

JOYFUL LIGHT

Joyful Light is a semi-annual publication of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius, 3605 Perrysville Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15214 • (412) 321-8383 • www.byzcathsem.org • byzcathsem@verizon.net

Deacon Daniel Graduates Seminary

Deacon Daniel Forsythe looks back on his four years at the Seminary:

It is difficult for me to believe my time at the Seminary is over. These four years have flown by as if they were a matter of months. On the other hand, I am amazed at how much I've grown and changed. Perhaps others see more clearly how I have grown (and in what areas I've not grown!), but there are some areas in particular that really stand out for me.

A great deal of my time, and a very important part of the Seminary, is spent doing academic work. What makes the Seminary different from any other school however, is the formation program, which goes hand-in-hand with the academic work. The formation I've received has been just as valuable as the education. There were areas where I lacked self-confidence when I first began. I remember being frightened at the prospect of public speaking or of going to hospitals and visiting the sick. But slowly I found myself doing things I never thought I would be able to do: visiting the sick in the hospital, cantoring, teaching Eastern Christian Formation classes, and preaching. My instructors and fellow students at the Seminary helped me to identify my

fears and insecurities while encouraging me to strengthen and develop my own gifts and talents.

Throughout my time at the Seminary, I've been challenged to grow in my relationship with the Lord and with others; a challenge that makes the theology we study in the classroom real. One of the highlights of my seminary experience has been the opportunity to enter into a full liturgical life. Vespers, Matins and the Divine Liturgy punctuate our week and create a rhythm by which life here flows. I will definitely miss celebrating all of these services in our community but look forward to sharing in these lovely prayers with others in a parish.

While I am excited about my upcoming ordination, it is a little overwhelming. I feel the Seminary has prepared

me well. I've been given an excellent theological and liturgical education, yet I am nervous. I keep telling myself I don't know everything and I've still got a lot to learn! Thankfully, my time at the Seminary and my summer assignments have put me in touch with wonderful and experienced pastors to whom I know I can turn for help and advice when I come up against difficult challenges.

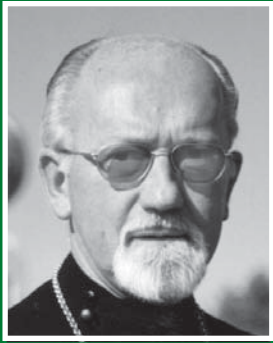
I'm going to miss my time with the Seminary community. We are a small school, actually more of a large family than an institution. And, as with any family, we sometimes rub each other the wrong way, but overall I have been immeasurably blessed by the whole community, and am forever grateful to everyone at the Seminary. The faculty provide an easy-going and supportive atmosphere in which to live and learn. I have the greatest respect for my fellow seminarians. You will be hard pressed to find a group of men more dedicated and excited about serving Jesus Christ.

Deacon Daniel graduated from the Seminary in May magna cum laude and will be ordained to the priesthood of Jesus Christ on June 7, 2009 at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Munhall, PA.



Musil Shihadeh and Deacon Daniel

Rector's Message



Another rich and fulfilling year has come to a close at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary. Once again this year God has blessed us with an array of students, students from fascinating backgrounds, in the various academic programs of the Seminary. In addition to the seminarians, some 15 others have taken courses this year either for credit or for their own enrichment. There have also been other students here for special programs, several of whom you will meet in these pages of *Joyful Light*. In these ways the Seminary continues to be a center of learning for Eastern Christian Churches.

Father John G. Petro, Rector

First Year Seminarian Shares Reflections

As the spring 2009 semester draws to a close, seminarian Musil Shihadeh reflects on his first year at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary. Musil, a Melkite Greek Catholic from the Eparchy of Newton, is a parishioner of St. John the Baptist of Northlake, IL.

"I was apprehensive about coming to the Seminary," Musil remembers. He had not visited the Seminary beforehand and did not know what to expect. He admits that at first glance, the Seminary was not what he expected. "It is more academically driven than I thought it would be." However, Musil quickly learned to adjust. "The work load is not unreasonable. The Seminary demands you learn how to balance your life and this balance is an important part of preparing one for the priesthood."

Musil notes that because he came to the Seminary from a small school, the small community of the Seminary is comforting. He adds, "It is a good community. Everyone comes together to support each other. Visitors like Radu Titonea, who came from Romania,

and Jaroslav Girovsky, from Slovakia, are a blessing as they add much to the community, and I think we enhance their experiences, too. Everyone here is encouraging, and my relationships with the others at the Seminary are always developing. I can always talk to someone."



Musil Shihadeh

He continues, "In my role as a first-year seminarian, the older seminarians have helped me to grow. I like to think I have helped them, as well, and I look forward to welcoming new students to this community where we can all help each other to develop."

Looking ahead, Musil wonders if the road ahead will be tougher or easier.

He hopes that his faith grows deeper, but understands it is impossible to see into the future. "The Seminary is the place where I hope to learn to truly discern whether this is the path God has chosen for me," he notes.

Musil recommends the Byzantine Catholic Seminary for all Eastern Catholics who are considering seminary. He was very happy with the ways the Seminary accommodated study of the Melkite tradition. He appreciated the fact that the chant instructor, Coreen Poklembo, helped the Melkite students learn the Melkite music. He also is grateful to Fr. David Petras for including at least one Melkite service each week. He enjoys the Melkite/Ruthenian mixture and feels that by learning both traditions and music, it expands everyone's horizons for the better.

Musil is spending six weeks this summer taking intensive Arabic in Hammond, IN five days a week. Looking back at the past year, Musil says, "My first year went by so quickly, I can't believe how time moves so fast!"

BE A PART OF OUR FUTURE If you would like to remember us in your will, our official title is: Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius, 3605 Perrysville Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15214

Pastoral Formation Supports Ministry

Deacon Radu Titonea's journey from Sibiu, Romania, to Canton, OH includes a stopover at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Pittsburgh.

Five years ago, Radu traveled to the United States on a work and travel program through his seminary in Blaj, Romania. While here, he met Bishop John Michael of the Romanian Byzantine Catholic Church before returning to his home country. When the Bishop was looking for a secretary to assist him in Canton at St. George Cathedral, he contacted Radu, knowing of his interest to return and work in the United States. Radu has now been in the U.S. on a religious visa for 2½ years.



Deacon Radu Titonea

Radu spent time during the 2008-09 year at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary for a special program in pastoral formation. Although he had completed the necessary theology and philosophy courses at the seminary in Romania, he now needed practical experience. Radu participated in a field education program at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh, where he was able to put his learned theories to practical use. "In a hospital situation people are very sincere, and you can see the true way people think," he says. "It was amazing what I learned, and this experience was a very good one for me."

In addition to his field education, Radu also took classes at the Seminary in counseling, leadership, homiletics, and he audited a class on the History of the Eastern Church in the U.S. His year at the Seminary was very helpful, notes Radu. He became more proficient in English and gained a greater insight on American culture. "How people think here is very different from how Romanian people think. I used to wonder why there are so many religions here. In Romania, we basically have two. I understand that people here are looking for ways to make themselves feel better." His hospital ministry, performed under the supervision of certified staff chaplains has also given him another perspective of thinking and understanding.

Although Radu studied this year at the Seminary, he makes his home in Canton with his wife of three years, Adina. He lived at the Seminary Monday through Wednesday, then returned to Canton where he worked the remainder of the week in the office of the Bishop. He is very proud of Adina, a former teacher in Romania, who insisted on learning to drive. *Continued on page 4*

Under the Dome

Rev. John S. Custer, Academic Dean, has been relieved of his faculty assignment at the Seminary. Bishop William Skurla of the Passaic Eparchy has appointed Fr. Jack pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Smithtown, NY, and administrator of St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Westbury, NY.

Fr. Jack played a vital role in procuring accreditation through The Association of Theological Schools. Owing to his extensive language skills, Fr. Jack was responsible for cataloging the bulk of the Rare Book collection and assisted previous and current librarians in their cataloging and book buying. He developed gift donations to the Library that have enhanced the collection. All Seminary faculty and staff offer Fr. Jack our humble gratitude for his efforts over the past 13 years and wish him the very best as he begins this next chapter of his vocation.

Memory Eternal... It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of faculty members: The **Very Rev. David B. Sedor** fell asleep in the Lord on December 23, 2008. Fr. David was an adjunct professor in Moral Theology at the Seminary, a position he held since January 2006, and the pastor of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Altoona, PA. He was a doctoral student in theology at Duquesne University, and the chaplain for the Orthodox Christian Fellowship in Pittsburgh. Fr. David was the beloved husband of Eileen, and father of Charissa and Stephanie.

The **Rev. Robert Forsythe**, a builder of bridges between churches of many traditions, fell asleep in the Lord on November 22, 2008. Rev. Forsythe, a Presbyterian pastor who followed the call to ministry after pursuing

a career as a pharmaceutical salesman, came to the Seminary in 1983 as the director of field education. Using his many friendships and connections, seminarians were able to accomplish their field education in soup kitchens, jails and hospitals. He held the position for 23 years, retiring in 2006. Rev. Forsythe leaves behind his beloved family: wife, Marlene; two daughters, Vera Purcell and Joyce Forsythe; and two grandchildren.

"The Seminary was blessed by the presence and assistance of both these fine men. Each greatly enriched our community, and we deeply grieve their loss. May their memories be eternal," said Fr. John G. Petro, rector.

Lenten Alms... During the Great Fast each year, the seminarians collect donations for those in need. A box placed near the Seminary chapel is a reminder of the Lord's command to minister to the least of our brothers and sisters. Many guests to our Seminary leave alms after a visit to the chapel.

In 2008, the seminarians donated to the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), requesting the money be used to sponsor the education of an Ethiopian Orthodox seminarian. During this year's Great Fast, the seminarians collected \$460.00 for CNEWA'S appeal for funds to rebuild Christian clinics and schools damaged in Gaza in a conflict between Israel and the Hamas party. These institutions serve the needs of poor Palestinians, both Muslims and Christians. We thank our visitors who so generously joined us in sharing our blessings with those in need. For more information on the work and mission of CNEWA, go to www.cnewa.org.

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Byzantine Catholic Seminary
3605 Perrysville Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15214

Rector

Very Reverend Archpriest
John G. Petro

Copy Editor

Margaret Ann Andrako, OSBM

Editor/Director of Development

Susan Seiden Carlino

e-mail byzathsem@verizon.net
website www.byzathsem.org

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Pastoral Formation, from page 3

Radu credits the community of the Seminary with turning this year into a pleasant experience. "With my wife in Canton, it was not so easy for me to be at the Seminary three days a week. Everyone at the Seminary was open to helping and sustaining me. This made a very big difference. I am very comfortable here, and I thank everyone for that." He was also impressed that everyone helps out at the Seminary, especially in the kitchen with clean-up. "At lunch everyone comes together and talks about life and other things, more like friends or parents. In the classroom, there is still the professor/student respect."

Radu will take his practical experience in pastoral formation back to Canton. He knows this will help him to be a better priest. The courses that he studied have motivated him to consider completing a chaplain program. He wants to serve in Canton because "I feel I can do something here for this diocese." He feels that what he's learned during his year at the Seminary is very important for a pastor to know before ministering in a parish.

Under the Dome, from page 3

Smart Classroom Update... The Seminary received a grant from the Koch Foundation to assist in the purchase of hardware, software, electrical and cosmetic upgrades to install a smart classroom. With this grant and the assistance of alumni, clergy, friends, faculty and staff, the Seminary has raised close to \$60,000 for these electronic resources.

The technology will allow the Seminary to further develop as a center of learning, and is indispensable to making programs available beyond the Pittsburgh area, a first step toward distance learning. Construction on the smart classroom is expected to begin in early June and to be completed for the Fall 2009 term. The Koch Foundation funds evangelization activities of the Catholic faith throughout the world. The Seminary offers its heartfelt thanks to all our donors and the Koch Foundation.

Annual Fund Update... We also want to thank and ask God's blessings on all the donors who so generously gave to support the Seminary's annual fund. We are currently near \$150,000 of our goal of \$250,000. Contributions are still welcome, and needed!

Sandra Collins, the Seminary librarian, has been learning and implementing the new online library system. The library catalog is now officially online (catalog.byzathsem.org). Users, both on-site and off-site, can now search the Seminary's book holdings in the regular collection and the Rare Book Room. There is also a link for suggesting a purchase. If there is a title you feel we should have, fill out this online form and submit it for consideration.

Those interested in donating materials (books, periodicals or other significant archival items) to the Library, can link to our gift policies through the library catalog. Direct library questions to Sandra at bcs.library@verizon.net or 412-321-8383, ext. 23.