



ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ Γ.Ο.Χ. ΕΤΝΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΡΤΛΑΝΤ Κ. ΑΥΞΕΝΤΙΟΣ

THE RIGHT REVEREND ALEXENTIOS
HOLY DIOCESE OF ETNA AND PORTLAND
POST OFFICE BOX 398
ETNA, CALIFORNIA 96027-0398

PHONE (530) 467-3228
FAX (530) 467-5828

St. Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary
Ὁρθόδοξος Θεολογικὴ Σχολὴ
τοῦ Ἁγίου Φωτίου

8 July 2015 (Church Calendar)
Holy Great Martyr Procopios

To the Clergy, Faithful, and
Friends of the Diocese,

Εὐλογία Κυρίου. With the blessing of the Lord.

Earlier this year, with the blessing of Metropolitan Demetrios, President of the Eparchial Synod in America of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, a decision was made to establish an official theological school to train the clergy of our Church in the United States and Canada, and to locate it near the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, the headquarters of the Diocese of Etna and Portland. Seeing the need for such an institution to facilitate our growing witness in the Americas, and inspired by the vision of several very generous and (at present) anonymous donors who pledged funds to this end, I proceeded to acquire a suitable facility, bolstered by the support of Bishop Sergios and Metropolitan Chrysostomos, my immediately predecessors in the Sees of Portland and Etna, respectively, which now make up our present Diocese of Etna and Portland.

I am very pleased to report that today I signed the final escrow papers for the transfer of title to a California non-profit religious corporation, “St. Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary,” of an imposing, two-story, 10,500 sq. ft. facility prominently visible as one enters the town of Etna. The facility was originally constructed in the 1980s to house offices, dormitory facilities, and a training center for the California Department of Forestry. It was sold to a Peace Corps-like NGO that trained young people for volunteer work in Africa, and was dubbed the organization’s “California Campus.” It was subsequently sold to a private owner who, in the process of making it into multiple apartment residences, agreed to sell it to the new seminary corporation.

Within several weeks, we will begin the redecoration, in a neo-classical style, and painting of the exterior of the new seminary facility. Thereafter, the interior of the building will require extensive renovation and reconfiguration to meet the current codes for an in-residence training or educational center. It will provide housing for up to ten students, classrooms, a library, administrative offices, a small lecture hall, a computer room, a small Chapel, and a kitchen and dining area, as well as a small laundry facility. God willing, we will be able to receive the first students in September of 2016, when the two-semester first year of studies will begin.

The seminary has been established to provide for the theological, liturgical and practical training of parish Priests and Deacons. Entering students, except in rare circumstances, will be required to hold a high school diploma or its equivalent (e.g., a G.E.D. or a home-schooling equivalency certificate)

for entry.

The basic program will consist of three years of study (two semesters a year) in residence, for the B.Th. (Bachelor of Theology) degree. Candidates for the Priesthood who already hold a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university have the option of enrolling in a two-year program, completing selected core courses in the B.Th. program *in residence* during the first three semesters and then writing a thesis during the fourth semester (residency not required). They will be awarded, instead of the B.Th., the M.T.S. (Master of Theological Studies) degree. A complete seminary catalogue detailing these academic programs will be published well before the first academic year.

In the next year, we hope to build up an endowment fund (a dividend-yielding stock portfolio) to support visiting faculty (monastery faculty will not be remunerated financially) and the basic operational costs of the seminary. It is thus our hope that degrees may be earned with modest, affordable fees. Fees, which may be adjusted to student need, will cover housing costs and the cost of maintaining library acquisitions. Students will be responsible for the preparation of their own meals in the seminary's kitchen facilities and the cost of books, educational supplies, and personal items. They will also be required to attend daily liturgical services, in which they will actively and regularly participate, as they advance in their studies. They will wear cassocks at the seminary, during their period of studies, and will conform to a strict moral and ethical code and to the Church's fasting rules.

The core faculty from the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery and the Convent of St. Elizabeth will include five individuals with accredited doctoral degrees, who will hold the title of professor, and five individuals with accredited undergraduate or graduate degrees, who will hold the title of instructor. I will serve as Rector of the Seminary and Archimandrite Patapios as Dean. In addition, we have asked a number of clergy and other distinguished scholars to serve as Adjunct or Visiting Professors, including (as Adjunct Professors) the retired Metropolitan of Etna and the retired Bishop of Portland. It is also our intention to hold weekend seminars or extended educational conferences and summer programs at the seminary facility, offering opportunities for our clergy, faithful, and persons interested in Orthodox studies to further their knowledge of the Faith.

This seminary project is the realization of a dream that we have for decades hoped to make a reality. Our monastery study center, the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, was a first step in this direction, but its programs are by correspondence, which is an inadequate way to form clergy. Its Diploma and Licentiate certificates, I should note, will be phased out and replaced by the seminary degrees noted above, and its activities will be confined to scholarly research and the continuation of its publication program. The Metropolitan Cyprian Theological Library, along with the Jaffee, Khokhlov and rare book collections, will remain in place, though some of its 10,000 books and 4,000 periodical holdings will be transferred to the seminary library.

As the seminary project continues to develop, progress reports will appear on this website (<http://www.dep.church>) and eventually on the seminary website (<http://www.spots.school>), which is now under construction. Anyone wishing to donate to the seminary project can do so by mailing gifts to the St. Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary, P.O. Box 797, Etna, CA 96027-0797. The seminary's application for 501(c)(3) non-profit tax exemption is in progress and will apply retroactively to contributions. I thank you for your prayers, book donations to the library, or monetary gifts.

Your Humble Servant,

† Bishop Auxentios of Etna and Portland