particularly for the training of clergy for the Diocese of Alaska. In 1977, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America renamed the school St. Herman of Alaska Seminary. The Alaska Department of Education authorized the seminary to grant the degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology in 1989. From the very beginning, the seminary also offered a substance abuse program, whose graduates are eligible for state certification as substance abuse counselors. "The seminary is aware of, and

committed to combating the various social problems that plague society, particularly in the Alaskan communities.” A new chapel was constructed in the late 1990’s, and the seminary buildings have been recently renovated.

Other seminaries were established by different jurisdictions in North America. In 1937, the Greek Archdiocese established a seminary on an estate in Pomfret, CT. In 1947, this school was moved to Brookline, MA, as Holy Cross Orthodox Seminary and Hellenic College. After the Second World War, the Russian Synod in Exile established Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, NY. The Carpatho-Russian Diocese established Christ the Savior Seminary in Johnstown, PA. There are also seminaries of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in South Bound Brook, NJ, and in Winnipeg, MB, Canada.

Since 1938, theological education has changed dramatically. From small classes and borrowed quarters, the seminaries have increased their faculty, staff and physical plants. Teaching is still largely the lecture format, with seminar classes on advanced topics. Pastoral training has increased, providing field education where students work under pastoral supervision in hospitals and prisons. Regular parish assignments also provide practical experience. Recently, the Orthodox Church in America established a summer internship program for seminary students to gain additional parish experience. Faculty use of the internet and chat rooms is expanding student experience as well. There is always more that can be and should be included in the seminary curricula, but time is still the limiting factor. Active recruitment is now necessary to encourage those most qualified to pursue studies at the seminaries. A program for faculty development now continues the tradition of the Church. Qualified seminarians are now encouraged to go on for advanced degrees. As these expansions took place, additional support staff was needed.

As the seminaries expanded, a more secure financial base was needed. The Century Association at St. Tikhon’s, the St. Vladimir’s Seminary Foundation and Ilaasi at St. Herman Seminary encouraged supporters to contribute yearly. When this was no longer sufficient, seminaries turned to major charitable foundations like Lilly and the Pew Research Institute to help develop special projects. Almost all students receive some form of scholarship, but the need for scholarship funds continues to be great.

The Current Situation – Facts and Figures²

Our anticipated clergy deficit in 2010, 2015

2010 – five years from now.

Assumptions: Priests are retiring at later ages than has been seen in the past. Rather than retiring at 65, or even at younger ages, the number of priests in the OCA who are continuing to serve in active parish ministry past the age of 65 appears to be the emerging norm; indeed, it is not unusual to find parish clergy serving past the age of 70. Many who fall into this category will tend to indicate that the reason is, for the most part, economical: that it is not financially possible for them to leave parish ministry and live in retirement with the pension they will be receiving.

1.1 All priests within age category:

Age:	20 - 24	25- 29	30- 34	35- 39	40- 44	45- 49	50- 54	55- 59	60- 64	65- 69	70- 74
Priests:	1	13	46	66	86	130	222	180	122	78	57

The chart above makes very clear that with the next five years, nearly 200 priests will be entering or at least contemplating entering retirement. Past ordination rates are not a predictable criterion from which to extrapolate future ordination patterns, since priestly ordination is based on a calling that cannot be manufactured by statistical manipulation alone, as the following graph illustrates:

What influence, if any, will the critical shortage of priests have on the standards of selecting good pastors?

² All information presented herein is current as of February 2005, and reflects information on record at the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America for actively serving parish priests unless otherwise noted.



2015 – **ten years from now.**

The same assumptions noted for the year 2010 can be used here; note should be taken of the number of priests, 222, who are between the ages of 50 and 54, and of the 180 who are between the ages of 55 and 59.

1. **The number of priests who are converts**

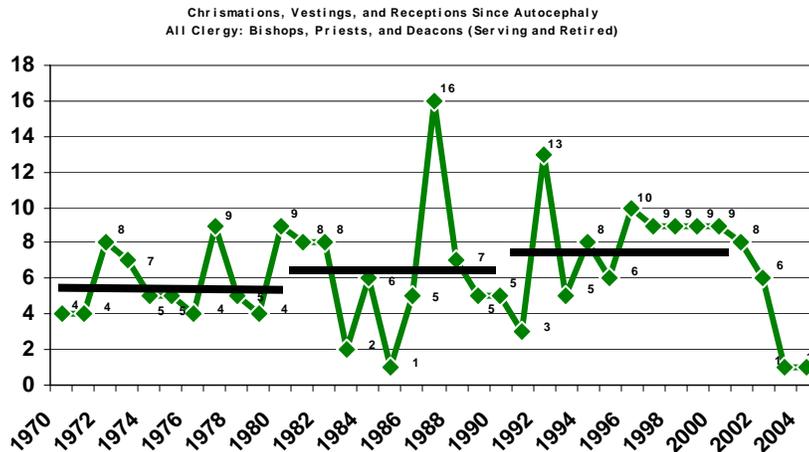
Assumption: The term “converts” is defined here as men baptized and/or chrismated at age 16 or older (the vast majority having received either or both sacraments at much later ages), or received through vesting, or received by confession.

Clergy received through baptism and/or chrismation: 172. Of this number, 6 were also received by vesting, either on the day of the chrismation or later (also noted below)

Clergy received through vesting: 11. Of this number, 6 were received by chrismation first (and would be reflected in the number of chrismations noted above), while one was also received by confession first (also noted below), meaning that a total of four priests were received solely by vesting.

Clergy received by confession: 10. Of this number, 1 priest was received both by confession and then vesting.

The average number of “convert” who have been entering the ranks of the clergy has been steadily rising since autocephaly. The black bars represent the average number of converts entering the ranks of clergy each year during the decade noted: in the 1970’s, the average number of converts ordained was approximately 7 per year, in the 1980’s it was approximately 8 per year, and by the 1990’s it had risen to approximately 9 per year.



2. The education of Orthodox Church in America priests

Assumption: Only actively serving parish priests are included; bishops, retired clergy, military chaplains, and deacons were not included.

Attended seminary; no degree or certificate (STH, STT, STV): 21

Attended seminary; no degree or certificate (other school or seminary): 33

Certificate received (STH, STT, STV): 12

Certificate received (other school or seminary): 12

Diploma received (STH, STT, STV): 125

M.Div. (STT, STV): 169

M.Div. (other school or seminary): 79

M.Th. (SVS): 14

M.Th. (other school or seminary): 8

D.Min. (SVS): 6

D.Min. (other school or seminary): 3

Late Vocations Program (OCA or St. Stephen's): 52

3. The cost of a seminary education

Assumption: figures noted in the tables are based on information compiled during the 2004-2005 school year, and assume students, whether single or married, live on-campus. Other expenses such as health insurance (which all students are required to carry at SVS), entertainment, travel, auto, and other miscellaneous costs, are not included. For the 2004-2005 school year, 45 students from the Orthodox Church in America were enrolled at St. Vladimir's while 44 were enrolled at St. Tikhon's.

4.1 For single students:

	Tuition	Room	Board	Total incl. all fees
STS:	\$3,000	\$2,000 (<i>incl. room & board</i>)		\$6,000 (<i>estimate incl. books</i>)
SVS:	\$7,050	\$2,100	\$2,850	\$12,000

4.2 For married students:

	Tuition	Apartment:	Est'd total expenses, no children:	Est'd total expenses, with children:
STS:	\$3,000	\$350-500 (<i>non-student housing rent</i>)	\$19,000 (<i>St. Tikhon's did not break down expenses between these two categories</i>)	
SVS:	\$7,050	\$635/mo to \$775/mo	\$21,700	\$24,000

NB: The estimated total expenses typically include the aforementioned tuition and board (apartment), food, clothing, telephone, car insurance, and other miscellaneous expenses, but do not include health insurance, entertainment, travel, auto, or children's expenses.

At St. Vladimir's, students who apply for and receive scholarships for financial aid typically receive enough aid to cover the cost of tuition.

The Current Situation

Challenges

Parishioners have been known to say to their priest, "I'm glad that I'm not the priest. I wouldn't want your job. It's too tough!" This is a compliment of sorts, meaning "I'm impressed with your abilities, because I don't have what it takes." But there is another side to it, as if to say, "I don't want your job because it is undesirable!" The comment

contains the germ of the idea that priests are misfits and that the priesthood is for lazy men who lack ambition and cannot make it elsewhere. This attitude is not new and has been held by some laity for hundreds of years. Today it is compounded by trends and attitudes in North America which hold that clergy are corrupt, manipulative, and dishonest. These views, held by many in our society, including by many within the Church, have had serious consequences.

A “normal” North American family seldom if ever encourages a child to pursue a religious vocation. Why is this so? This may be a generalization, but the priesthood is suffering from low self-esteem. Whether this is the product of priests giving a poor impression of themselves or from widespread secularization, priestly ministry is not the high profile career it once was. If in past times an ecclesiastical career was synonymous with social prestige and financial security, today pastoral ministry means being part of a class of people who are on the fringe of society and who may in fact be destined for a life of financial insecurity. The financial issue has recently received some attention, and there has been progress during the last twenty years. Parishes have come to realize that priests are professionally trained specialists who deserve appropriate compensation. Thus even Scripture is fulfilled, because the “laborer deserves his wages” (1 Timothy 5.18)!

In the matter of social standing, however, the Orthodox priest in North America occupies a peculiar place. This is nobody’s “fault.” It is just that in our day the Orthodox pastor in North America can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. Who is the Orthodox priest? Is he a liturgical functionary, an ethnic/tribal leader, a museum curator of Byzantine or Slavic traditions, a pseudo-ascetic cultic guru, an actor re-enacting ancient customs, a businessman, a hired hand, etc.? In fact, the priest has to have experience in all these areas if he expects to be successful. But it is not just practical aspects of ministry. It is a matter of identity, for Orthodox pastors and laity alike. Are Orthodox Christians in North America members of the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,” which exists to lead “all men to the knowledge of truth,” or are we a people living within emotional ghettos, with quaint rituals and a unique cuisine that may be a part of the melting pot, but have little real connection with society at large?

Neither the Church nor its pastors can become *immersed* in this world (which is fallen), but at the same time the Church and the pastors exist to *save* the world (because it is fallen). Jesus prays to the Father: “I do not pray that Thou should take them out of this world, but that Thou should keep them from evil” (Jn 7:15). The sacrament of the eucharist, which is at the center of the priest’s liturgical ministry, symbolizes the sacramental transformation of the world which Jesus

accomplishes through His priests and His people. So who is the Orthodox priest? He is the humble, sober, faithful shepherd, tending the flock of God that is in his charge, subject to every human institution, honoring all men, loving the brotherhood, living as a free man, yet not using that freedom as a pretext for evil, but co-suffering with and waiting for the Chief Shepherd, Our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we will obtain the unfading crown of glory (1Pet 2:13-16; 5:1-6).

The situation is not all bad. It may not be readily apparent, but one of the great strengths of the Orthodox Church in America is its pastoral vision. This vision has been shaped by the earliest missionaries, including Sts. Herman, Innocent and Tikhon, and also by the gifted bishops and priests who have served our Church over the last century. Their spiritual integrity enabled them to recognize God's providence in the fact that *Eastern* Orthodox Christianity came *West* and was brought to the New World. With humility but also with great courage, they came to see this as a divine mandate – which means that pastoral life must be understood as the witness of Orthodox Christian tradition on this continent and at this time. Carefully, after prayer, reflection and discussion, bold decisions were made which we now take for granted: to conduct services in contemporary English, thereby revealing the beauty and meaning of liturgical worship; and to change to the new calendar just as the early Church adopted the calendar of the Roman empire in which it lived. Historically speaking, the canonical reality that is the Orthodox Church in America is only 35 years old. Compared to other local Churches we are still in our infancy, but there have been major accomplishments. Chief among these is the development and articulation of a pastoral vision for North America. Today, we see many gifted priests working with wonderful lay people in healthy, growing parishes. It is particularly noteworthy that many men who were not cradle Orthodox have found their calling in the Orthodox Church and are now outstanding pastors.

Complexities of contemporary life affect all of us. Priests are no exception. The role of the priest has undergone many changes in the last hundred years, and there is every indication that the need for pastoral adaptation to new issues will only continue. Life has made people casual and indifferent to religion. Where our grandparents would come to churches as volunteer workers as well as for fellowship, we see today that most parishioners' church life is restricted to Sunday mornings. Whether they want to or not, pastors are forced to adapt to these changes. But laity also need to accept changes that affect priests and their families. Sometimes priests or their wives need to find jobs which put special stress on them. We cannot forget that the priest's role as husband and parent is not made easier because of his job, and sometimes it is even made harder. The

“double standard” that laity expects of the priest and his family can be the cause of unnecessary tension and stress. Priests are subject to emotional and personal problems just as other people are.

Bishops, priests, deacons and monastics are “set apart” from the laity not in the qualitative sense (that is, “who is better than the other”) but by virtue of their function (“who does what”). Clergy and laity together make up the body that is the Church. We know this and accept it as fact, but there exist lingering attitudes which cause harm to the body. Clericalism and congregationalism are sinful attitudes, which need to be recognized, repented of, and avoided. It is by conscious recognition of how interdependent clergy and laity are that we come to understand the differences between the two. Yes, laity come to priests for spiritual guidance and assistance. But the priests also come to the laity, for support and encouragement.

Clergy Formation and Development Today

Axios! Axios! Axios! The word chanted thrice at every ordination means “worthy.” It refers of course to the one who is about to be ordained to serve in the ranks of the clergy and is a declaration by the faithful that he who is being presented to the bishop for the “laying on of hands” is worthy – to the best of our knowledge. Although we trust that the “Grace Divine” will complete that which is lacking, it still behooves us to put forth the finest and best-prepared candidate we can for ordination to holy orders. There is indeed much at stake when we appoint those who lead and teach within the Church.

The present situation in North America regarding Orthodox theological education has, in many ways, greatly improved over the years. Significant progress has been made in the translation and publication of classic texts, and many new books have been written and published as well on every aspect of the faith. The Orthodox Church in America itself has three established seminaries, as well as a new pastoral institute for the Archdiocese of Canada. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America has a seminary, and the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America has the St. Stephen’s Course of Study. In addition, the Orthodox Church in America has its own Late Vocations Program, which is supplemented by several local and diocesan programs.

With all of this, can we say that all is well regarding the preparation for episcopal, priestly, and diaconal orders? Most would agree that there is room for improvement, and that there is more to preparing a candidate for ordination and church service than simply academic study. Seminaries have known this all along. As crucial as a solid theological education is, liturgical worship, personal spiritual growth, work assignments, field work programs, and general participation in

the “community” life of a seminary are at least as important in the “formation and development” of clergy.

Long before a petition for ordination is submitted or formal theological training begins, the background and upbringing of a candidate already determines the formation and unique attributes of a potential candidate. A genuine proclamation of “Axios” presupposes, at the very least, that he is known by the Church. Those who enter programs of theological studies should have the recommendation of their priest and bishop, as well as character references by others who know them. In addition, their character and personality should be evaluated through an interview. Who are they, and what kind of household were they raised in?

For that matter, what is their household like now? “For if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God’s church?” (1 Tim. 3:5). St. Paul begins this chapter with the affirmation that “If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task” (3:1). He then outlines the attributes of a bishop as being above reproach, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must not be a recent convert, nor be puffed up with conceit. These are all similar to the attributes of those who would serve in the Holy Diaconate, and by extension, the Priesthood. All such, we are told, must be serious, not double-tongued, and not greedy for gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, and finally; “they must be tested first; then if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve...” (3:10).

Other considerations come into play as well in regard to the quality and quantity of our clergy. The discernment of a genuine call to serve in holy orders has always been a deep, mystical, and quite personal question. Often a person’s recognition of such a call has much to do with the prayerful and loving guidance of others around him in the Church. Once realized, is that calling encouraged and taken seriously? Each must struggle to know if it is his own will or God’s will that he should embark on the road of preparation. For many years, the icon of Christ on the iconostasis in the old chapel at St. Vladimir’s Seminary depicted Him with an open page on which was written: “You have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring...” (Jn 15:16). It was food for thought to all who gazed upon it in prayer and worship. Did **I** choose to attend seminary or did **God** choose me to attend seminary? – a critical difference in perspective.

The hard questions must then be asked before one begins any program of preparation –not only questions that would indicate academic

strength, but basic qualities of Christian virtue and “churchmanship” as well. All too often, even casual observations of many interactions among brother clergy, not to mention their relationships with the faithful they serve, reveal a frightening lack of concern for brotherly and ecclesial unity and peace. This is never good for the Church. Those in positions of leadership and authority in the Church must seek to be peacemakers, unifiers, and loving witnesses to Christ, who is the “Good Shepherd.”

Are we doing all that we can to put forth the best candidates for ordination and foster their continued formation and development? This question becomes all the more urgent for us as we realize that we are not in a static environment, but an ever changing and seemingly more hostile one with regard to the virtues of humility and piety. So while it has perhaps become easier to acquire a theological education, it has become harder to raise a family in our society that has Christ’s Church and His Holy Gospel as its center. “Formation” or maturity in the Faith, therefore, may in our day not occur until much later in life for many who would serve in an ordained capacity. The maturity of applicants needs to be evaluated in pre-enrollment interviews.

Finally, we must also remember that, after the laying on of hands, there is an ongoing need for mentoring. Bishops must be archpastors to the pastors within their diocese. All must have a father confessor with whom they work out their own salvation. Elder clergy should guide their younger brethren, and all should bear one another’s burdens with the love of Christ. In this way, together, we cooperate with the Grace Divine and help to ensure good pastoral care for God’s holy flock

Looking to the Future

Lay Perspective 1

Orthodox clergy emerge from seminary having participated in the academic, pastoral and spiritual formation that provides them with a basic "tool kit" of useful clergy skills. The seminary curriculum should include participation in a clergy internship program or a year-long assignment under a mentor priest; the local parish is fertile training ground for the new priest. Other requirements complement the training of a priest to be a well-rounded, effective priest. These additional "tools" deal with pastoral ministry, including communications, which includes both speaking and writing skills for sermons and as a master of ceremonies for the annual meeting. Skill in writing an effective church bulletin is necessary (the Greek Orthodox website, for example, features bulletin-writing software). Unless the priest's previous job was a building contractor, classes in construction basics, project and leadership management are helpful, as

are courses in business finance, tax preparation (completion of IRS Schedule C), business economics, law and risk management. A course in Risk Communications Training on dealing with the media is a useful tool. Seminarians at St. Herman Seminary are prepared for village life through studies in Drug and Alcohol [abuse] Counselor training. Skills in family living and pre-marriage counseling, and training for married couples in conflict resolution are important. Effective listening and conflict management courses improve clergy people skills. In 2004, the Orthodox Church of Greece launched a campaign to ‘...examine methods to obtain and prepare priests' wives.’ To prepare seminary wives in this country, St. Herman Seminary holds “pre-matushka,” or “PMS” classes to teach the potential “matushka,” “presbytera,” “khouria,” or “Mother,” how to care not only for her husband and family, but also for her parish. The seminarian needs learn pastoral concern for those who suffer sexual abuse, taking into consideration professional boundaries. For this issue and others, the priest must know when to step aside and consult an expert when he lacks the required expertise. Seminaries must teach how to find these resources, and the national church must build an infrastructure to support the need.

We are all called to serve the Lord; those called to serve in holy orders are charged with helping their congregation to grow in wisdom, age and grace. It is helpful, though not necessary, for a "good" priest to have a sense of humor, to be an effective communicator, to love people, to be of healthy mind and body, to be physically fit (though not every priest can climb Mount Rainier), to take things in moderation, to seek holiness, and to be empathetic in all situations. Priestly ordination is not only a sacrament; like marriage, it is a vocation. A priest must follow the "seven virtues": he must have faith (the belief in the right things), hope (our hope is not in this world, but is in the belief in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come), he must show charity (concern for others), fortitude (never give up), he must practice justice (be fair to others), he must exercise prudence (use resources and funds wisely), and he must be temperate (moderate with needed things and showing abstinence from things that are not needed). He should encourage his parishioners to read the Bible. He should appeal to all ages and intellects. He ought to be well-rounded (while he may not know much about football, he should know about the local sports team because it is important to his parishioners). A good priest is someone who looks you straight in the eye when you talk to him (even if you do not get the problem resolved, you know that someone is listening). He respects ethnic Orthodox Christian traditions and customs, but he helps his parish put them into perspective; e.g., there isn't a "set time" (9:00 am, 10:30 am, etc.) to begin an Orthodox liturgy. If something is important to his parishioners, he will address the situation. He is committed to wife

and family, and he interacts appropriately with others. He is self-disciplined, mature, and understands obedience to God. He encourages a chaste lifestyle, both for himself and for his congregation, and he reflects Christ in his ability to shepherd his people to God. He teaches his parish to take an active moral stand against abortion and in support of chastity in marriage. His sermons should focus on the here and now. He is a "brother" and "father" to fellow clergy and, at the same time, he is willing to learn from his "wise elders." Finally, a good priest ought to have a good relationship with his bishop and know when to consult him.

The Orthodox clergy of the future will deal with the realities and problems facing society: not only disease, famine and poverty, but how to deal with issues facing society, and nurture the faith to be part of living an Orthodox Christian life. Clergy are called to be the "teachers of the faith" and witnesses of the second coming. They must encourage their flock to keep strong in the church and as St. Herman said, "...love God above all else". How can this be practical when there are so many distracters? He must serve as a role model and guide for his parishioners and encourage them to give towards the church like they would to maintain their own home. (Bishop Basil [Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese] encouraged parishioners to "...think of the church as an extra room in your home.") Religion will no longer matter to the people in the latter part of the 21st century; people will show an indifference towards the church. Most people will neither believe there is a God nor believe there is anything besides the universe we live in. Clergy have to compete with children's soccer games on Sunday mornings and teachings that God and family are not important; they must encourage youth in the parish to make good choices in life, make God and family their priority, and choose a mate compatible with the teachings of the Church, even though their mate may not be an Orthodox Christian. He must seek ways to encourage singles to meet and marry, introducing them to Orthodox Christians from other jurisdictions, and find ways of linking the parish life with other networks: work, sports, travel and education. A priest must know his counseling limitations, when to call in an expert and not handle a matter himself which could get explosive. Encourage retirement: clergy must use retired parishioners effectively by getting the retired parishioner involved in all aspects of the church! Clergy need to help parishioners find the right traditions to make God real and find a vocation in the church - not only by directing or singing in the choir, but by serving in church vocations; e.g., assisting in the church office, planning a retreat, starting a community outreach ministry or starting a nursing ministry with the nurse who lapsed in her profession, decorating the church on Feast days, organizing the Pascha Preparation Day or St. Nicholas Craft Day, or visiting the sick, lonely or bereaved. In the future, people will show an indifference to the church. Through

In talking about how people should support the Church, one writer quotes Bishop Basil Essey as saying that we should treat the Church like another room in our home, which we take care of and furnish. Do you find this image useful? How might we use it to encourage others to support the Church?

their actions, clergy must work with and sustain their congregation in Christian ethics, and impress upon them the importance of knowing God. When we look to the future, we need to remind ourselves that it is ultimately God's grace and His plan that accomplishes everything.

Lay Perspective 2

Surely every age and place has offered many challenges to being an Orthodox priest. A priest in 21st century America has a particularly difficult job. Living in a secular, materialistic, and Protestant culture offers great challenges to the priest and to his flock as well. Many of our priests are converts and come to the faith with a lot of “baggage” from their former faith tradition. Some of this baggage is good, while other is less than helpful.

Seminaries need to prepare priests to work in a culture very different from the one that our parents and grandparents lived in. Many people no longer need the church in the sense of needing a community, much less an ethnic community. This is certainly a problem unique to America.

Priests need to deal with parishioners who in many cases are not able to prioritize their lives. They can't decide what is more important: for example, going to a child's soccer match or to the Liturgy. They can't prioritize values in their personal lives and are often unable to help their children to do the same. Priests need to deal with parishioners who live in a society awash in false sexual mores. Television and radio are swamped in shows and music with overt sexual themes. How are we to deal with this? Priests need to deal with parishioners who are psychologically disabled because of drugs, abuse, and unformed and undeveloped consciences. Priests need to expect to find people who are well educated in all areas except woefully uneducated in what the church believes and teaches.

I would like to suggest a number of things that should be included in the curriculum/development program:

Intensive work on sermon preparation and effective delivery is needed. A few sermons delivered to the student congregation is not enough. I believe a minimum of one class per year should be required.

It is crucial that priests learn how to liturgize correctly. As our older priests retire or die, we no longer have that living continuity of worship, which has been so essential for the maintenance of the church's divine services. A generation or two ago we could have books with minimal rubrics because everyone knew the correct procedure. Today this is often no longer the case.

At least some classes must be devoted to educational practices. This is important if priests are to become the educators that the church needs.

Some classes also must be devoted to counseling and guidance techniques and philosophies from an Orthodox Christian point of view. Priests in the 21st century are often called to counsel and guide in matters that were not common in the past.

First, it is essential that every young man entering the priesthood must be educated in an Orthodox seminary. This is especially true of men who are coming from a non-Orthodox background. It is only by this training that they can experience the Orthodox Christian lifestyle in its fullest setting. In addition, each priestly candidate must go through some form of evaluation to determine his suitability for ordination.

Priests must assume many duties that have not traditionally been a part of the parish experience, and our seminaries must train them if they are to be effective in their ministry. Every priest is not automatically qualified to be a father confessor, a spiritual guide, and a personal and family counselor all at the same time. Perhaps there should be some kind of division of labor here with priests being formally educated in one or more of these areas and then being specifically recommended to work in that area. Counseling, especially, at any kind of intense level ought to be left to a priest who has trained for that kind of work. It is possible that an untrained or inexperienced pastor could cause at the least confusion or at the worst open himself and the church up to legal difficulties. Our seminaries ought to offer the kind of course work that would help pastors to fulfill these various needs.

Seminaries need to prepare priests to be educators. This is absolutely essential because if the priest fails to teach he fails to win souls. Jesus, Himself, was an exemplar of a teacher, both by words and examples. In fact the great command was to “go, and teach all nations.” How can we fail in such an explicit command from our Lord?

Finally I think that what we need in the 21st century are priests who are firmly convinced of their calling to the sacred ministry. We cannot afford to have men who think of their calling as an avocation, or who practice “priesthood as a hobby.” We need priests who are firmly committed to their parishioners in the world. They must not fall into the temptation of developing a “siege mentality” withdrawing into themselves. We lay people are not monastics, and we cannot be separate from the world in which we live. The challenge to the priest is to be here struggling along with us as we all grow in the faith.

Clergy Perspective 1

One recently reposed Orthodox hierarch wrote that as pastors “our task is not merely to imitate what was done by the saints of previous eras, but somehow to appropriate at a much deeper level the way in which they engaged their own historical environment....” This is an oft-heard exhortation, and one that is tragically false. In our present day, we Orthodox at the very best are very, very far from even “merely” imitating our holy forebears in the Faith. To presume that we can go “deeper” is false thinking. Future pastors ought to be taught by their hierarchs, the seminary, and their spiritual fathers how to be followers of those saints and righteous clergymen who have gone before them in this country: St. Herman, St. Innocent, St. Raphael, etc., down to those ever-memorable reposed archpriests and pastors that have served in America. We would indeed do well to “merely” imitate these men in their pastoral work and theology, and gauge ourselves against the icon of their priesthood, which is an icon of the high priesthood of Christ. Knowing and accepting how we fall short will teach us repentance, and repentance is always a turning from the wrong way to the Godly way. Briefly, from the perspective of a parish priest, here are some areas in which many clergy are weak:

1. Preaching
2. Understanding the lives and pressures actually faced by parishioners
3. Liturgical life
4. Personal spirituality and ascetic practice (denying oneself)
5. Understanding what Orthodoxy actually is and how it is to be participated in
6. Psychological insight into human nature
7. Parish administration

A seminary cannot do everything that is needed in order to develop effective clergy. This writer heard Metropolitan Herman state that three years of seminary education are hardly enough to begin training someone fairly new to the Orthodox faith himself to become a pastor of souls.

Of the points listed above, which are most important and which are clearly secondary? Parish administration, liturgical performance, and preaching are all important and vital aspects of effective priestly performance, yet there are not a few saints and marvelous priests that were poor administrators, preachers, or liturgists.

One might ask: what is it that effective pastors have that answers the deep questions and needs of the troubled, the spiritually sick, and the seeking? Why were St. Herman, St. Innocent, and St. Raphael able to begin the work of converting a nation? Why did hundreds flock to St.

Seraphim, the Elder Paisius of Romania, the Optina Fathers and other counselors and spiritual fathers too numerous to mention? And one can speak here not just of the great modern saints and elders, but of simple parish priests of the church here in America. These pastors and shepherds of souls had an **understanding** of the lives and pressures actually faced by those that came to them, and they had a deep **psychological insight** into human nature. This understanding and insight were gifts of the Holy Spirit, and are given to those who are receptive to Him, by virtue of the labors of their own ascetic practice and spirituality. Having the gift of understanding and insight is, in fact, far more important for effective clergy than anything else they might be getting in seminary, including church history and dogmatics, homiletics, patristics, and liturgics, as important as those subjects are.

Of those critical areas listed above, one stands out as supremely important: **one's personal ascetic and spiritual practice and fidelity to the Church**, which are based on the love of God and neighbor. The struggle for self-knowledge in and through Orthodox ascetic practice, even if only partially or imperfectly achieved, will go a long way to overcoming all manner of other deficiencies. Through his ascetic practice (including especially his relationship with his spiritual father), the pastor will develop psychological insight into human nature and compassion for what parishioners actually face in life. This compassion comes out of a deep love for his flock. A priest is asked to minister to those whose frantic, troubled lives and cultural environment demand a radical effort on the part of those who minister to them. That effort is the practical theology modeled by the Fathers of the Church. In short, the greatest need for clergy is to become effective spiritual “doctors” and counselors – but this does not happen automatically, nor through more classes in modern psychology and counseling “techniques.”

Of course it is important that a priest gain expertise in pastoral counseling, in dealing with substance abuse, sexual abuse, biotechnology ethics, in learning organizational and oratorical skills. This is necessary education, yet seminaries, hierarchs, and clergy mentors need to teach and instill within any potential pastor that a priest cannot be a man like others: he is endowed with the healing Grace of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands at his ordination, and if he lives with faith in Christ God—in humility—and acts according to what he has been taught and what he has observed in the saintly pastors of the Church, then he becomes not just a leader, but a shepherd who has the gift of “grace-filled co-suffering love for his flock” (Archbishop Averky, “True Pastoral Care,” *Orthodox Life*, 1993, No. 2, p. 11). He is dedicated “to a concern for the salvation of the souls of the people entrusted to his oversight which is caring, imbued with love and self-denial. The pastor strives for their spiritual

rebirth, leading them truly and unwaveringly along the path to their attainment of spiritual perfection” (*ibid*).

Whether he is reaching out to others, or troubled souls are coming to him, the priest will often (but not always) be able to bring the healing that they need to those who come to him. If the potential priest sees in his bishops the love of prayer, of the Holy Scriptures, of silence, of the liturgy, of the saints, of virtue, of fasting, and of obedience to a spiritual father and to the Holy Tradition – in short, the ascetic tradition of Orthodoxy – then he will certainly be a pastor capable of sharing God’s love, of giving the “right words” and the “right spirit” (Ps. 50) to those who come to him. He will be a witness to the foundation of our theology that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory...” He will be a sought-after man of God, and proof that even now “the Light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:5).

Clergy Perspective 2

The late Fr Alexander Schmemmann wrote pointedly that the church may think of herself figuratively as the priest, and the whole world as her congregation (*Journals*, 10/20/81), and while this is her true vocation and mission, very few actually recognize or live according to this understanding. It is important for the clergy who form, so to speak, the front-guard of the Church, to embrace this view which affects the nature and goal of their ministry and vocation. Otherwise, regardless of their academic achievements, their intellectual and practical skills, they will strive mainly to promote the insular and parochial needs of their congregation or territorial church, and will suspect and compete with anything threatening this elusive stability (Orthodox triumphalism, traditionalism, and jurisdictionalism are the global manifestations today of such myopia).

“For God so loved the world...” To say that a priest should be compassionate seems to state the obvious, but in Christian terms compassion is meaningless if it doesn’t extend to every nook, to every living being in creation. It allows no favorites. The Christ who gave his life for “the many” (meaning all) expects no less from his disciples. Universal compassion and sensibility imply a broad exposure and formation for the clergy – their formation first of all as mature human beings, men who have, as Solzhenitsyn called it, an “upper storey.” Seminary candidates who feel called to the priesthood, therefore, must first be tested in life to demonstrate the following qualities:

1. A fundamental sense of joy and gratitude about life.
2. An ability and desire simply to be one faithful member in a local congregation, to understand firsthand the implications and tests of such durable and humble service.

3. Not be reputed as polemical and inclined to partisanship.
4. The ability to be silent, to listen, and to observe.
5. The experience of, appreciation of, and acquisition of specific worldly skills, and some proven leadership and management ability. This naturally implies vocational preference for older candidates, somewhat seasoned by life.
6. A discerning interest in and engagement with culture (diverse readings, art, music, politics, and technological/economic concerns, proven participation in the concerns of the community outside the church). Only in this way will candidates have a deep connection with the issues and lives of their flocks and the larger community.
7. The ability to delegate and engage a variety of differently-skilled people, understanding that the “success” of the local church is the health and functioning of the whole body in all its members, and not the full-time “job” of the priest.
8. The wisdom to promote Orthodoxy not as one of many religions, or even as the best religion among many, but as the truest form of human life, and to promote this belief first and foremost through their own personal example of life and choices.
9. Since beauty is of the essence in Orthodox life and worship, priestly candidates need some significant formal training in music, and in the visual, literary, and dramatic arts, since they play significant roles in applying and directing these disciplines, particularly in the neglected fields of church art and architecture.

In the interest of furthering the development of well-rounded human beings, seminaries should exercise great restraint and care with all outward symbols and activities (for example the wearing of cassocks and student preaching), which can prove distracting and tempting in early formation. In the overall church mind, it is to be reinforced that seminary training, while certainly a major part, is nonetheless only a *part* in the larger continuum of clergy formation that must include the preparatory qualifications mentioned above, as well as continuing conferences, retreats, and programs which ultimately reveal and define this work as a life-long endeavor.

These considerations might lead to a serious reexamination of the current drive to recruit younger candidates by appealing to their natural, though untested, youthful idealism. Often, it is the harsh reality of the Cross in parish life that then eventually crushes this idealism and leads to the cynicism that seethes just beneath the surface at many clergy convocations today.

An enormous mistake and shortcoming of today's training is that it does not adequately examine and reinforce the many forms of the Cross that are a normal part of healthy parish life. Yes, a healthy parish recognizes its crosses, identifies them, and learns to carry them. An unhealthy parish pretends that it has no crosses and keeps advertising its successes. It is precisely this dysfunction which is largely responsible for clergy hiding their fears and failures from each other, and the competitiveness and pretense of parish "progress" that consume the energy of good priests and bishops.

Not only will a proper confrontation and training in the Cross produce healthier priests and parishes, but it will do so by giving meaning to the Resurrection as precisely that joyous and all-powerful "medicine" which triumphs over the Cross! As the chief and willing *stavrophore* (cross-bearer) in his congregation, the priest can actually demonstrate his willingness to absorb and annihilate the power of evil through relentless vigilance and love – instead of escaping and avoiding conflict. Only such humble truthfulness can necessarily erode the *we/they* dichotomy of clericalism today.

"*Be an image of meekness....*" The above "program" will necessitate a serious reconsideration of clergy awards, advancements, and banquets inimical to cross-bearing and humble service, and respectfully allow the priest (and bishop) the integrity of his life and deeds uncluttered by insignia of rank and worldly honor. This will also mean the priest's own reconsideration and vigilance over all outward symbols (types of cars, homes, clothing, etc) which reflect the inner life. Just as the priest assists each faithful church member in becoming clothed with the *image* of the new Adam in him, he must relentlessly cultivate and *be* that unique image in every word, deed, and thought.

From the Perspective of Our Seminaries

St. Tikhon's Seminary

What is the seminary preparing priests to be capable of doing and being as they serve the Orthodox Church in 21st century America? Certainly, it would seem, ours is a society that is at best post-Christian, if not anti-Christian – and it appears, at least for the moment, that we are facing declining membership in many parish communities. And perhaps, more than ever before, the complexities of modern life necessitate a pastor who can address difficult issues wisely and give advice on questions never before imagined.

However, at the same time, what we are preparing our students to become should be exactly what Our Lord was preparing the very first seminary class of 12 to become as He taught from that fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee: to become spiritual fathers for the "household of

Do you agree that the cross is a big part of parish life as stated in this section? How is this important in our conduct in the parish, and in our relationships with our priest and with other parishioners?

God” – shepherds for the flock of the children of God entrusted to their care – *His* sheep, not ours.

That seminary training is essential for future priests goes without saying. St. Gregory the Theologian tells us very clearly: “One must be purified before purifying others, be instructed before instructing, become light in order to enlighten, draw near to God before approaching others, be sanctified in order to sanctify” (*Oration 2, 71*). And that such training must continue beyond ordination is equally essential. Again, St. Gregory explains that the growth of the shepherd never stops; even after his initial training he is to grow steadily and continually, as “the common sailor grows to be the helmsman,” or as “the brave soldier grows to be the general.”

Our theological schools must prepare seminarians to be more than just theologians. In today’s world, pastors need to be computer savvy; they need to have a good background in finance; they need to be able to counsel engaged and married couples, troubled teens, confused souls, and lonely individuals in the face of such crises as disease and death, divorce and depression. Clergy need to possess leadership qualities and organizational skills that can be suited for various circumstances – whether in parishes of 50 members, 150 members, or 550 members, in communities with a vast majority of elderly or with many young couples and their children. Organizing a church school with 15 children across 12 grades will, for instance, be far different than doing so for a school of 125 students!

However, as the saying goes, the more things change, the more they seem to stay the same. The Gospel of John records Our Lord saying to His Church’s future pastors, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (Jn 15:16). This means we must teach future priests to speak Christ’s words – the words of His Church, not their words. They must proclaim His Gospel – the Gospel of His Church – not their own. They must be taught to accept, not to speculate; to preserve, not to innovate; to defend, not to attack; to uphold, not to tear down, our Tradition which, in the words of Vladimir Lossky, is “the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.”

This means that our clergy must have the mind, the ethos, the *phronema* of the Church. This means that they must understand that they have been chosen and ordained to be part of the continuum of truth-bearers that spans the history of Christ’s Church. They must be one with the Holy Fathers of the Faith – “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Thus, the Church will have but a single voice amid today’s cacophonies, and a single mind – that of her Head: “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16).

Perhaps the two most important things that a priest *does* in his ministry are to preach the Word and to hear confessions. These are two areas in which seminary formation is so essential. It is in the homily, which is to be preached at every service – “in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2) – that souls are led from sin, and the world and the self to repentance. And it is in the mystery of confession that the repentant soul is led to Christ Himself and His forgiveness and healing. A beautiful bass voice and precise liturgics make worship seem “like Heaven on earth,” but in all likelihood they will not save souls. The shepherd must teach His flock from the pulpit and guide each soul in confession in order to reclaim those that have strayed and make strong those that are in the fold “until Christ comes again.”

And how should a priest *be* in his ministry? He must first be a man of prayer. What does it say to us that Our Lord is found to be at prayer to His Father before the most important events in His earthly life, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke? The priest must be, in the words of St. Gregory, a good “model” for the flock. Is this something he must learn in seminary? Absolutely! In the words of Evagrius of Pontus, “He who prays is a theologian; and he who is a true theologian, truly prays!” Seminary is a host of academic courses, but it is also a chorus of prayer – corporate and private, liturgical and personal.

A priest must also be mindful that he is still a deacon – in the sense that he is and always will be a servant. Every day, in countless ways, the priest serves Christ and he serves His people. Such is his privilege – to stand at the altar and serve the liturgy, and to stand in the soup kitchen and serve “the least of the brethren.” The words of Our Lord ring out across the centuries: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45), and “A servant is greater than his master” (Jn 15:20).

All of this is so unlike the modern world; but then, the devil would not have it any other way. The key to overcoming this tension is a certain quality that a priest must acquire and consider a cherished possession – humility. St. Silouan explains it simply: “Our entire struggle is to humble ourselves.” St. Basil calls humility “the virtue of virtues” – the means by which we acquire divine grace and a host of other virtues as well. The Psalmist David understood this well: “A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Ps 50[51]:17).

This leads us to the final point. Seminary graduates must know how to love their people. This is what the New Testament tells us the Christian life is all about: “God is Love,” writes St. John. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you,” Jesus teaches. “Love your enemies” is perhaps the greatest challenge of all to come from our Lord’s lips. If Christ so commands

all His followers, should not our parishioners expect their priests to be loving spiritual fathers?

Priests have often complained that they are treated as employees by their parishes. Sometimes, in retaliation, they try to become “the boss.” The solution is for priests to be what Christ taught Andrew and Peter and James and John so long ago – to be loving spiritual fathers to His flock. If priests love and serve their parishes as spiritual fathers, this will not guarantee that people will never disagree with them; however, it will ensure that what Christ taught, and what people want, will come to pass in His Church in 21st century America. Truly there is so much to accomplish in three years of seminary!

St. Vladimir’s Seminary

The formation of clergy is one of the Church’s most important responsibilities. The task is a holy one. The process of recruiting and training priests, however, has varied over the centuries, ranging from a caste system where little, if any, theological education was mandated, to the development of highly sophisticated theological seminaries and academies.

Most people would agree that the complexity of the world today demands that the formation of our clergy be at the highest level. The days are gone when a good voice and knowledge of services were the main criteria for selection to the priesthood. This raises several questions: How should our seminaries prepare and train clergy for the 21st century? What demands do and will they face as they are sent out? What knowledge and skills must they command to face the challenges of our day? These questions are not easy to answer. They require serious dialogue and debate. More importantly, they require the prompting of and listening to the Holy Spirit.

In Orthodox understanding, priests are neither the vicars of Christ nor His representatives. They do not possess their own unique priesthood. Rather, there is **one priesthood**, which belongs to Christ. He and He alone is the High Priest. The vocation of each priest, then, is to make “present” the priesthood of Christ in the midst of the community. Therefore it must be stated clearly at the outset that seminary education and formation is far greater than the accumulation of knowledge or the acquisition of particular pastoral techniques and skills. It is rather a process of forming the hearts and minds of men, of providing them the opportunity to grow spiritually, while at the same time providing them with the knowledge and the practical skills necessary to carry out their vocation.

St. Vladimir’s Seminary is and has been committed to the classic fields of Orthodox studies – scripture and liturgy, church history and

patristics, dogmatic theology, spirituality and ethics, canon law, homiletics, languages, music, and art. In addition, it is and has been equally committed to practical theology and training. Students spend many hours in fieldwork and parish assignments gaining essential experience that cannot be provided in the classroom alone.

No seminary can rest on its laurels and legacy. With sober discernment and obedience to the Lord's will, it must consistently, honestly, and humbly review and judge its programs and mode of operation. St. Vladimir's Seminary is no exception. Prompted by a recent self-study and strategic plan, the seminary has initiated a project entitled "The Good Pastor," with the aim of assessing every aspect of its educational program. The study begins by asking "What makes a good pastor?" and then, "How can we best form good pastors for the future?"

A number of areas are being and will continue to be addressed:

1) Academic study

St. Vladimir's trains its students to ask questions and to think critically. For example, it is important to know not only how a priest is to preside at the liturgy, but also why he does what he does and what it means. Such questioning helps us to understand what the Church wishes to reveal. In addition, questioning is vital because we live in a culture that asks "why." "Why do you do what you do?" "What can it possibly mean for me?" In asking such critical questions, the seminary hopes to imbue in its students not only with a sense of wonder, but also with a sense of "wondering." This desire to understand serves well in a world that is not satisfied with pat answers. Theological education, as understood by St. Vladimir's Seminary, empowers its students to ask what the Living Tradition of the Church is and what criteria are used for the answers.

2) Communication

A pastor is fundamentally a communicator. He communicates the Gospel, he communicates a vision, and he communicates Christ's love and care. As stated above, he makes Christ "present." His task is to communicate Christ's presence in word and deed. While long-timers in our parishes may never consider leaving a parish community because their priest cannot communicate, it is certain that newcomers, potential converts, and seekers will not stay very long if he cannot. Theological education, as understood by St. Vladimir's Seminary, thus emphasizes the importance of writing and speaking skills. It introduces students to effective pedagogical methods. It trains future pastors to make theology accessible to those in the Church and those

not yet in the Church. Most importantly, it is committed to strengthening classes in homiletics so that our students become proficient in preaching the Gospel.

3) Pastoral counseling

Pastors face a plethora of human tragedies and difficulties in their parishes. Because pastoral work is such a major and vital element of a priest's vocation, theological education, as understood by St. Vladimir's Seminary, seeks to provide classes and experiences which help each student to understand the complexity of the human person (including one's own family of origin): family systems, the dynamics of marital life, the ability to help effectively, and the ability to connect and understand each of these elements within the context of the Gospel message.

4) Leadership skills

Pastors are leaders. They are called to provide vision and direction in every aspect of parish life. St. Vladimir's Seminary is committed to strengthen programs so that its students have a basic understanding of administration, conflict resolution, and group dynamics. It seeks to help its students understand how to disciple and mentor people, and how to discern talent and use it effectively. Students must become comfortable with budgets, investments, and endowments, and be able to navigate through the temptations that each area possesses. The seminary desires to unfold and explore a variety of venues for its students to help them and their parish members embrace one vision for the parish.

5) Continuing education

St. Vladimir's Seminary teaches and encourages its students to continue reading and studying after their graduation. They are taught that if "nothing is going in, then nothing can come out." They are taught that reading and studying are not leisure-time activities for priests, but rather they are an essential activity to maintain an effective ministry. The seminary seeks to encourage this also by providing continuing education programs throughout the United States and Canada for its alumni. Discussions are in the initial stages to determine the proper course of action. Opportunities will consist of short lectures series, workshops, and retreats with various themes and purposes. Besides intellectual stimulation and spiritual renewal, these opportunities will provide fellowship and mutual support.

6) The Good Pastor

“The Good Pastor,” a study of the curriculum, operations, and resources at St. Vladimir’s, is a study in progress. Many of the ideas mentioned in this article are a result of this effort. After honest assessment, however, the question remains: Can St. Vladimir’s achieve its desires and goals fully and effectively? The answer is painful, but clear. No, it can’t. For that matter, neither can any other seminary. A three-year seminary program is not a sufficient time to cover all the areas essential to pastoral ministry. Discussions about extending the program an additional year are often tabled, not because of lack of desire, but because resources to provide such training along with student ability to pay for extended training are extremely limited, if not fully lacking.

Thankfully, the Summer Internship Program (SIP) established at the 12th All-American Council in Pittsburgh, PA in 1999, has been a very effective program for the training of future clergy and has filled a void. Participants have gained valuable experience, prompting them to state that this program should be mandatory for every student considering ordination. Unfortunately, both the funding for the program and the small number of parishes willing to host an intern has limited the number of participants. Nonetheless, St. Vladimir’s in recognizing the program’s valuable benefit, looks forward to engaging and embracing the SIP, and will seek ways to mandate expanding the program for all those seeking ordination.

7) Engaging the World

The seminary must be prepared to engage the world at large and the issues posed by the world. As Orthodox Christians, we believe that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Those charged with the ordained ministry must witness to this conviction clearly and effectively. Theological education, as understood by St. Vladimir’s Seminary, does and must continue to provide its students with opportunities to understand the culture around us by use of conferences, symposia, and lectures. By engaging the world itself for the sake of the Truth, the seminary hopes to be an example and model for its students.

This mandate was stated clearly by John H. Erickson upon his election as dean of St. Vladimir’s Seminary in July 2002, where he stated in his inaugural address, “We at St. Vladimir’s – we in the West generally – tended to see our role as preserving Orthodox theology for better times. We repeated what others had said before, just putting it into French and English. Now increasingly our role must be to show how this theology can engage our world today, in cutting-edge issues like

social ethics, bioethics, information technology, religious and cultural pluralism, and the place of religion in public life...we must resist the temptation to offer superficial answers to complicated questions. We must be courageous enough to speak the truth, but we must do so in love.”

By better understanding the world, the seminary hopes to help its students craft Christ’s saving message and to reveal His priesthood in each moment and each circumstance. As we enter the 21st century, St. Vladimir’s Seminary understands the challenges facing the Church’s clergy, and it seeks to empower its students to meet those challenges by remaining faithful to Christ, the One “who is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8).

The Path Forward

Essentially, Orthodox Christian ministry consists of building up the Body of Christ,³ and this ministry is accomplished primarily through the spoken word.⁴ The primary occasions for effective ministry include (but are not limited to):

- Liturgical preaching
- Sacramental confession
- Teaching (e.g., Bible study, Christian education, retreats)
- One-on-one pastoral guidance (i.e., the counsel of a spiritual father).

Therefore, to improve the quality of clergy formation and development in the Orthodox Church in America, we need to allocate resources for the support and development of programs that will allow us to train priests who are excellent preachers, confessors, teachers and spiritual fathers. These programs would address the need to develop

³ Saint John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*, translated by Graham Neville (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984) “The Church of Christ is Christ’s own body, according to St. Paul, and the man who is entrusted with it must train it to perfect health and incredible beauty, by unremitting vigilance to prevent the slightest spot or wrinkle or other blemish of that sort from marring its grace and loveliness. In short, he must make it worthy, as far as lies within human power, of that pure and blessed Head to which it is subjected.” iv.2: 114.

⁴ Chrysostom, “When all is said and done, there is only one means and only one method of treatment available, and that is teaching by word of mouth.” iv.3: 115.

theological faculty, subsidize seminary and continuing education, and strengthen programs in preaching and mentoring.

This approach assumes that the most talented candidate for priestly ministry requires effective training in order to use his God-given talents. In other words, this approach rejects the idea that “good priests are born, not trained.” Every effective priest must begin his training and formation with some degree of natural talent and ability, but the possibilities for ultimate success in ministry will be most affected by the training that the candidate receives both as a seminarian and through continuing education.⁵

Developing Theological Faculty

All of the major Christian groups in North America (Roman-Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, etc.) provide scholarships for those of its members who desire to pursue advanced theological degrees. However, talented Orthodox men and women who desire to obtain terminal degrees in theological fields are required to subsidize their own education, or they are forced to rely upon the generosity of secular institutions or other Christian groups. In order for our Orthodox seminaries to continue fulfilling their mission to train and form effective ministers, they must be able to draw from a pool of well-trained Orthodox Christian faculty. To begin with, we must ensure that the seminaries are able to fill existing faculty positions with qualified candidates: experts in their respective fields who are capable not only of training Orthodox Christian ministers, but who can also enter into scholarly dialogue with their academic colleagues beyond the bounds of the Orthodox Church. Ideally, however, the Orthodox Church in America would not only support the development of Orthodox Christian faculty for “in-house” work, but would also support the advanced education of Orthodox scholars and theologians who could then witness to the Orthodox Christian faith through teaching ministries in colleges and universities throughout North America.

⁵ St. John Chrysostom, “The power of eloquence...is more requisite in a church than when professors of rhetoric are made to contend against each other! ...For though a man may have great force as a speaker (which you will rarely find), still he is not excused continual effort. For the art of speaking comes, not by nature, but by instruction and therefore even if a man reaches the acme of perfection in it, still it may forsake him unless he cultivates its force by constant application and exercise. v.1, 4: 127, 30.

The Orthodox Church in America should begin to establish an endowed scholarship fund to provide scholarships for Orthodox Christians seeking to pursue doctoral degrees in theological disciplines. Possibly this could be a part of the current Orthodox Church in America Theological Education Endowment. Such an effort would be even more effective if it were conducted on a pan-Orthodox level (perhaps under the auspices of SCOBA). An initial target could be a one million dollar endowed fund that could provide approximately fifty thousand dollars a year in scholarships.

Paying for Seminary Education

Institutions as diverse as the Roman Catholic Church and the U.S. Military pay for all the education and training of those who serve in their ranks. However, the Orthodox Church in America requires seminarians to pay for the majority of the costs of their seminary education by themselves. Even when seminary tuition is nominal, the cost for a married seminarian with children, whose full-time seminary program precludes the possibility for outside employment, can be staggering.⁶ The negative consequences of this situation are even greater when considering the relatively low salary for priests in the Orthodox Church in America. For many priests, paying for seminary expenses can be a great financial hardship, sometimes requiring the priest's wife to seek full time employment in order to provide health insurance and to augment her husband's minimal salary. When a man considers responding to God's call to serve as an ordained minister in the Orthodox Church, the question, "How am I going to afford to pay for this?" should not be a deciding factor. When the Orthodox Church in America is able to fund a high percentage of the total costs involved in a seminary education it will be able to accomplish the following:

Seminarians will be free to focus entirely upon their studies.

Once ordained, priests will be free to focus their energies entirely upon their ministry and will not be saddled with large student debts.

Reducing the costs that seminarians incur might increase the number of qualified candidates for ordination.

When addressing the issue of clergy formation, it is important to remember that "You get what you pay for." If parishes want highly trained and effective clergy, then parishes need to pay for highly trained and effective clergy. The costs of both seminary education, and continuing clergy education (see below), could be significantly

⁶ Please see chart 4.2.

defrayed if parishes budgeted for “clergy education.” This money could be used to fund the continuing education of the parish priest; it could be used to subsidize the education of a parishioner studying at seminary; or it could be used to help the pastor repay student loans incurred at seminary.

Developing and delivering continuing education and developing specialized clergy

One common misconception in pastoral ministry is the idea that there is such a thing as an “average OCA parish.” While there are certain pastoral issues that are “universal,” each parish possesses a unique combination of strengths and weaknesses. In pastoral ministry, there is no such thing as an average parish or an average parishioner. Each parish is unique, and each individual Orthodox Christian is unique. From this perspective, all Orthodox clergy, in some concrete way, need to be “specialized clergy,” in order effectively to build up the Body of Christ in the particular context, and among the particular people, where they serve. While seminary education is essential in providing a sound theological and pastoral foundation, continuing education for clergy is an indispensable facet of effective ministry. In the same way that physicians continue to train and study so that they can always treat their patients with state-of-the-art procedures, to maintain their effectiveness clergy should continue to train and study so that they can best serve the faithful. Continuing education programs, therefore, should be designed to meet the specific needs of clergy. This could be accomplished by surveying and interviewing parish clergy in order to determine the areas that they find most challenging. This data could be collected either at the national or diocesan level, and the results would enable the Orthodox Church in America to develop a series of programs addressing the specific challenges facing the clergy. Some program might have wide applicability (e.g., “exegesis for preaching engaging sermons”), whereas other courses might have a very narrow scope (e.g., “meeting the challenges of military chaplaincy in the 21st century”).

The costs of continuing education programs would be largely determined by the location in which they were conducted. For example, it would be significantly cheaper to hold the courses at a seminary campus during the summer than at a hotel conference center. The cost involved with developing and administering a program should be commensurate with the cost of offering a three-credit course at one of the Orthodox Seminaries. A reasonable estimate would be around \$3000 per program.

Homiletics as an integrating discipline

In order to be an effective minister, the priest must possess keen insight into the theological implications of contemporary life and speak to the faithful in a way that directly applies to their lives as Christians today. For example, it is not enough for the priest to say that “consumerism is evil”; rather, he must be able to understand the theological agenda behind the rhetoric of advertising, and then present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that exposes the lies of this world and offers the people a way of salvation through repentance. In order to do this—whether in preaching, teaching, confession or spiritual counsel—the priest must integrate a number of diverse disciplines, including biblical studies, patristics, dogmatic theology, church history, and liturgical theology, in order to touch the hearts of the faithful.

In addition to the basic skills of rhetoric and public speaking, homiletics, both as part of seminary curriculum as well as continuing education, should focus on the effective integration of all theological disciplines so that, as preacher, teacher, confessor and spiritual father, the priest can utilize the very best of Orthodox Tradition in the service of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Effective mentoring

Mentoring is an absolutely essential aspect of clergy formation. Almost every senior priest remembers that one pastoral mentor to whom he always turned when he was just beginning his ministry. Oftentimes, the mentoring relationship is established organically, and sometimes it is the diocesan chancellor or the local dean who serves as a natural point of contact for those seeking a mentor. However, this is not to say that every chancellor and dean should be a mentor. When a new priest is assigned to a parish, it would be very helpful if he were made aware of the senior priests in his area willing to serve as mentors. Though geographical proximity is not absolutely essential, it is much more effective if a mentor is someone that the new priest can occasionally speak with face to face.

The costs, if any, of a mentoring program would be minimal. In some cases, the mentor might be offered a stipend. Mentoring could be coordinated on the diocesan or deanery level to ensure that new priests have full access to the pastoral wisdom and experience of their elders.

Talking Points on Clergy Formation: Second Vocations

We are all eager to empower diverse ministries within our church, yet at the end of the day, what the faithful really want is a priest. And not just any old priest – or perhaps precisely an old priest – but very definitely a priest who preaches the word of God with intelligence,

good humor and sincerity, who is seen to live a godly life, who celebrates and administers the Holy Mysteries with dignity and conviction, and who is manifestly given over to prayer and the study of scripture. This is the sort of priest the faithful want. And their intuition is correct. These are precisely the characteristics of priestly ministry we find sketched in scripture and affirmed in our pastoral tradition.

Where do such priests come from? Our answer in recent centuries is that they come from the seminaries. While the rise of seminaries and the role of the seminary system in providing for the theological education and pastoral training of clergy have not been without difficulties and disappointments, it is almost impossible for us to envision any other means of training the number of clergy we need – and of training them to a common standard. We do not wish here in any way to diminish the contribution our seminaries have made in the past and will inevitably make in the future. But we believe that there are some very serious problems with the seminary model when it comes to producing priests. Or rather it is perhaps not so much a problem with our seminaries as it is with the raw material with which they work.

We need not go into great detail concerning the problem. It can be stated simply: there is a crisis in the ranks of our clergy. There are many aspects to this problem and many explanations have been offered. Some would deny that there is any problem. But the proof that it exists is easily demonstrated by looking at outcomes – the outcomes of ordination and ministry. Consider the number of clergy who are or have been under some sort of discipline, suspended or deposed, or who have dropped out of ministry, gone AWOL, been removed from the ranks of the clergy. The attrition rate among our clergy is rather large; the personal stories are tragic. But our official statistics offer only a small glimpse of a more widespread malaise, one that is often hidden. The truth is that Orthodox clergy easily fit into the pattern recently noted in a Protestant journal: “Religious leaders are prone to significantly higher incidents of substance abuse, obesity, financial difficulties and depression. Clergy now rank among the illustrious ‘top ten professions’ associated with heart disease.” Marital difficulties, issues of sexual identity, and parental struggles are sometimes devastatingly played out on the stage of parish life. Add to this picture the naïve or unrealistic expectations of new clergy, the unpleasantness that can be encountered by the neophyte in parish life, the material conditions of pastoral ministry, and it is not difficult to imagine the toll that all of this, taken together, can have on priests, their families and, of course, their parishes.

This situation would not exist to the degree that it does if we followed the biblical and canonical norm for ordination. The basic biblical and canonical criterion for identifying the right stuff for priestly ministry is a very simple one: a man may be found worthy of ordination if he has raised his family well and in the Church. We understand this to mean that he has nurtured the faith of his wife and children, or at least not driven them away from the Church and not alienated them from the faith. Such a man, having developed and demonstrated appropriate marital and parental skills through the long years of his family life is very likely to have precisely the necessary skills, wisdom and stability to take on a spiritual family and pastoral ministry. The idea that a young man – scarcely married, without having navigated the trials and temptations of marriage, children and family life – has the sort of wisdom and experience the Apostle clearly thinks needed for pastoral work is a fundamental flaw in our “system.” The only way to know about the maturity and stability of a man and his potential for pastoral leadership is to look at him in his mature years and to see the fruits of his vocation as husband and father. Given his own faith, is his wife a believer? Are his adult children believers? Do they participate in the life of the church? Has his life experience shaped a character suitable for leadership in a parish?

How can parishes, individuals and families help to identify and encourage vocations for work in the Church?

But herein lies the problem. Who goes to seminary? Generally speaking it is young men, without the requisite demonstrated life experience, and yet who feel some sort of interior call to ministry. In the past this has been considered the norm. It may be that today we are seeing this change as the average age of our seminarians increases. This is a good thing, but not the entire thing – because what we envision is not simply about age, but about accomplishment. We would like to see a new emphasis on second vocations.

While it is true that a personal sense of God's call must play a part in the overall process, we know that feelings can be deceptive. In our Church we insist that any subjective, personal sense of call can only be realized by the objective call of the Church. In formal terms this is expressed by the hierarchical decision to ordain, but of course this decision is itself meant to be a response to the concrete needs of the Church in parish life and at the recommendation of various advisors – seminary faculty, chancellors and deans, church boards, and so on. It is our recommendation that the process of producing priests place even greater emphasis on the objective call of the Church in identifying and recruiting our pastors, show a preference for demonstrated life experience and lived faith, on maturity and stability, put more weight on those fundamental issues of character and experience upon which the seminaries' academic enhancement and professional skills may be built.

Even though his passionate appeal for a radical renewal of theological education in Russia is based on the seminary model of producing priests, Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) notes that “education itself cannot be the only criterion: other criteria, such as ecclesial spirit, spirituality, prayerfulness and administrative skills should be taken into account as well.”

While a seminary can teach homiletics, there are no techniques to create intelligence, good humor and sincerity. It is impossible to determine if the young men proposing to attend seminary – or who graduate from seminary – have, in fact, the desire, capacity, imagination or endurance to strive for a godly life. The mechanics of priest-craft can be taught, but no amount of coaching can hide the fact that some persons are at ease in liturgical serving and have innate skills and talents with respect to movement, voice, lateral awareness and so on, and some are not. It is often said that clergy are more often than not introverts. If true, this is surprising given the amount and scope of interpersonal encounters in pastoral life. In any event, some people possess the ability to interact with persons of various ages and backgrounds; others are extremely limited in their interpersonal skills. The young men who come to seminary are often just beginning a life of prayer – how will seminary education help to create a habit of prayer? And while our schools can teach scripture, the habit of scriptural reading and reflection is something else altogether. In other words, while there are subjects that can be taught and appropriate skills that can be mastered, there are questions of character and formation that can only be evaluated and assessed on the basis of a life lived.

The idea of “paradigm shift” has entered the popular vocabulary. We need to embrace just such a shift, away from pastoral training as primarily a matter of training young men to one of delivering skills to mature men, and from ministry as a response to a personal call to ministry as a response to the call of the Church. It may even involve a shift from thinking of our clergy primarily as “clergy professionals” to thinking of our clergy as spiritual fathers.

The concept of a second vocation needs to be clearly and unambiguously affirmed as a good and important thing throughout our Church, and not apologized for as if a concession. Second vocations will need to be identified, evaluated and encouraged far more intentionally and vigorously by pastors and archpastors. Institutional ways and means of supporting second vocations must be built up. Creative ways of delivering the particular content of seminary education will need to be developed. These are all details, but we believe the picture of equipping men selected precisely on the basis of their demonstrated maturity and stability in the faith is a compelling

one and needs to be taken seriously.

It is one of the great mercies of God that the grace divine has found in many young men the raw material to create a fruitful ministry. But as we know and can see in our official statistics, in the anecdotal evidence of the brotherhood of the clergy, and in parish gossip, there is a high attrition rate among our clergy. Many of the various reasons and explanations boil down to this, that young men who are just at that point in life when one begins to learn what it means to be a husband, let alone a father, have found themselves under enormous pressure to meet the demands of the parish with life skills and spiritual wisdom that can only be developed, tested and proven over the years. We need to embrace the idea of a second vocation as closer in spirit to biblical and canonical norms for ordination. Although it seems unlikely that second vocations could ever meet the personnel needs of our Church, increasing the number of second vocations would raise the overall level of stable pastoral leadership and resources in our parishes and moral support for our younger clergy.

Having read the section on Clergy Formation, what do you think is the major priority for the Orthodox Church in America in the next 10 years in this area?