



## St. Macrina Orthodox Institute

*for Renewal of Diakonia and Catechesis  
in the Midwest Diocese, OCA*

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### Report, Diocesan Assembly, 2-4<sup>th</sup> of October 2023

18<sup>th</sup> of September – St. Eomenes of Gortyna, Anno Domini  
2023, Anno Mundi 7532

### Statistics

At Present the Program has APPROXIMATELY 31 students. ~10 on hold.

### Operations

Courses are presently being held through zoom. During the pandemic students in widely spread areas, many with few local people for a cohort, were brought into a single online course.

We have yet to return to in-person instruction. Difficult with present cohorts of people from geographically disperse places and at different points in their work through the curriculum cycle. We need to develop more local interest and faculty not just to teach when called on, but to help in the development of local interest and the formation of local cohorts.

### New Program, "Seeds of Faith"

This advanced catechesis has had limited success. We will continue it, but hope to get more diocesan buy-in. We are trying to counteract some of the bad educational environment of social media and various internet influencers--trying to head off the *supplementation* by outside materials. We welcome input. We would gladly take any technical assistance to increase the impact of these courses. These courses allow for a deeper dive into some subjects than we can normally do in the Catechist/Diaconal program, where we need to do broad surveys to cover an immense amount of material. Hopefully, the work we do here in these courses will be

developed, to be available to parishes and priests in some way that is of assistance in parish life.

### Faculty

At present our faculty is somewhat reduced. We are looking for more, to go with development of local cohorts.

Fr. Elijah Mueller--Director, *Spirituality, subjects as needed*

Dr. Rebecca Luft, *Old Testament, New Testament*

Fr. Esteban Vazquez, *New Testament*

Dr. Richard Zaleski, *Church History/ Patristics*

Fr. Philip Maikkula: *Dogmatics*

NEED: *Liturgical Theology/ History*

Assorted local instructors: *Pastoral Issues / Liturgical serving / Catechetical Practice* (usually local Deans and deacons with rubrical expertise).

Many other instructors have worked with us in the past and we hope to use again (*Fr. Jacob Van Sickle, Fr. Michael Butler, Dn Justin Jackson, Fr. Paul Wesche, Dn Paul Gavrilyuk, etc.*).

### Future Hopes

We hope that the work that is done in this Institute provides the basis for further educational initiatives in the diocese. There is a need for local and affordable theological education that meets people where they are, as they remain rooted in their present community, and we hope to help in connecting the diocese to broader educational resources to meet that need. Additionally, the Institute has already helped to prepare many people for seminary studies, and has also assisted people with theological degrees from non-Orthodox institutions to enable them to minister in an Orthodox parish context.