



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

**Letter of Bishop Paul of Chicago regarding the 2015
"Support Our Seminarians" Appeal**

September 1, 2015

Glory to Jesus Christ!

With the beginning of the new church year, we also begin another year of seminary education at St. Vladimir Theological Seminary and St. Tikhon Theological Seminary. This year we will have 9 students attending both seminaries. Three people graduated from St. Tikhon's last May: Deacon Theophan Warren, Joel Brady, and Michael Skor. May God bless their future ministry in the church, whether that is in continuing education, parish ministry, or chaplaincy.

I am writing to once again ask for your support for our students. September of each year has been set aside to do just that. Please use the month of September to take up special collections or conduct special fundraisers (i.e. bake sales, parish meals, car washes), the proceeds of which can go towards supporting our 9 students. As you know, our students are given a stipend of \$1,000 per semester to assist them in the expenses which they incur as a result of their studies.

Each year, we send this letter out with the intent to explain why parishes should do this for our Midwest students. So I will give it my best shot.

The first reason is that the nature of the sacrifices single or married students make to go to seminary is great. Students are unable to get jobs while at seminary to help offset costs. In between class time, studies, community service, and church attendance there is no way outside employment is possible. The ones that do end up getting jobs are the spouses of the students who study. That means that have to arrange and pay for childcare, if they have kids needing day care.

Many students end up getting student loans to fund their seminary cost which means leaving seminary being in debt 30 to 60 thousand dollars. For those who do seek to serve in the Church some have to seek their own employment because they may end up in an assignment where the parish is unable to adequately support them.

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The whole point of the September Seminary Drive is to do what we can as a diocese to help our students; to minimize their debt and ease their burden in a small way. To paraphrase our chancellor at the last All-American Council, “I spent \$9 on a beer today. If I can do that, why can’t I come up with a \$20 donation to help those in Syria that are homeless?” That same line of thought applies here. When a family goes out to see a movie or a ball game, they easily spend anywhere from \$150 to \$400 for the evening. How about skipping a movie during the month, and setting that \$150 aside for September Seminary Month?

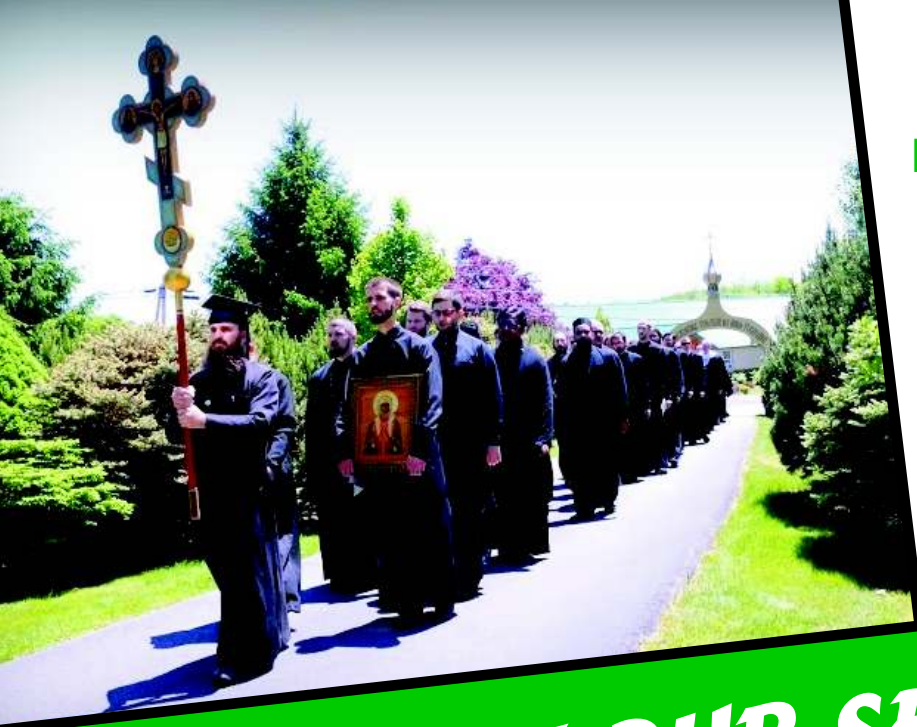
Your generous support for this will be greatly appreciated by me, but most importantly by the students you would be helping. Thanks for taking time to prayerfully consider the stewardship you can provide here. Please pray for those who seek to serve the Church and discern their vocation through study at our two seminaries in Pennsylvania and New York.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you.

Your servant in Christ,

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 three quarters of a century, our seminaries have devoted themselves to imparting **information** about our faith and to 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 2015** has been designated “**Support Our Seminarians Month**” in the Diocese of the Midwest, culminating in “**SOS Sunday**” on **September 27**. Please be generous as we join together to help lighten our seminarians’ financial burdens.

■ **All funds will be given directly to our seminarians!**



**SEPTEMBER 27
IS SOS SUNDAY!**

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

MEET YOUR SEMINARIANS / Diocese of the Midwest



Mark Chenoweth, Holy Assumption, Canton, OH—Mark was born into a Protestant family, and first encountered Orthodoxy through a college professor. Upon graduating, and during an internship in Washington DC, his Catholic roommate showed him the riches of the Church Fathers. After navigating through the differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, he began attending an Orthodox parish in Virginia. He returned to school to study theology after immersing himself in Orthodoxy for a few years, finally being Chrismated in 2012. Mark hopes, by God's grace, to bring everything he encounters at St Vladimir's back into parish life and into academic life and to strengthen the church in any way he can.

Basil Ferguson, Holy Transfiguration, Livonia, MI—Basil attended an evangelical liberal arts college where he met his wife, Marina, a foreign student from St. Petersburg, Russia. They were married, and Basil began attending an evangelical seminary in Chicago. Basil briefly served as an associate pastor at an evangelical church. Questions about evangelicalism and the historical Church that emerged in college, however, had expanded and intensified. Eventually, Basil resigned from the evangelical church so that he and Marina could become catechumens; they were eventually received into the Church. Spurred by a seminarian's visit to their parish, Basil and Marina received a blessing to attend seminary.



Megan Haak, Christ the Savior Church, Chicago, IL—Megan attended Wheaton College, a non-denominational Protestant liberal arts college, where she majored in Christian Formation and Ministry. There she encountered Orthodoxy through a friend, and was increasingly drawn to the Church. After graduating, Megan moved to Chicago and found Christ the Savior Orthodox Church, where she was Chrismated. Megan's desire has always been to devote all of her time to ministry. With the guidance of her priest, she finally decided to pursue that call by applying to St. Tikhon's Seminary. She hopes to become more fully grounded in Orthodoxy, better equipped to facilitate the growth of the Church, and more strongly fortified to reach those outside the Church with Christ's love.

John Kennerk, Christ the Savior Church, Chicago, IL—John attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he met his wife Michelle. He continued his studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He worked in the auction industry as a fine art specialist, and Michelle worked for a textile design company. During the Baptism of their daughter, Inez, John and Michelle were received into the church. They are overjoyed to be at St. Tikhon's, where their son Anthony George was baptized in 2014.



William Rettig, Holy Trinity Church, Saint Paul, MN—William studied theology and philosophy at Bethel University, where he became aware of Orthodoxy through the study of church history, reading of the church fathers, and a trip to Turkey and Greece. William began attending Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in St. Paul along with Jillian, whom he met in a college tutoring program, ultimately being received into the church, and marrying. William worked as a retail buyer before realizing the need to do something different with his life. After discussions with trusted mentors, including his priest, Fr. Jonathan Proctor, he pursued a blessing to attend St. Vladimir's Seminary.

Jonathan Lincoln, Holy Assumption Church, Canton, OH—Jonathan graduated from Malone University, where he began to reexamine his faith more closely. He embarked on a spiritual journey which led him to study in Israel and England. After a friend's invitation to visit an Orthodox church, he quickly fell in love with the rich theology, deep reverence in the services, and liturgical singing. Jonathan was Chrismated, worked for three years, continued to read about Orthodoxy, and visited St. Gregory Palamas Monastery whenever possible. He desired a future of helping others along their spiritual paths. Jonathan looks forward to possibly becoming a teacher or chaplain.



Christopher Stoops, Holy Apostles Church, Normal, IL—Chris graduated with a BA in Journalism from Eastern Illinois University, and began attending Orthodox services in 2002 at Holy Apostles Parish in Normal, IL. Two years later, he was received into the Orthodox Church. After moving with his wife to Champaign, IL, they began attending services at the Three Hierarchs Church, where Chris served in the altar. In 2014, they went to St. Vladimir's, being drawn to its pan-orthodox nature, as well as field education opportunities leading to institutional chaplaincy. This summer Chris will complete a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at NYU Langone Medical Center in Manhattan.