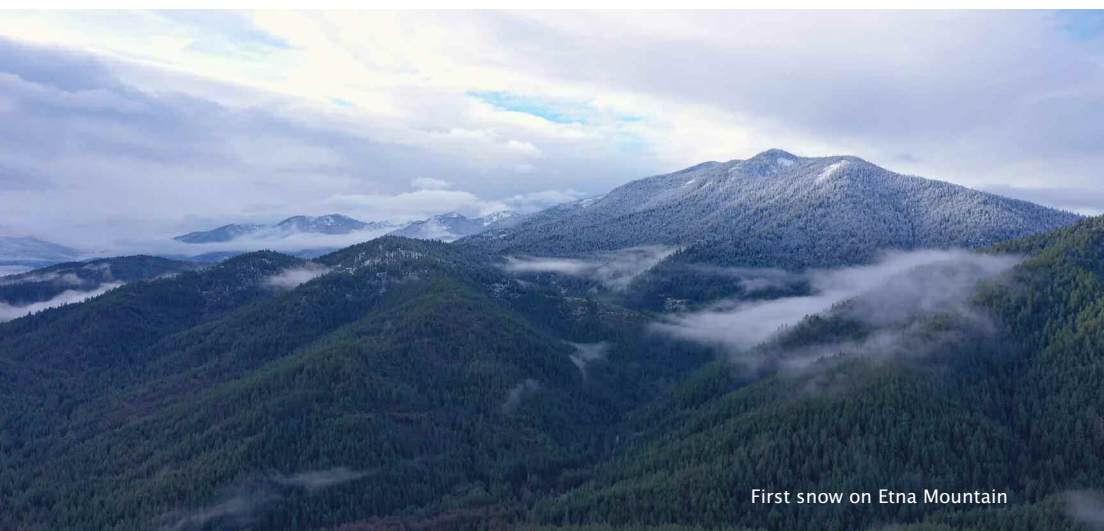


"I AM THE VINE,...

...YE ARE THE BRANCHES"

THE GRAPEVINE

Vignettes of Seminary Life



First snow on Etna Mountain

First Masters Students to Graduate: Two will Advance to Doctoral Studies.

His Eminence, the Most Reverend Dr. Auxentios, Rector of the St. Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary, at the request and with the approval of the seminary's Standing Faculty Committee, has announced that Archimandrite Gregory, Schemamonk Chrysostomos, and Schemanun Seraphima will officially receive the degree of Master of Theological Studies in January 2019, at the commencement of the school's Pascha Term. Father Gregory is a graduate (with highest honors) of Long Beach City College and received both his Diploma and Licentiate in Orthodox Theological Studies from the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies. Father Chrysostomos also received both the Diploma and Licentiate in

Orthodox Theological Studies from the CTOS. Mother Seraphima is a graduate of Barnard College, Columbia University, and a nun at the Convent of St. Elizabeth in Etna.

Both Fathers Gregory and Chrysostomos, brothers of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, were also recently accepted for doctoral studies at the San Francisco Theological Seminary, a member school of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. They will begin work on their Doctor of Ministry programs in January 2019, with an anticipated completion date of late 2021.

We heartily congratulate our fellow students on their accomplishments and wish the two Fathers every success for their continuing studies!

The Editors



Icon of St. Cæsarius

The Fourth Cappadocian. *This is a continuation of a series on St. Cæsarius of Nazianzos, a serialization of a presentation that I made during the Patristics course of the M.T.S. program.*

Most of what we know about the life of St. Cæsarius comes from his brother, St. Gregory the Theologian, who delivered an oration at his funeral and also composed several epitaphs (funerary poems) in his memory.

Born in Nazianzos, a town of Cappadocia (now Bekarlar in Turkey), in 331 or 332, he was educated in his early years at home. As a young man, he studied in Alexandria, gaining proficiency in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine.

After a time, he went to Byzantium (Constantinople) and was appointed court physician by Emperor Constantius. His brother, St. Gregory, had arrived in Byzantium at the same time (having been studying in Greece), and persuaded

him to leave his post and return home. It was not long, though, before he went back to the court of Constantinople. He remained a man of integrity and virtue. He would treat patients free of charge, had little use for arrogance and intrigue, and wished to be known, above all, as a Christian.

Some time after Emperor Julian the Apostate (who renounced Christianity and became an idolater) ascended the throne, he attempted to persuade Cæsarius to deny his faith, since Cæsarius's virtuous Christian way of life served as an example to many. Thus, Julian prevailed upon him to engage in theological debate, but was worsted. St. Cæsarius would have been put on trial, but Julian was preparing for his Persian campaign, in the course of which the emperor met his death.

Later, St. Cæsarius was appointed to be the emperor's treasurer in Nicæa in Bithynia. He died during the plague following an earthquake in Nicæa, in 368 or 369.

Next time, I will present some of the epitaphs composed by his brother, St. Gregory.

Father Chrysostomos, M.T.S. Student

Experience and Tripartite Man. Again and again in recent classes we have dwelt on the fact that the nature of Orthodoxy is not a religion, but the medicine for a fallen soul, and that this medicine is not scholastic, or purely intellectual but, rather, experiential. We cannot know God until we experience Him.

In this way, the Saint Photios Seminary functions not only as a sterling example of an institute for higher education, but also an edifying illustration



Library orientation session

of attendance to the tripartite nature of the human being.

There is no mistaking the fact that our *minds* are challenged and encouraged to elevation daily. The courses are as rigorous as they are rewarding. But despite the intense focus on such learning, due attention is given to the entirety of the formation of students as well.

In such an environment as we enjoy in Etna, with the mountains sloping away in all directions, inactivity is almost a criminal offense against such an opportunity to enjoy the scenery and exercise of a long hike. In such a way as this, tramping along the Pacific Crest Trail, soaking in the breathtaking views and atmosphere, the *body's* most wholesome desires are seen to.

To crown it all, what would seminary life be without regular services? With the Monastery within a mile of our quarters—comfortable walking dis-

tance—we are provided with the cycle of services, and the Eucharist, regularly, which is indispensable for the complete experience of such a course of study and satisfies, strengthens and emboldens the *heart* and *voûç*.

Timothy Granger, B.Th. Student

Practical Knowledge. It has been said that knowledge bereft of practical application lacks any substance and does not differ from fantasy. It is a kind of dream; it fills the mind the way refuse fills the landfill. The ultimate end towards which learning is usually directed in the present times, according to my experience in public schools and community college, is the acquisition of wealth or the fulfillment of some other personal ambition—if, indeed, there is understood to be any purpose at all beyond custom and compulsion. However, the objects of these

kinds of goals are themselves dreams and fantasies, for they are just as ephemeral. This sort of practical application does not really lend any particular substance to knowledge.

This is not the prevailing situation at the Seminary. The tendency here is not towards memorization, recitation, and commendation, which is the system oft used in public schools, reflecting the substantial emptiness of the knowledge acquired therein. Rather, there is discussion, reflection, and understanding. All knowledge becomes practical within this framework, not in the sense that many would mean by “practical,” that it can aid the accomplishment of some physical task or serve to draw some desired object to oneself, but rather that all that we learn, if properly understood and applied, leads us to self-knowledge, which is the first step towards true knowledge of the things

that are beyond ourselves, of that which is truly lasting.

For example, we opened our Old Testament 101 course with the study of one of the conferences of St. John Cassian. In it he inquires of one of the Desert Fathers how one ought to read and understand the Scriptures. He does not respond by immediately expounding all the various methods of interpretation but rather first explains what the aim of anyone approaching the Scriptures should be. It is not to become an “expert,” storing up information in the memory, like a filing cabinet, for vain display and reckoning oneself highly exalted above the ignorant, or to seek out all kinds of metaphysical mysteries and divine secrets. The first aim is practical knowledge which is defined as the experiential understanding of the vices within oneself and how they may be uprooted and eradicated. Following



An autumn morning at the
St. Gregory Palamas Monastery

this, is the discernment of the sequence of the virtues and the struggle to become internally obedient to them. The Scriptures should, first and foremost, be an aid in gaining this kind of knowledge, and surely we can apply this teaching to many areas of study.

What is most important is that all of this learning takes place within the context of life in the Church, for it is this which teaches us how to apply our knowledge. It is this which provides the proper context for and is the real source of self-understanding, without which it would be difficult to derive actual benefit from the various subjects we are taught. The Church provides unity to our knowledge. In public schools, there never seemed to be a connection between one class and the next or between the school and the world outside of it. All was fragmentary and meaningless—like a series of television commercials. However, with education as an integrated part of life in the Church, the connections are revealed, the meaning is illuminated, and—not just this—the Church is the very source of this meaning and interconnectedness. Thus fantasy begins to cease and something substantial starts to take its place.

Brother Gregory, B.Th. Student

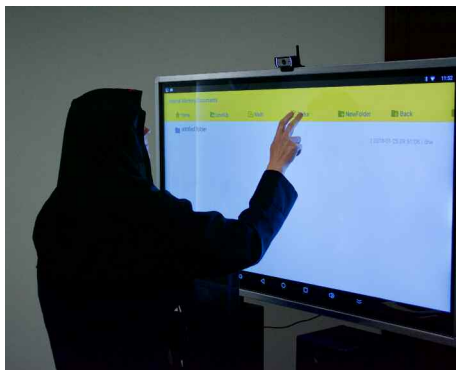
Literate Literature. This semester in the third-year class we have a new subject, Western Literature, which has been very enjoyable as well as thought-provoking. While some of the works we have read and discussed were already familiar to me, many were not, which served to introduce ideas, descriptions, history, and styles of composition which were quite new to me. In George Orwell's dark depiction of a world engulfed

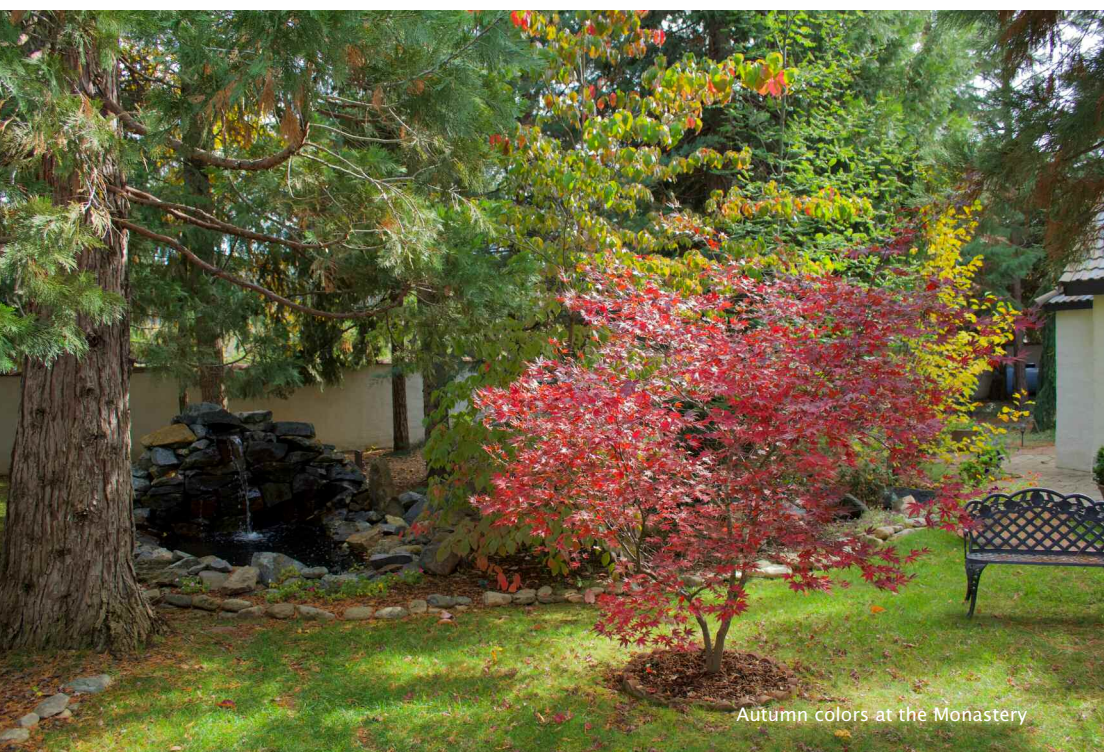


in communist totalitarianism, 1984, his explanation of the forcible limitation of language as a means of removing the capacity for free thought brought a jarring perspective to our own age of LOL and BFF.

In Emily Dickinson, I discovered a masterful literary composer of everything from playful tripping melodies conjuring up the charms of nature, to the achingly beautiful song of a soul's search for God, to the sonorous chiming of a funeral dirge for those loved and lost. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, we travelled to nineteenth-century New Mexico, following the winding and unimaginably difficult path of a missionary bishop in a land of vast wilderness, social conflict, abuses of power, and inspiring simple piety. Willa Cather's lyrical style was as striking and hauntingly, starkly beautiful as the desert landscape in which the story is set. These are experiences I will not soon forget and authors I hope to return to in future.

Mother Eupraxia, B.Th. Student





Autumn colors at the Monastery

Computing Consciousness. During this Nativity Term the first-year students have had the opportunity to study a diverse selection of courses. Some of these courses have a practical application yet still teach the spiritual life. Even in the more practical subjects incredible theological insight can be gained. One such insight came from learning about man’s drive to achieve artificial intelligence (AI).

During a lecture in information technology (IT), we learned that some experts predict that computers will be able to achieve, and eventually exceed, all the tasks once believed to be unique to humans. In time these computers will gain an organic intelligence. Computer science has progressed in leaps and bounds performing tasks once believed achievable only by humans. Today we have computers that are able to beat grandmaster chess players. There

are computers that can read handwriting. We even have developed computers that can teach themselves how to do tasks that are not pre-programmed!

However, the prediction that full AI is achievable is flawed. It assumes two major truths. First, it assumes that the human brain is merely a device engaged in information processing and that through this processing man becomes aware. Second, it assumes that humans are merely biological machines without a soul. This is a dangerous assumption that, when approached with a secular mindset, makes the advent of sentient AI seem inevitable.

But modern science does not fully understand the driving force behind the origin of thought. Orthodox understanding teaches that the soul is the seat of consciousness. The existence of the soul and spirit is vital in the construction of man’s awareness. The

absence of such an integral component of consciousness means that a computer cannot achieve consciousness, no matter how sophisticated its computing or learning abilities. The fact that the soul is an integral part of humanity is the hidden ceiling that will ultimately negate the production of a complete, general artificial intelligence.

Uriah Lantzer, B.Th. Student

Orthodox Immersion. Before I came to the Seminary, I knew there was a lot about the Orthodox faith that I did not know, but now I realize that I only know a tiny fraction of what is out there.

Staying at the Convent of St. Elizabeth while attending school is a blessing. Not only am I learning about Orthodoxy from a theological perspective, but also how to live a more pious life. The environment is very different from anything that I have ever experienced. To have so many questions answered and spiritual matters explained to me by knowledgeable monastics is a privilege. I feel that my spiritual knowledge is growing more and more every day. I have been learning so many new things—for example, the different books used in the Church services, the order of the services, and what and when things are read and sung. These are all things which are helpful to know should I be a choir member or even a director in the future. I am also learning other practical things such as prayer rope making.

At the Seminary we are being taught more theological topics, such as how some of the early Church Fathers were able to spread Christianity to pagans by finding a way to put

Christianity into Greek philosophical language and presenting it in a way that was easier for them to understand.

Since we are studying New Testament Greek, the History of Philosophy, and Patristics, everything is related in such a way that it eventually merges into one big subject. The teachers do their best to present the materials in such a way as to make them understandable to beginners.

Being able to study in a place where Orthodoxy is the sole focus is extremely helpful and beneficial, and I love it!

Kira Rapp, B.Th. Student



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Under the sacred patronage of its namesake, please help us impart light, for “without schools, we walk in darkness.”

(Saint Kosmas of Aetolia)



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