Message from Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, on the beginning of the school year at Holy Trinity Seminary

I greet you from all my heart on the first day of the new academic year of 2018-19 at Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary! In particular I send my cordial words of greeting to the incoming students, and especially to those who have entered into the newly inaugurated Master’s program at the Seminary. Today marks the beginning of a new period in your life and in your spiritual growth. Today, the good and all-perfect will of God is worked among you, directing you to bear of the yoke of Christ through service to the world and to man.

A person who enters to the path of theological education must clearly realize that a serious task of work within himself lies before him. A person who received the holy orders is the one who is called to lead people to Christ. What, however, can he offer people, if he himself does not strive for personal perfection? Therefore, regular participation in the liturgy, humble fulfillment of obediences and the observance of discipline, the reading of patristic and other edifying writings, as well as fervent labor of prayer together with the observance of fasts and of other regulations of the Church – these all are most important components of the path of spiritual education, and none of these element must be neglected.

It needs not to be said that our Russian Church Abroad which fulfills her ministry in very difficult modern conditions, is today in need of the influx of young and vibrant forces. It needs these same young men who today have begun their studies at the Seminary and in its graduate program, but who in the near future will have to take upon themselves the yoke of archpastoral and pastoral service in the parishes of the Russian dioceses abroad. They will have to undertake the path of monastic life in our monasteries, and will have to continue our traditions of theology. Therefore, looking upon you with my mind’s eye, I am heartened about our future, and I give thanks to God who has chosen you for this exalted service to His holy Church.

I send my prayerful wishes to all faculty, administration, and students of the Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary, and especially to the students of the Seminary’s new graduate program. May the grace of God may firmly strengthen you in your hard labours in the field of theological education. May you also be strengthened by the fervent intercessions of the Most Blessed Mother of God, the prayers of the Three Hierarchs and Ecumenical teachers, of Venerable Job of Pochaev, of the new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church (among whom there were many graduates of theological schools), as well as the prayers of the departed “everyday saints” among the brotherhood buried in this place. May their prayers and entreaties confirm all of you in the important and difficult ministry of the Church that lies ahead of you.

***+HILARION*** *Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York  
First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad*