

"I AM THE VINE,..."

...YE ARE THE BRANCHES"

THE GRAPEVINE

Vignettes of Seminary Life



His Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos
1943–2019

The Passing of Our Father-in-Christ.

It is with profound sorrow that we must announce the decease of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Dr. Chrysostomos of Etna, who, after a long bout with heart disease, reposed in the Lord on February 3/16, 2019. He was seventy-five years of age. Although His Eminence held the simple title of "Professor" at the Seminary, he was, nevertheless, the principal founding father of the school, which was, in many ways, the culmination of his life's work as an academic. He lavished his extensive experience as a scholar, as an educator, and as an administrator on the establishment

of the Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary, every detail of which he oversaw with diligent care.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos (in the world, A.E.J. González de Iturriaga Alexopoulos) came from a family of cultured aristocrats, learned academics, and accomplished professionals. A natural polyhistor, His Eminence learned Greek, English, German, French, and Catalan in his childhood, and he successively or concurrently earned five degrees in his early adulthood: a B.A. in History from the University of California, Riverside, in 1967; a B.A. in Psychology from the California State University, San Ber-



Metropolitan Chrysostomos delivering what would be his final public lecture, in the Seminary auditorium, on October 19/November 1, 2018

nardino, and an M.A. in Byzantine History from the University of California, Davis, in 1971; an M.A. in Psychology from Princeton University in 1974; and a Ph.D. in Psychology from Princeton University in 1975. From 1972 to 1975, he was a Preceptor in the Department of Psychology at Princeton University (it was in 1972 that I first met His Eminence, being enrolled in one of his preceptorials), and in 1975, he was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Riverside.

But in order to put his academic achievements at the disposal of the Orthodox Church, His Eminence sacrificed his personal career by becoming a monk in 1975, the year that he and I together founded the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery. His Eminence's life

of service as a clergyman began with his Ordination first to the Diaconate and then to the Priesthood in 1976. He was Consecrated to the Hierarchy in 1986, enthroned as Bishop of Etna in 1989, and elevated to the rank of Archbishop in 1995. His elevation to the rank of Metropolitan in 2014 would be followed a few months later that same year by his retirement from active Episcopal duties.

In all of his years as a Churchman, Metropolitan Chrysostomos remained involved in academia in one way or another. In 1979, His Eminence was appointed a Visiting Lecturer in Eastern Christian Thought at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio, and from 1980 to 1981, he was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Ashland University, also in Ohio. While at Ashland University, he was awarded, in 1981, a Chairman's Research Grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities. That same year, His Eminence and I established the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, the predecessor institution of the Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary. From 1981 to 1983, Metropolitan Chrysostomos was an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Ashland University, and in 1983, he earned the Licentiate in Theology from the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies. Also in 1983, he was a Visiting Scholar at the Divinity School of Harvard University. In 1985, His Eminence was appointed a Marsden Foundation Research Fellow and Visiting Scholar at Pembroke College, Oxford University, and in 1986, he became a Marsden Foundation Research Fellow at the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, which institution he would consecutively serve as Academic Director from that year to 1998, as Research Associate from 1998 to 2001, and as Senior Research

Scholar from 2001 until his repose. In 1987, Metropolitan Chrysostomos was appointed a Visiting Lecturer in Patristics and the Psychology of Religion at the Theological Institute of Uppsala University in Sweden.

A new phase began in his academic activities when he became a Senior Fulbright Scholar in Romania, from 2000 to 2001. During this period, he was a Fulbright Lecturer in Byzantine History and Byzantine Theological Thought in the Faculty of History at the University of Bucharest, in 2000; a Fulbright Lecturer and Visiting Professor of Byzantine History in the Faculty of History, Business Ethics, and Consumer Behavior and the Faculty of Economics and

Business Administration at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași, in 2001; and a Fulbright Lecturer and Visiting Professor in the Theology of Orthodox Ecclesiastical Art and Architecture at the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest, in 2001. Also in that year, he was the Facilitator of the Senior Staff Retreat for the United States Embassy in Bucharest, as well as a Consultant and Grantee for the Project on Media Ethics of the Office of International Information Programs of the United States Department of State. These activities were followed by his appointment as Executive Director of the United States Fulbright Commission in Bucharest, which position he held from 2002 to 2003. It was also during this period that he was a Guest Lecturer at the American Studies Center of the University of Bucharest. He was an Adjunct Professor in the Graduate Program in Church Architecture of the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism from 2002 to 2005.

In 2004, His Eminence was a Visiting Scholar in the Program in Comparative Religion at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, and in 2005, he was a Visiting Scholar at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. In the following year, Metropolitan Chrysostomos was appointed the David B. Larson Fellow in Health and Spirituality at the John W. Kluge Center of the United States Library of Congress. Finally, he became Professor of Statistics, Pastoral Psychology, and Patristics at the Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary in 2016, holding this position until his demise. His literary output over a period of more than half a century included the publication of some three dozen books and Patristic translations, and more than sixty schol-

Seminary Achieves Candidate Status

In September of 2018, a team of scholars representing the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) visited and evaluated the Seminary. All members of the visiting team were impressed with the progress that the school has made thus far. The team subsequently submitted a report to the accreditation commission. On February 6/19, the feast day of the Seminary's patron Saint, the accreditation commission met with a representative of the Seminary, who had travelled to the ABHE headquarters in Florida for this purpose. The commission unanimously approved the advancement of the Seminary to candidate status, also known as pre-accreditation. (Schools with candidate status are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.) Three of the five major steps in the accreditation process are now completed:

- ✓ 2016 — Applicant status
- ✓ 2018 — Evaluation team visit
- ✓ 2019 — Candidate status
- 2020 — Evaluation team visit
- 2021 — Full accreditation

Father Chrysostomos, Treasurer

arly articles, which appeared in various theological, historical, and psychological journals.

By Divine Providence, the funeral of Metropolitan Chrysostomos, who was buried as a simple monk at the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery, fell on February 6/19, the Feast Day of the Patron Saint of the Seminary. This was especially appropriate, since it was His Eminence who had urged us to name the Seminary after Saint Photios the Great, the outstanding ninth-century Patriarch of Constantinople whose intellectual accomplishments and ecclesiastical leadership His Eminence so admired and himself emulated. Like Saint Photios, Metropolitan Chrysostomos was a voracious reader—from the age of twelve, when he began his heretofore private personal tally, until his death, His Eminence read over 4,900 books, an astonishing lifetime average of about seventy-seven books a year. Also like Saint Photios, who is famously credited with having invented the book review, Metropolitan Chrysostomos penned scores of book reviews, most of which were published in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, *The Patristic and Byzantine Review*, and *Orthodox Tradition*. His personal book collection formed the nucleus of what would become the library of the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, which is housed at the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery and which the faculty and students of the Seminary may access. This library was eventually named the “Metropolitan Cyprian Theological Library” in honor of Metropolitan Chrysostomos’s spiritual Father, Metropolitan Cyprian I of Oropos and Phyle (1935–2013) of blessed memory.

With all of this in mind, the Board of Directors of the Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary has unanimously approved my proposal that we

honor the memory of Metropolitan Chrysostomos in the same manner by naming the Seminary library the “Metropolitan Chrysostomos Theological Library.” The newly-christened Metropolitan Chrysostomos Theological Library owes a debt of gratitude to all of those among you, our supporters and benefactors, who contributed funds and materials to it, and the bulk of this debt it owes to the family of our co-founder, Michael Gombos, Sr. (1927–2018), and, in particular, his eldest son and namesake, Michael Gombos, Jr., whose enthusiasm for and generosity toward the development of the library has made possible its most significant acquisitions to date.

We will sorely miss the erudition and the wisdom, the solicitude and the discipline, the charisma and the humor of Metropolitan Chrysostomos. He was the best of spiritual Fathers to us; may God grant that we, his unworthy spiritual children, faithfully preserve the inestimable legacy he has bequeathed to us. Eternal be his memory!

Bishop Auxentios, Rector

Retrofuturism. Of the many concepts Dr. Augustin Ioan taught us last year, I have retained one in particular: “retrofuturism.” This idea, in its most basic sense, involves the creative use of architectural forms that are so ancient as to seem new in a modern context. It is, he said, like taking something from the bottom of the sea and going back up to show the birds. However, beyond this, the point is not merely to imitate an historical style, but to create something which is archaic, original, and essential. Archaic does not mean far away in the past, but archetypal, first in principle, qualitatively primary. Original does not mean new and innovative, but directly related to the origin. Essential does not just mean necessary, but containing

essences, irreducible features without which the object would cease to exist.

A retrofuturist architect draws up his plans based not on the example of a particular building or style, but on archetypal and essential forms and concepts which are, and from ancient times were, expressed architecturally. Thus, retrofuturism is more than a method of design; it also entails a symbolic mode of understanding architecture in general. For instance, we might consider the tower. It has to do with connecting earth and heaven, an archetypal theme in the life of man, as seen in the pillars erected by the Old Testament Patriarchs or the Tower of Babel.

I have found the concept of retrofuturism especially memorable because I see in it a similarity to our work at the Seminary (and Monastery). Our studies and participation in the monastic life keep us in constant contact with much that is ancient: the Orthodox iconography, the melodies of Byzantine liturgical chant, the language and imagery of Scripture, the works of the Holy Fathers, the Divine Services of the Church, even our manner of dress. But, as in retrofuturism, the antiquity of these is not our main concern. Dr. Ioan emphasized that the archaic is really outside or beyond the issue of time. The archaic is found not necessarily way back on the timeline, but up on the vertical, qualitative axis (eastward, as Dr. Ioan would say), above time. The aforementioned elements of our lives and studies here have this archaic, timeless character, ancient but always new. The impressions we receive from them help to direct our mental gaze “eastward,” up to the original principles which inspired them. Hopefully, through our studies we will come to a fuller understanding of these principles, that we may ourselves draw up our own designs, so to speak, based on them.

Brother Gregory, B.Th. Student



Winter scene from a Seminary window

A Tool for Prayer. I have been learning how to make prayer ropes and have found that I really enjoy it—it is calming. Wanting to know more about them, I learned that the earliest monastics kept track of their prayer rule by using either pebbles or seeds to count their prayers. Saint Anthony the Great tried to do the same thing by tying knots in a rope, but the Devil would frustrate his efforts by untying the knots. An Angel then appeared to Saint Anthony and showed him how to tie special knots that had nine Crosses in them, representing the nine orders of Angels. The demons tried to pull these knots apart and failed. Thus, the prayer rope came to be.

We still use prayer ropes and their formulaic prayers today. Traditionally, prayer ropes are made of black yarn and red beads—the red represents the Blood of Christ—but they can be made with yarn and beads of different colors, too. The traditional prayers include the Jesus Prayer (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”), the prayer to the Theotokos (“Most Holy Theotokos, save me, a sinner”), to one’s Guardian Angel (“Holy Angel of God, my Guardian, pray to God for me, a sinner”), and to the Saints (“All Saints, pray

to God for me, a sinner”). Saint Anthony made it easy for us to keep track of our prayers anywhere, making prayer ropes very popular.

Kira Rapp, B.Th. Student

Spiritual Treasure. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

These verses from St. Matthew’s account of the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount remind us that those who constantly work towards bettering themselves will have their efforts rewarded in time. Any competent school adheres to this idea in at least one way: a policy of open inquiry. Everyone who asks should receive an answer, and everyone who seeks knowledge should be rewarded in time with its acquisition. Doors otherwise remaining locked are opened at a knock to students with a desire to learn, as they unconsciously act in accordance with the words in St. Matthew’s Gospel.

In most schools, however, this inquiry is simply a search for knowledge for knowledge’s sake. But the lack of a guiding principle to direct this search for knowledge leads to disorganized, sadly confused students. The most precise goal set by conventional schools is “preparing students for a future career,” which is so *imprecise* that it could mean virtually anything. This open-ended approach to education, while it can yield good results and presents a great deal of freedom to students, lacks a coherent motivating principle.

Here at the Seminary, the goal of this quest for self-betterment is best described by a verse appearing further on in the Sermon on the Mount: “But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Above and before all else, the goal is a spiritual formation. While the program is a rigorous one, the goal is not to ingest oceans of knowledge and then find a nice job, but instead to use this in the upward climb towards a greater life in Christ. This not only creates cohesion in our courses, but it sets our view of education right-side-up. We understand that if we leave this place after three years with a huge storehouse of knowledge, but have failed to grow in our faith, then we have failed utterly. This is not a conventional university that happens to be Orthodox; it is a school *of* Orthodoxy intended to form Orthodox Christians and to transform their vision and understanding, so that they can see the world in terms of their faith. This is the aim in all of our studies, whether they be in philosophy, history, statistics, Greek, or any other subject.

The Lord warns Christians against “laying up treasures upon earth.” Filling one’s mind with useful facts and clever ideas for no reason other than “knowledge is power,” as the old adage has it, can quickly become this treasure-hoarding on earth. In our search for transformed vision, the intent is to lay up treasure in heaven as Christ also instructs us: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Timothy Granger, B.Th. Student

Order Within, Order Without. Among his many soul-profting instructions to his disciples, Saint Dorotheos of Gaza (*ca.* 506–570) teaches, “[O]ne must act ‘according to conscience’ with regard to God, his neighbor, and all things.” That we must act according to our conscience with regard to God and our neighbor everyone knows well—this is, after all, the essence of Christ’s dual commandment of love—, but that we

must also act according to our conscience with regard to *things* is a less well-known spiritual principle. Saint Dorotheos explains what he means by this spiritual principle: “For one to ‘act according to conscience’ with regard to material things means that one does not misuse any object, or permit something to be destroyed or tossed aside. Even when one sees something lying around, let him not be oblivious to it, however insignificant it may be, but pick it up and put it in its place.” He goes on to give several practical examples of this principle in action, the gist of which the newly-reposed Metropolitan Chrysostomos sums up in his observation that, “[A] fundamental teaching of the desert Fathers, those great exemplars of the spiritual life, is that orderliness in external things reflects an inner orderliness of soul that prevails when one follows divine laws and precepts and the natural laws contained in the conscience.” In other words, mindfulness of one’s own internal, spiritual state cannot but express itself as a mindfulness of one’s external, physical surroundings—a process that works both ways: when one compels oneself to attend to prosaic and seemingly insignificant matters in one’s immediate environment, it has a salutary effect on the development of one’s own inner universe. Thus, Saint Dorotheos urges, “Let us therefore be careful, brothers, to guard our conscience, as long as we are still in this world, without giving it cause to censure us for anything, trampling upon it in absolutely nothing, even the slightest thing. For heed well that from sneering at those things small and by nature lowly, as they say, we end up sneering at greater things. [...] Thereupon, one acquires an evil and perverted disposition. He then begins to ignore the greater and weightier things and tramples upon his conscience. And so proceeding, he slowly risks falling

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to complete insensitivity (of conscience). Hence take care, my brothers, that we are not lax in small things. Take care not to ignore them as though they were trivial. They are not small; the soul is fed by them and they spawn bad habits.” Developing good habits, by contrast, is fundamental to the acquisition of an Orthodox ethos, an ethos which embraces such virtues as cleanliness, tidiness, frugality, temperance, solicitude, and conscientiousness. These are some of the important qualities we seek to inculcate in the students of Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary.

Father Gregory, Registrar

Support the Seminary

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