



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

September 11, 2016
Ven. Sergius & Herman of Valaam

To all Parishes, Missions, Clergy, Laity, and Monastics of the Midwest

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

It is that time of the year again where we ask our parishes and missions in the Diocese of the Midwest to provide financial support for our seminarians that are attending St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's Seminary this upcoming year. We have 11 students enrolled this year at both seminaries.

Attending St. Tikhon Seminary:

Dn. Basil Ferguson, Dn. Stephen Gresh, Megan Haak, Dn. John Kennerk, and Jonathan Lincoln.

Fr. David Gresham completed one year of intensive study at STS and is now assigned as acting rector of Holy Apostles Church in Bloomington-Normal, IL.

Attending St. Vladimir Seminary:

Mark Chenoweth, Brian Crivela, Brittany Lauber, Christopher Moore, Christopher Stoops, and Daniel VanderKolk.

Fr. William Rettig completed his M.Div. at SVS this past year and graduated. He is now assigned as priest-in-charge of Holy Resurrection Mission in Fargo, ND.

As you can see there has been much activity at both seminaries and more to come in the following year.

Each year I feel the need to explain to you why support for our seminarians is necessary and not an option. Last year I mentioned the sacrifices students and their families make to go there. It is not feasible for them to get secular jobs; often they leave seminary in significant debt due to student loans. So what else can I say to persuade you that it is worth the sacrifice you make to help our students?

Two things come to mind. When I was preparing to attend St. Vladimir's in

1991, I was working as a social worker in community mental health. I remember a conversation I had with our Psychiatrist on staff, talking about going to seminary. I told him I would get some help but I would need to pay for most of it. He looked at me with surprise and stated "I thought that when you go to seminary you are giving your life to the Church, and the Church should take care of that expense, not you." I think he came from a Methodist background. I know the Antiochian Archdiocese covers expenses for M.Div. students. So I would say it is important to support our seminarians because it **is** the responsibility of the Church to provide the financial support they need to relieve them from that burden or, at the least, lessen the load.

A second issue needs to be addressed, which will become more crucial in the next five years. We have many clergy in the Midwest that are now between 62 and 64 years old. I predict that in the next five years we will have many vacancies in the Diocese. I am concerned that we won't have enough graduating students to fill them. So we need to be supporting students now, and not wait until the openings occur, as the M.Div. program is three years. So our churches in the Midwest need to raise the issue of vocation and ordained ministry. We need to identify people who may be potential seminary material, because the Church may be calling them to be priests, deacons, or teachers of the Church. Thanks to those parishes/missions that have been doing that over the years and have sent students to seminary. This work needs to continue, because the need will be great in the next five to seven years.

So do be generous in your giving. Make your donations out to "Diocese of the Midwest" and note that it is for "Support Our Seminarians 2016". Thank you for taking the time to read this and prayerfully consider what each person or parish/mission can do.

With love in Christ, the unworthy

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul
Bishop of Chicago and the Midwest



Before His Ascension, Our Lord commissioned His disciples to “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

SUPPORT OUR SEMINARIANS!

■ While all of God’s People are called to proclaim the Good News, our clergy have been given the special task of “equipping the saints for ministry” by planting the seeds of faith and nurturing spiritual growth. ■ For nearly eight decades, our seminaries have devoted themselves to imparting *information* about our faith while pursuing the *formation* of those called to the ordained ministry. ■ Our diocesan seminarians have chosen a truly difficult and selfless path, especially in terms of funding their studies and related living expenses. ■ **September 2016** has been designated “**Support Our Seminarians Month**” in the Diocese of the Midwest, culminating in “**SOS Sunday**” on **September 25**. Please be **generous** as we join together to help lighten our seminarians’ financial burdens. ■ **All funds will be given directly to our seminarians!**



**SEPTEMBER 25
IS SOS SUNDAY!**

Please send your donations to the Diocese of the Midwest
927 North LaSalle Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60610