



Saints Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church Lenten Retreat March 6-8, 2026

Faith Based Storytelling

Sharing the Good News through the Sacred Art of Narrative

Guest Speaker: **Fr. Sergius Halvorsen**

Sponsored by the Saints Peter and Paul Creticos Memorial Lectures

Friday, March 6

6:00pm Akathistos/Salutations Service | 7:30 PM Lenten Meal (RSVP by February 27)

8:00pm **Story and Communion**

How does story bring us into communion with God and with one another? What role do stories have in our Orthodox Christian faith? How can stories share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others?

Saturday, March 7

10:00am Coffee and Fellowship

10:30am **Faith Made Perfect in Weakness**

How does the Crucified Messiah reveal God's power through vulnerability? What kinds of stories invite people into relationship with God?

12:00pm Lenten Luncheon (RSVP by February 27)

1:00pm **Sharing Your Story**

What are your stories of faith? How can our stories strengthen our faith and strengthen our communities? What are the opportunities for evangelization with faith-based storytelling?

3:00pm Great Vespers Service

Sunday, March 8

9:30am Divine Liturgy – Homilist Fr Sergius Halvorsen

Fr Sergius Halvorsen, Ph.D. V. Rev. J. Sergius Halvorsen is Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Rhetoric at St Vladimir's Seminary where he also serves as director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, and director of the Compelling Preaching project. In addition to teaching homiletics and rhetoric, he also teaches courses in Christian education and the sacred art of narrative. He is a priest of the Orthodox Church in America, and is attached to Holy Transfiguration Church in New Haven, CT. He is an accomplished liturgical musician and has contributed to a number of "Archangel Voices" recordings. He lives in New Haven, CT, and serves part-time as a chaplain at Yale New Haven Hospital.



Anastasia and Angelo Creticos were founding and longtime members of Saints Peter and Paul who established this fund to encourage all parishioners in the continuing study and growth in our faith, in part by bringing the best thoughtful and faithful educators to speak at Saints Peter and Paul.

BIOGRAPHY - Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, PhD

Education

B.A. Biology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1992

M.Div., St Vladimir's Seminary, 1996

Ph.D., Drew University, 2002



Teaching Interests:

Homiletics, Rhetoric, Faith-based Storytelling, Christian Education, Distance Learning

Current Projects and Research Interests

During the twenty years that he has taught preaching, his primary focus has been on the art and craft of liturgical preaching; the sacred art of preaching within the context of the Divine Liturgy. Increasingly, his recent research has shifted towards how clergy and laypeople can better share their Orthodox Christian faith beyond the liturgical context. In the fall of 2022, St. Vladimir's Seminary received a grant from the Compelling Preaching Initiative of the Lilly Endowment, and this has provided an opportunity to explore and develop faith-based storytelling as a dynamic, personal approach to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has incorporated faith-based storytelling into two seminary courses, and the results have vastly exceeded expectations. Not only were the stories compelling and dynamic, but the process of developing stories and sharing them strengthened the faith of the storytellers and built relationships of faith between the storytellers.

Recent Courses Taught at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary

Homiletics, Faith Based Storytelling, Sacred art of Rhetoric, Christian Education, Peacemaking in Troubled Times

Recent Publications

- "The Liturgical Homily as Sacred Art" in Essays from St. Vladimir's Symposium on Liturgy and Sacred Arts ed. Grant White and Rossitza Schroeder. (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press) forthcoming.
- "Preaching the Impossible in the Face of the Unthinkable: Nonviolence, Love, and Thanksgiving in a Coptic Easter Sermon." In Religions 2024, 15, 455. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/15/4/455/pdf>
- "Preaching in the Orthodox Theological Family" in Preaching the Manifold Grace of God, Vol. 1 Theologies of Preaching in Historical Theological Families. ed. Ron Allen (Eugene OR, Cascade Books, 2022) 1-26.

Recent Presentations

- "Eucharistic Preaching: Thanksgiving and the story of God's presence"
- North American Academy of Homiletics, Richmond VA
- "Creativity as Death and Resurrection: An Eastern Christian Reflection on the Spiritual Life of the Preacher" Marten Preaching Conference, University of Notre Dame
- "Power Made Perfect in Weakness: Ascetical theology as homiletical antidote to rage addiction" North American Academy of Homiletics, Atlanta GA
- "The Creativity of the Humbled Soul: Preaching as an invitation to ascesis for preachers and hearers." Lausanne-Orthodox International Conference: Worship, Liturgy & Discipleship, Södertälje, Stockholm, Sweden

Other notables about Fr Sergius:

(M.Div. '96; Ph.D., Drew University, 2002) is Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Rhetoric at St Vladimir's Seminary and serves as director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, and Director of the Compelling Preaching project. In addition to teaching homiletics and rhetoric, he also teaches courses in Christian education and the sacred art of narrative. Fr Sergius is a priest of the Orthodox Church in America, he is attached to Holy Transfiguration Church in New Haven, CT, and has contributed to a number of "Archangel Voices" recordings. He currently lives in New Haven, CT, and serves part-time as a chaplain at Yale New Haven Hospital. He loves gardening, hiking, biking, and reading biographies and fiction.

For a full biography of Fr Sergius:

<https://www.svots.edu/people/very-rev-dr-sergius-halvorsen#>