

## “Facing the Spirits of Our Age with Both Mind and Heart”

### PRELUDE:

Christ is Risen! Христос воскрес!

Your Eminence, Your Grace, Rev. Fathers, Matushki, Faculty, Graduates, families of graduates, continuing students, dear friends:

“O give thanks to the Lord for he is good! For His mercy endureth forever!” (Ps 136 [137]), as the Psalmist says.

Asked to give this talk, I was profoundly honored and I join with the graduates in offering thanks to God today and to all of you, Your Grace, Dean Nicolas, all the administration, trustees, staff, benefactors, and monastics of this seminary and monastery.

Commencement addresses customarily feature amusing quips near the beginning. Although I very much appreciate humor, I did not think in this instance I should follow form. But just in case I was mistaken... *You know you're at an Orthodox seminary commencement when it suddenly occurs to you that you're probably not the only one in the room whose first instinct when seeing a shopping-mall Santa Claus is to hold out your hands to get his blessing.*”

As to other traditional components of the address, the dispensing of pithy advice looms large. Mulling over today's talk, I thought back to my own college graduation to see if anything said that day remained with me. There is one thing—probably the *only* thing-- I remember clearly now 30 years later, something worth repeating: The university president invited us to look around at our classmates and consider that we would likely not see many of these people ever again (even some with whom we had become friends). But he told us “You will become anecdotes in each other's lives.” There is something to that. God willing, in this case you will see all of your fellow students over the coming years. But either way, indeed, you *will* become anecdotes in each other's lives. You'll probably smile to yourself the first time it happens.

A final *pro forma* part of the commencement speech is when the speaker says to the graduates: “Go change the world, follow your dreams!” -- or, as one graduation greeting card I saw the other day said, “You are limitless.” Here I will definitely break with form. I think a much better message is the reverse:

*Don't* go change the world. Change yourself, meaning work with the Holy Spirit to become what you were created to be. Leave the world's transfiguration to the Lord, the giver of life—but cooperate with Him in it. On this, you will recall St. Seraphim of Sarov's famous epithet: "Acquire the Spirit of Peace—the Holy Spirit— and thousands around you will be saved."

### Body I.

I would like to address today's graduates with a two-part reflection about becoming bearers of the living water that many are seeking, but often at dry wells. One key in this is discerning what the cups out there look like and what is on the tables being poured into them. In other words, the talk's first part is comprised of some thoughts about the culture into which you'll be taking the wonderful spiritual and intellectual formation you've begun at this seminary. In the second part of the time allotted to me, I will shift to the question of how you as seminary graduates might best meet and address what we discuss in the first half— and that is, with *a combination of spiritual and intellectual discernment... and ever-living hope*. For that second part, while *I* cannot presume to guide you, the saints can.

You may be thinking, "what will come to me in my life after graduation?" They — the saints— will; every single calendar day. Turn to them. Later on here, *we'll* briefly turn to, and hear from, three of them—two "coming to you" as commemorated by the church *right* after graduation --this very week-- and the third in a little over a month [O.S.]. We will turn to them to see what they say about growing what you've learned at this seminary, i.e. tempering intellectual activity— your mind/mental faculties— with the *askesis* of prayer— so that your intellect may be bright and bear fruit that is blessed.

I am aware that under the tutelage of His Grace, Bishop Luke and Dean Nicolas with this fine faculty, [in tandem with deep cultivation of the beauty of sacred arts, learning how to live the liturgy, and everything else you do here]— a concerted effort has been unfolding at this seminary over a number of years to make sure students' philosophical and critical thinking skills are sharpened. I know there is an important emphasis on learning history, too. As a historian, this one *really* warms my heart. Beyond the simple benefit of encountering these things, one effect of all this is that it helped you better understand important context and nuances of other subjects you came across. Thus, you have understood those subjects better— for example, recognizing philosophical and historical references in Patristic writings. But another effect will, I suspect, become clearer once you leave here. This training has given you skills to better discern— and seek to understand-- the underpinnings of ideas and beliefs that people you encounter in future ministry are increasingly likely to bring to that encounter. And perceiving this is crucial-- whether that ministry involves ordination or lay service to the Church. So, let us talk for a little while about these ideas and beliefs.

Prior to a recent semester, I found myself planning the readings for a new upper-division undergraduate history course at my university, a course on religion in American culture. I was reading over some recent books written by people with scholarly training in order to find something I might assign for the portion of the course covering the very recent past. One of them I read was titled *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* by Tara Burton. As I got deeper into the book, it struck me that its subtitle – instead of “New Religions for a Godless World”— could just as easily have been “New gods for a religious world” based on what the book showed because, contrary to all of the claims we have been handed about the secularization of the culture, in an important sense, this is not at all the reality that we have. Yes, there has obviously been much abandonment of the one true God, and much secularization *of* and *within* what are often called the “traditional religions.” But the culture itself, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, seems more and more religious in its very fabric. The caveat is that the ‘religious’ in this case amounts to encouragements to *de facto* worship what can be called a conglomeration of false gods—or, more precisely, false spirits treated *as* gods—through practices and habits and encouragements that profoundly oppose the Gospel, whether these oppositional practices are classified “occultist,” “New Age,” “neo-pagan,” or any number of other related terms. These things are not just present; they’re rather ubiquitous.

Keep in mind, though, as we talk about this [rather unedifying picture] over the next few minutes- that this picture paradoxically presents a huge *opportunity*- because it reflects a widespread search for spiritual meaning that goes beyond the boring, sterile, atheist scientism so popular even a decade ago as peddled by the Richard Dawkinses of the world [i.e. ‘The God Delusion book’s author]. Remember, too, in listening that people often don’t consciously choose to reject God, but are led by steps unawares. And finally, remember that those who loudly proclaim the good of what I’m about to touch on are also suffering themselves inwardly. All of this presents a ripeness for an encounter with Christ... perhaps through *you*.

Although this author of *Strange Rites* doesn’t go down the following road, Scripturally we may well say that some of the chief spirits being offered again to us for worship in this religious culture include the ancient Ba’al, under more modern names and with practices having more modern disguises; And also the spirit known to the Sumerians as Ashtoreth, whom the ancient Greeks called Aphrodite and was known by other names elsewhere. Then there is the Canaanites’ god Molech, and so on. Always, the cults of these idols- cults forbidden in the Old Testament to the Israelites- insisted on strange behaviors and practices from their adherents that were predicated on *defiance* of something, some norm. This is because these gods themselves in their stories are the sowers of rebellion and inversion. One of Ashtoreth’s

Sumerian hymns has her saying: “When I sit in the alehouse [tavern] I am a woman. *And* I am an exuberant young man.”<sup>1</sup>

Back to the *Strange Rites* book. With every page I turned, it seemed more and more to be chronicling the unfolding of patterns already delineated in another book, a chapter of which I had assigned in a seminar years ago in another university in 2007. The book, from the 1970s, was called *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* – written by someone who at least once personally visited this monastery and seminary and with whom many of you are probably familiar: Hieromonk Seraphim Rose. Reading the new book made me pick up that older one again. I was thus reminded just how attuned it was to *how* a new syncretism was playing out in shaping culture of that period. Some were monistic or polytheistic systems imported from the far East repackaged in America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which I had encountered in my own research of that period, brought by figures like a Hindu popularizer and New Age forerunner, Swami Vivekananda, famous among other things for emphasizing yogic practices. Others came in the mid twentieth century, like the “Transcendental Meditation” of the man styled Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of 1960s Beatles rock group fame. But it was also there in erstwhile Methodist minister Norman Vincent Peale’s 1952 book *The Power of Positive Thinking*- itself partly cribbed from ideas of ‘New Thought’ occultist author Florence Shinn. [ I should add that, indeed, occultism already had deep historical roots in America’s ‘folk’ religions and in its elite esoteric strains based in Hermetic philosophy, manifesting in everything from the self-styled ‘metaphysical’ systems of old New England to the nineteenth century mind cure religions, such as Mary Baker Eddy’s inaptly named ‘Christian science’, to the utopian perfectionist and séance spiritualist movements emerging from their nineteenth century national epicenter right here in upstate New York – especially Rochester and Oneida].

Many such systems and others I don’t have time to mention are still with us. But their spirit has also combined with myriad cousins that all share something in common, something that for the far Eastern [and Southeast Asian]-inspired systems, *Orthodoxy and the Future* identified in Transcendental Meditation: it did “not require[e] any belief or understanding, moral code, or even agreements with the ideas and philosophies it encompassed” —just a practice that would promise to quickly lead one to spiritual enlightenment and peace- both inner and outer.<sup>2</sup> This claim perhaps sounds familiar. After all, it is basically the claim of most current permutations of such movements in our time. In a real sense, their

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<sup>1</sup> A Shir-Namshub to Inana (Inana I): translation: Segment A, from *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, The Oriental Institute, Oxford University. <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr4079.htm>

<sup>2</sup> S. Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 47, quoting J. Robbins and D. Fisher *Tranquility Without Pills*, 1972.

promises are as old as the ancient Gnosticisms of the Near East and, indeed, go back to the Garden itself: To become gods-- on our own terms-- without the real God.

In an afterword to the 2005 edition of this book, the current abbot of St. Herman's monastery noted that by that time, "A large number of major corporations have sponsored 'New Age' seminars... 'psychic healing', 'dream work', contacting 'spirit guides' and other 'consciousness raising' practices."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the author of the recent *Strange Rites* book mentioned above discusses what is the clear contemporary extension of all this, and how-- in no small part through companies with their "Mindfulness" training for employees (mindfulness being essentially a repackaged hodgepodge from Zen Buddhism), and the utopian promises of tech companies, and through the meditation apps on smartphones, along with many other cultural forms-- what the author calls "intuitional religion"—is everywhere inculcated; *Intuitional*, meaning one where my emotions make the world around me, where to live "authentically" is to be guided wholly by my emotions.

It is a religion of the Self.

This 'religion' has instantiated a whole new way of talking—a new vocabulary—all around us. It is one of *wellness, harmony, optimization, self-care*, etc. The 'spirituality' and harmony promised by "Wellness" exercise routines insist on "self care" as a starting point.<sup>4</sup> Here, as the *Strange Rites* author astutely put it, "Our sins, if they exist at all, lie in insufficient self-attention—the refusal to separate ourself from 'toxicity'" [in many cases, 'toxicity' amounts to other people who may actually ask something from us] "Pampering [has] itself," she says, "taken on a 'spiritual' urgency."<sup>5</sup>

We can say that the optimization of selfishness has, in short, become the Gospel of Wellness. Its priests and priestesses go by the names of "Personal Development Mentors," "Empowerment Guides," "Life Transformation Coaches," "Wellness' or 'Success' Mentors,"<sup>6</sup> etc. This 'wellness' religion encourages everyone to do things like make exercise (which is in itself good), not just exercise, but to make it also some spiritual quest for self. One wellness advocate I found in an article called her running "a ritual I do for my body, a time for connection and prayer with my ancestors, an alignment of my humanness."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rose, *Orthodoxy*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 208.

<sup>4</sup> Tara Isabella Burton, *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* (New York: Public Affairs/Hachette, 2020), 94.

<sup>5</sup> *Strange Rites*, 58.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.quora.com/What-is-a-great-alternate-name-for-a-life-coach>).

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.damemagazine.com/2018/09/24/is-self-care-an-act-of-resistance/>

What can we say in facing such a gospel? We could shake our heads. But we could also say that embedded in this is a quest for something bigger—and that some salt added to this yearning, salt based on *the* Gospel, with pain and love of heart, could perhaps help that person’s search for ritual become a love of the ritual of the Orthodox liturgy (which also has its own exercise, especially during the Lenten training season). That desire to connect with “ancestors” could become communion with the saints. We *can* see this as an opportunity to redirect what is at least some kind of thirst for the spirit. But to do so, we would have to know what this stuff is about to know how to approach it and its devotees—not with naivete but with sobriety. For this, we need both intellectual effort and spiritual discernment. History well shows us that the Church in her mission has always seriously studied the culture she seeks to reach.

[The thing is, the more such ‘religious’ selfishness is pursued, urged, and glorified in the quest to pacify inner fears and anxieties and despondency—the *worse* the cultural epidemic of these things will no doubt get. Is it *really* surprising that a prescription for further descent into egoism would increase the pandemic of depression we’re increasingly seeing engulfing young people – and many others too? Well, if one has never encountered the image of what it is to be truly human in Orthodoxy, it’s very likely that it *is* hard to see (think about that). Let’s witness to that image—starting with ourselves.]

In the contemporary Religion of Wellness, the God who *is* God has to be exiled, because, for all this, *we* supposedly have become the gods, not through θεώσις/*theosis* but exclusively through our own efforts. Though sometimes in a cleverly hidden way, all this is still just the religion of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s character Kirillov from his great novel *Блѣты – Demons* (aka ‘The Possessed’)—Kirillov, who famously cried out: “For 34 years I have been searching for the attribute of my divinity, and I have found it! The attribute of my divinity is self-will! “*If there is no God, then I am god!*”<sup>8</sup>

It is important to say at this point that not only those whom you will encounter as you go from the seminary to bear witness to Christ will bring some such beliefs to the table but they also exist as a temptation for you—and for all of us-- temptations to subtly remold us; not all at once, but bit by bit because we, too, live in the culture. I found in revisiting *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* that it warns us about this— because, after all, it’s never “them” and “us.” The author wrote there: “the seductive power of the ‘new religious consciousness’ is so great today [meaning 1975] that it can take

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<sup>8</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1994), 617.

possession of one even if he believes he is remaining a Christian.”<sup>9</sup> So, let’s be *vigilant*— νήπις/*nepsis-not* ‘Mindful.’ But let’s also not be afraid- - and remember that humility is the great medicine.

We might ask, how did the author of *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* see so clearly where things were heading even back when so much of this was still largely fringe, incipient, operating only in pockets of subculture rather than blazing out on the websites of multi-national corporations? Well, the book itself is a simultaneous exercise in discursive intellect—use of logic, critical thinking, study-- *and* purification of mind through years of ascetical effort. Intellectually, he doesn’t just say in his book “Well, I both participated in these systems myself and studied them at an academic level, so you should just believe me” (both of those things, by the way, he *did*—for a long time- before he encountered a living Orthodoxy through St. John in San Francisco). No. Instead he laid things out using sources, demonstrating his contentions- applying his philosophical training and critical thought. That was key for allowing others to be able to learn to see what he saw.

Yet, if reasoned study was all there was to it—meaning, without his effort at spiritual discernment—the book might have been a penetrating cultural analysis but just another in a long line of other interesting books in that genre. What makes his book different is its perception of the spiritual heart of the matter—*why* these things were happening and what would inevitably follow if the trends continued. What made seeing *that* possible was the author’s spiritual effort joined to the thinking and study. Yes, most won’t be writing books. Fine. But we’ll be talking. We might write *something*. And we’ll be a presence with others.

Ok, so the culture into which you will take your ministries is profoundly religious *in this way*, now. But the specific appearances and permutations of this egoistic spirit will continue to change and mutate. You’ll need to work, study, think critically while praying. In other words, you’ll need to further cultivate what you’ve already started doing here in seminary so you can follow the shape-shifting in order to make the right diagnosis in encountering real people in real culture in *your* future.

Or maybe you are thinking another way: “can’t I just pray and not study any more? After all, I’m graduated!” I am not a Patristics specialist, but St Maximos the Confessor in his work *To Thalassios, On Various Difficulties in Sacred Scripture*” (from the early 630s) shows us a good example of how the dual effort is so important. He says in that text, even of saints “It is not legitimate to say that grace alone brings about, in the saints, the knowledge of the mysteries without the contributions from their natural faculties that open us up to receiving knowledge . . . . On the other hand, they did not come to a true knowledge of reality *simply through* the investigations of natural reason, without the grace of the All-Holy Spirit. . . . The

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<sup>9</sup> Rose, *Orthodoxy*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 69.

grace of the Holy Spirit never destroys the capabilities of nature. Just the opposite: it makes nature, which has been weakened by unnatural habit, mature and strong enough once again to function in a natural way and leads it upward toward insight into the divine.”<sup>10</sup>

## Body II.

Let us turn for the remaining time to much more recent saints- to observe and listen to them on this same matter. The first one I will mention was literally a physician, a surgeon, and a medical school professor. He is St. Luke of Simferopol and Crimea (+1961), a hiero-confessor from twentieth century Bolshevik persecution. He will ‘come at you’ tomorrow, which is the eve of his feast [O.S.]. St. Luke was glorified locally in the Ukrainian Church in 1995 and as a New Martyr of Russia in 2000.

He was a highly educated man who dedicated himself to serve—especially the poor-- as a surgeon. But a bishop’s call led him to priestly ordination. After the sad death of his wife from tuberculosis at the age of 38, Fr. Luke was ultimately elevated to the episcopacy in summer 1923. Importantly, with the blessing of Patriarch St. Tikhon, his task was thereafter to engage in both episcopal ministry and surgery.

He used his head. He was the first research physician to devise ways to administer anesthesia that vastly reduced the often deadly mistakes people made when employing ether and chloroform.<sup>11</sup> He also pursued extensive research in microbiology and wrote the definitive textbook on what are called pyrogenic infections.

At the same time, he used his heart. He insisted on always having an icon in and praying his operating room, no matter what the Bolsheviks did to try to stop him. Whenever they removed the icon, he refused to operate. He was so skilled and in demand for surgery that they had to give in. He was sent into prison exile for a total of eleven years for his many different manifestations of steadfastness.

St. Luke faced the reality of a supposedly materialist, but actually occult-suffused, revolutionary culture promising an earthly utopia (sound somewhat familiar?) Chief among them was the Bolsheviks’ attempt to syncretistically pervert the church herself – the so-called “Living Church”/Renovationism, which he opposed mightily. He faced all these swords with a studied discernment of the problems and a prayerful retreat into the heart—out of which came boldness of word, courage to suffer multiple exiles and

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<sup>10</sup> St. Maximos the Confessor, *Questions to Thalassios* 59, Corpus Christianorum Series [aka CCSG] 22 - in trans. 47, 49.

<sup>11</sup> H. Sakkas and P. Spyropoulos, “The legacy of Saint Luke (Valentin Felixovich Voyno-Yasenetsky) to medical sciences” *History of Science and Technology* 11:1 (2021), 72, 74.



imprisonments, and advice on how to minister in these conditions, which he sometimes said should involve using no words at all:

“The rose does not speak, but puts forth a strong fragrance. We, too, should put forth fragrance of our deeds that should be experienced from far around. Good and righteous deeds, full of love. Only thus can the Kingdom of God appear in our hearts, appearing not through words but through prayer.”<sup>12</sup>

Even his textbooks were, thus, half born from inner silence. This is not to be underestimated.

The second saint we can refer to as a guide on how to meet a skewed religiosity in culture is St. Justin (Popovic) of Celije in (+1979)—glorified in 2010-- whose feast we also celebrate this coming week (on Friday O.S.). A contemporary of St. Luke, but in the Serbian Church, St. Justin exercised his intellect and his spiritual feats/ *podvig* together. He, too, would likewise suffer under Communism, ultimately living under house arrest in a monastery for three decades. Having done graduate study at Oxford as a young man (moving from the St. Petersburg Theological Academy because of the political chaos), his doctoral thesis on Dostoevsky was not accepted, partly because the professors would not countenance his critique of the Western cultural incentive to human-centric egoism. His later, second doctoral thesis on St. Makarios of Egypt *was* accepted at the Univ. of Athens in 1926. Many of St. Justin’s writings are extraordinary and veritably explode with light. ( It is fitting that he was the spiritual son of the brilliant St. Nikolai of Zica, whom St. John of San Francisco called ‘the Serbian Chrysostom’.)

St. Justin wrote numerous profound texts, but let us listen for a moment to what he says must happen to the rational mind if it is to bear fruit. He argues in *The Inward Mission of our Church*, that “In response to the ‘erudite’ atheism and cannibalism of contemporary civilization, we must give place to Christ-bearing *personalities*, who with the meekness of sheep will put down the roused lust of wolves, and with the harmlessness of doves will save the soul of the people from cultural and political putrefaction.”<sup>13</sup> Such “a God-human objective can only be brought about by God-human means, never by human ones or by any others....”<sup>14</sup> In speaking of the fourth ascetic virtue, which he calls “the God-human virtue of meekness and humility,” St. Justin says, “only he *who* is meek at heart can appease fierce hearts that are

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Adn. V. Marushchak, *The Blessed Surgeon: The Life of St. Luke Archbishop of Simferopol* (Divine Ascent Press, 2002, \_

<sup>13</sup> Fr. Justin Popovic, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, trans. A.G., 5th Printing, (Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2021), 29

<sup>14</sup> J. Popovic, *Orthodox*, 26.

in uproar; only he who is lowly in heart can humble proud and haughty souls.... But a person becomes truly meek and humble when he turns his heart of hearts into the Lord Jesus, humble and meek....”<sup>15</sup>

From his Introduction to his Lives of the Saints, he tells us how we should listen to the saints in *their* telling us how to perform the balance we’ve been discussing. Taking from St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Justin reminds us “A pure mind and a pure heart engender pure knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> Excessive focus only on natural knowledge, he cautions us, leads us to be “seized by fear” and pushes us away from “simplicity of heart and simplicity of thought.”<sup>17</sup> *On the other hand*, he warns us not to think St. Isaac taught that natural knowledge is to be ignored or is blameworthy. He directly says “it is not to be rejected.” The main point is that “faith is higher than it is.”<sup>18</sup>

Finally, on this question of balancing rational knowledge with the mind’s purification through faith, I will turn to St. Paisios of the Holy Mountain Athos (+1994, glorified 2015) whose feast we celebrate in around a month [O.S.] (which is June, too, on the church calendar).

Unlike the other examples, St. Paisios was not himself an academic or a professor. But those who were, flocked to him to learn, including the famous Serbian Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radovic) of Montenegro of Blessed memory (+2020). I encourage you to read the short pieces the metropolitan wrote about his encounters with St. Paisios after the metropolitan, when still a layman, went to him with pain in heart after spending too much time in his own head in advanced study in elite Western European universities and at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. Later tonsured a priestmonk, the metropolitan lived for ten months directly under St. Paisios’ tutelage on Mt. Athos. Metropolitan Amfilohije was also, by the way, a spiritual child of the St. Justin just discussed.

“People,” St. Paisios said, “who constantly sharpen their mind with secular knowledge and distance themselves from God turn their mind into a double-edged sword. With the one side, they are slowly killing themselves. With the other, they cut people to pieces with the absolute nature of the solutions devised by their human brains.” “Human knowledge,” St. Paisios said, “can benefit us—only when it is blessed by God and made holy”<sup>19</sup> No matter, in other words, how learned (or not), a mind untempered by

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<sup>15</sup> J. Popovic, *Orthodox*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 140-141.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>19</sup> St. Paisios the Athonite, *With Pain and Love for Contemporary Man*. Spiritual Councils 1 (Souroti: Holy Hesychastarion of John the Theologian, 2019), 236.

the pursuit of humility can wreak havoc with others- and with our own inner life. He says, “Before the mind is sanctified, its energy is carnal.” “When we become humble and are [illuminated] by God, our minds become sanctified and our logic is strengthened.”<sup>20</sup>

When teaching or counseling others, St. Paisios said, “Words that come from the human intellect alone cannot transform the soul because they are of the flesh. Only the word of God which is born of the Holy Spirit and is filled with divine energy can transform the soul. The Holy Spirit does not descend with machines.”<sup>21</sup> Egoism literally warps our intellect- we can’t see or think. St. Paisios says, “When humility is missing, the interpretations [of the Gospel] we are likely to give are the product of logical reasoning alone; they lack divine enlightenment.”<sup>22</sup>

But the Saint was very clear that people should not stop their education, and added “When used correctly, the intellect can spur the heart and help it..... Sound reasoning is a gift. But this first has to be sanctified.”<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, “God gave us a mind,” he said, “so that we may find our Creator.”<sup>24</sup>

#### Conclusion:

Throughout all this, I hope you have been encouraged to always try to balance your mind and your heart before trying to do anything else. The formation begun here at this seminary is the beginning of a *process*. Even though today marks the milestone of graduation, remember that milestones are markers on a road, a journey; not the end line. Still, it *is* a milestone. You are graduating- and that’s wonderful- from a wonderful seminary. As the Apostle says in his letter to Timothy: “You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.” [2 Tim 3: 14]

“Give thanks to the Lord of Hosts, for his mercy endureth forever” (Psalm 136 [37])

Congratulations to you all again!

And thank everyone here for your very generous attention.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 257-58.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 248.