

# VESTNIK



Fund for Assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia  
P.O. Box 272  
Glen Cove, NY 11542  
contact@fundforassistance.org

*The mission of the Fund for Assistance is to support the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, specifically, the moral-spiritual education of youth, aid to its clergy and distribution of emergency relief to its missions.*



**St. Herman's Conference**



**Kosovo**



**MDiv program**

## St. Herman's Conference: An Orthodox Christian retreat for the Church-minded

**Donors like you help ROCOR youth grow strong in Christ**

I'm used to being around the secular world during the school year. Used to having to explain my faith, who I am, and why I live the life I do. But there's one place where I never have to explain anything, because here everyone understands me without me having to say anything. Here everything I cherish and hold dear to my soul is exactly what those around me feel. This wonderful place is the St Herman youth conference.

I look forward to St Herman's as the best several days of the year – all thanks to the amazing people who make it happen: the generous donors and the hardworking organizers. Not a day went by in Albany when I wasn't laughing so hard I cried. I felt like I knew where I belonged, and I





smiled so much my cheeks hurt. Not an hour went by when I didn't learn something new and amazing about my faith.

**A**t St Herman's we share the most important things: our beliefs. There is no greater joy than praying, living, and going to church together with all the attendees around me. We grow together spiritually, feel for each other, and enjoy a sense of community. Here I can always find support and love, thanks to the friendships I've



made and strengthened throughout the week of the conference.

**T**his past conference gave me wonderful memories that I will remember and smile about for years to come, like the moment I saw my childhood best friend at the airport for the first time in four and a half years. I've never run so fast or hugged someone as tightly as her. That week together strengthened our friendship immensely, and as soon as I got home, I bought a plane ticket to travel halfway across the country just to see her again as soon as I could.

**E**very year I feel like a new person when I leave St Herman's Conference. Each lecture, discussion group, and spiritual workshop has opened my eyes to the beauties of Orthodoxy, while also grounding me when I felt lost in life.

***“Each lecture, discussion group, and spiritual workshop has opened my eyes to the beauties of Orthodoxy, while also grounding me when I felt lost in life.”***



**I** have sought out advice and comfort during difficult times from many of the clergy who attend conference every year, and they have helped me without even realizing it. I always learn something new about our faith and have learned countless lessons that help me strive to be a better Orthodox Christian in my life. Here, the best parts of ourselves are brought out as we strive for improvement in our earthly lives.

**I**t is a blessing to go to St. Herman's every year. The conference has shown me that the Church will always be there for me, and if we live our lives in search of God, He will never abandon us.

***“The conference has shown me that the church will always be there for me, and if we live our lives in search of God, He will never abandon us.”***

This is the reason for everything I love and do in my time on this Earth. You can't even begin to imagine how much your life is going to change from the first walk through the hotel doors to joyful reunions to the final and tearful goodbyes.

**A**nd when you look around and see 150 young adults crowded into the hotel lobby after checkout to sit around and talk for the next couple hours, waiting until the last minute to leave, it hits you. It only takes five days to change your life forever. Five days that turn into lifelong friendships, relationships that turn into marriages for some couples, and a new perspective on the world.



**T**hank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to come to St Herman's. You have changed my life. And I will never forget it.

*Written by Anna Kropov*

## **“I have food because of you. I love you and I thank you...”**

**Your gift saved families from starvation in Kosovo**



**“P**eople think the war is over in Kosovo.... It’s not!” – said Fr Nektarios, almost crying on the phone. This conversation happened a few weeks after Fr Nektarios’s return from his latest trip to Kosovo. He went there to deliver the aid you sent to your starving brothers and sisters.

**T**hanks to your help, between 350-400 people in Kosovo received money for food and clothes. We asked Fr Nektarios to deliver the money to the people personally, so we knew exactly where it was going and for what reason.

**A**rchimandrite Nektarios Serfes is a ROCOR-educated and ordained priestmonk. He lives and serves in Boise, ID, where he also administers the Decani Monastery Relief Fund he created (DMRF). He created DMRF 14 years ago to help the Serbs who refused to leave their motherland – Kosovo – after it had been taken away from them by Albanian Muslims who declared independence after ethnically cleansing this originally Orthodox land.

**T**he humanitarian crisis there is horrific, said Fr Nektarios. Livestock, farm

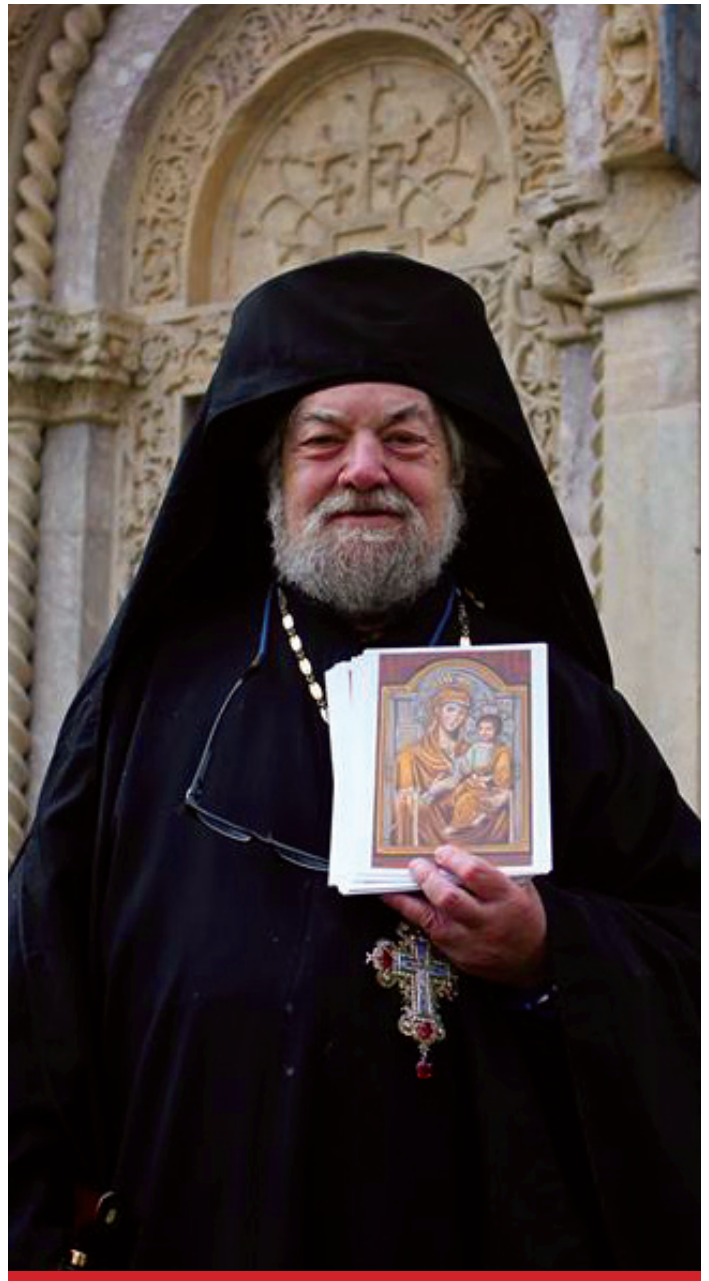
machinery, and firewood are stolen daily. Serbs are threatened with machine guns if they try to protest. Yet they still want to live in their native land. They try to be self-sufficient, but they need help.

*“When I told them this help came from the Russian Church in America, they cried with happiness. They were so happy that someone – anyone – cares for them.”*

Thanks to your generosity, Fr Nektarios was able to provide between 350 and 400 people with money, as well as potatoes, flour, sugar, and firewood. All the provisions had to be bought at a specific place that was more or less accepting of Serbs and Orthodox Christians – hours away from their villages. Firewood had to be ordered from Germany, because even villagers who own their own forests cannot chop wood, for fear of being shot by thieving occupants.

The list of their daily sufferings and everything Fr Nektarios has endured would take more space than this newsletter. But here some wonderful news: because of kind donors like you, all these people, as well as parishioners of six different churches and four monasteries in Kosovo, have had food to eat for months now.

When we wrote to you about “the Kosovo cabbage diet” – where families have nothing but cabbage to eat for months, you did not remain silent. You sent money, prayers, and kind words that warmed our



brothers all the way in Kosovo. Thank you.

*“I have food because of you. I love you and I thank you...’ this is what they asked me to tell the benefactors,” said Fr Nektarios.*

Thank you for caring for the people forgotten by the whole world. Our Lord will remember you for not forgetting the horrific sufferings of these people. Thank you so very much.

## Foot soldiers no more... Now they are warrior-scholars!

**Donors like you are helping arm our priests to battle the relativism in the world and the rising renovationism in the Orthodox Church!**



**I**t's a mad, mad, mad, mad world out there. And it would take a special kind of naivete to think that the madness is not touching our beloved Orthodox world. For example, there are professors in Orthodox seminaries actually say that saints like St. Mary of Egypt never lived. Concelebration with Catholics in some circles is considered all but a foregone conclusion. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

**T**he problem for our dear ROCOR has been something reflected in the words of Bishop Amvrosy of Geneva of blessed memory. "Our priests," he said, "are not scholars. How could they be? They've been at the front lines, battling for the souls of their flock. They are foot soldiers."

**B**ut foot soldiers, when faced with the deceptively wise of this world, can be left speechless. And what will their flock do then? Will some of them be lured by the crafty speeches of wolves in sheep's clothing?

**I**t was with that in mind that the FFA reached out to you before last September, asking you to help fund a full scholarship for a new and exciting project, the long-awaited MDiv program at our beloved Holy Trinity Seminary. And you responded enthusiastically, becoming sponsors of a truly amazing endeavor—the Vladimir Golitzine Scholarship, which allowed one student the freedom to apply himself to the rigorous academic requirements of

the MDiv program, as well as the equally challenging spiritual requirements of a full liturgical calendar.

**T**hank God, you no longer need to worry about the dearth of scholar-priests. With your help, ROCOR is finally equipping a new kind of priest. Not the simple foot soldier, but a new kind of warrior-scholar, equipped with the best knowledge of the past, seasoned with the best of today's advancements and discoveries.

*With your help, ROCOR is finally equipping a new kind of priest.*

**Y**ou would have been thrilled to see it—a class of seven people, from their early twenties to their sixties, all compatriots-in-arms, eager to learn for their own benefit and the benefit of their church. They grappled with everything from postmodern philosophy to the latest linguistic discoveries in ancient Near Eastern Languages. They came up against their own prejudices and the prejudices of the modern world, and they found answers to questions they never thought to ask.



And without you, at least one of them would have been denied these riches.

**A**dd to this the ascetical element of living in a monastery, working alongside the monks, and attending the richest liturgical experience our Church has to offer, and our budding warrior-scholars have everything necessary to build their physical and spiritual strength, as well as their intellectual capabilities.

**F**inally, ROCOR can feel confident to enter the public square to battle the growing modernism, ecumenism, and



renovationism in Orthodoxy and the world.

**B**y continuing to support Jordanville through the FFA, you are ensuring that our Church will not only weather the storm of modernity, but it will prepare priests who will take the battle to the world, saving the souls of their flock and attracting many others to the Church of Christ by the brilliant light of their example. It is a light

so lovely, that even the non-Orthodox will want to know, from the bottom of their hearts, the source of that light.

***You are making this light shine much brighter! We hope you will continue to do so with your continued support of the MDiv program at Holy Trinity Seminary.***



**Leave a gift in your Will to your favorite charity...  
and you will create a personal legacy that will last forever!**

Our informative new brochure “A Guide to Wills and Bequests” explains everything you need to know in non-technical terms. To request your free copy, please call Alena Plavsic at (917)817-2925 or email [alena@fundforassistance.org](mailto:alena@fundforassistance.org)

**A 100 years from now  
you could still be  
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**Your money – your decision: 100% of all donations directly fund the cause indicated by the donor.  
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P.O.Box 272  
Glen Cove, NY 11542

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