

WOMEN'S PROGRESS REPORT  
1976-1981

During the formative years of our Church's life in America, the Seminary was open to male seminarians belonging to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese only. In retrospect, we believe this to have been a necessary development, due to historical, financial and other practical reasons. During the past decade, however, the scope of our community has widened to include the training and education of those persons wishing to serve in the various ministries outside the ordained priesthood. This more expanded vision of vocational Diakonia is more in line with the Orthodox understanding of the laity's ministry within the Church.

The Orthodox Church historically has always encouraged its people to develop their talent, resources and abilities. The laity in the "homelands", has always had a very active role in the mission of the Church. To this day, for example, in countries such as Greece, the majority of theologians teaching in theological schools and universities are laypersons. It is no surprise and infact, a welcomed phenomenon, to have women studying and taking an active part in the life of our community.

During the past five years eleven women have graduated Holy Cross. Seven have received the M.Div. degree, two have been awarded the M.T.S. degree and two have received the M.A. in Church Service. Currently there are four women studying; two in the M. Div. program and one in each of the others. The ratio of the women among the males has remained relatively constant, between 4-7%.

The women, practically speaking, are still a new phenomenon. Many efforts have been made by the faculty and administration to incorporate them into the life of the community. This process has been even further facilitated by the women themselves, who, have been taking an active part in sharing their concerns with us. Their presence on campus has been a point of growth for the faculty and administration as well. Some of the new developments include:

- 1) A Director of Women who will deal with the specific concerns of the Theological and College women.

- 2) A Women's Byzantine Choir, that will help encourage the women's participation in the various worship services.
- 3) The athletic program has been expanded to a superior calibre, for both women and men.
- 4) Full participation in school programs and clubs that were previously open only to male seminarians of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, such as: Religious Life Representatives, Retreat Leaders, Student Government, etc. Our school's women are gaining a national Orthodox reputation as well. We rejoice in conveying that two of our women were elected to national offices of O.I.S.M., ( the Orthodox Inter-Seminary Movement, a previously all male organization, ) during this five year period. One of them was elected as the first female president of O.I.S.M. nationally.
- 5) The women have also formed a theological discussion group that meets regularly to discuss issues concerning Church and school life. They have currently expanded the scope of the group's interests to include encourageing female lay-ministry within the Orthodox Church.

Holy cross graduates are currently serving in several types of active ministries. Three of the women are now serving as parish lay-assistants (lay-ministers) in various churches of the Archdiocese. Two graduates are involved in ecumenical relations; one is serving a local branch of the N.C.C. and the other is employed at Archdiocese Headquarters, working on a national level. Three others are now persuing doctoral studies in Theology. Two women are studying in the U.S.. One is at the University of Chicago majoring in Church History. The other is at Boston University concentrating in Pastoral Psychology and Religious Education. The third student is at the University of Thessaloniki, majoring in Patristics. Three graduates are currently employed by our community; one is a theological librarian and two are in administrative positions ( Assistant Dean of Women and Assistant Dean of Admissions and Records ). Two of the women are also involved in (part-time) campus ministry and one is now involved with (part-time) Pastoral counseling/psychotherapy.

There have been many victories for the women, and consequently for ourselves, on campus. In retrospect, we acknowledge and rejoice in the growth that has taken place. It is no surprise to us, however, that this growth did not come easily. It did not come without pain. There are still many challenges to be met. A major source for concern, is that there are few "obvious" openings for vocational employment. There is a common understanding among the students, faculty and administration that much of this work is "pioneer" work for Orthodoxy in America. We are all active participants in the Church entering a new phase of its history. There are many unknowns as to what specific particular ministries the future may bring. We are confident, however, that Holy Cross will help bring about an expanded vision of Orthodox Christian lay-ministry and a better understanding of ourselves.

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