

The Mission of the Center

The Orthodox Christian Studies Center is unique in all the world. As part of a Jesuit, Catholic research university in New York City, we are prominently positioned to engage students, faculty, and a global community in our mission: to explore and preserve Orthodox Christianity through bold inquiry, cutting-edge scholarship, and supportive fellowship. The Center provides a space within a university setting for engagement with Orthodox Christianity by undergraduate and graduate students, participating faculty, and friends. It seeks to promote understanding of Orthodox Christianity in Western culture; to preserve and perpetuate a vibrant Orthodox Christian tradition in America; to articulate the value and relevance of the Orthodox Christian tradition; and to promote ecumenical dialogue and relations, especially with Roman Catholicism.

Fordham has long had a special relationship with Orthodox Christian communities—from the 1960s, when the Very Rev. John Meyendorff brought his ecumenical vision to the Fordham faculty, to 2009, when His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew preached at Fordham, to this past September 2025, when he again visited the University and was welcomed with a concert by Cappella Romana. In 2012, the University's Orthodox Christian studies program, founded in 2007, blossomed into the Orthodox Christian Studies Center. Our influence has grown tremendously thanks to the generous support of foundations and individuals who recognize the value of our work and community.

Today, we offer the only Orthodox Christian studies minor for undergraduates in the United States. Our fellowships fund award-winning research. Our virtual and in-person events engage thousands of people. And our thriving community initiates critical dialogue on issues of vital importance, from human rights and environmentalism to nationalism and war.



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ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STUDIES CENTER

ECONOMOS
Orthodoxy
in America
+ LECTURE SERIES

Reclaiming 'Orthodoxy':
Clarifying Our Ecclesial Vocabulary

Sr. Vassa Larin, Professor of Practical Theology at the
Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy and host of the
"Coffee with Sister Vassa" online catechetical programs

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Reception 5 p.m. | Lecture 6 p.m.

The Great Hall, McShane Campus Center | Rose Hill Campus



Reclaiming ‘Orthodoxy’: Clarifying Our Ecclesial Vocabulary

In this lecture, Sister Vassa will address the issue of popular misconceptions about several basic terms of Orthodox Christian faith. Basic terms such as “orthodoxy,” “church,” “catholic,” and “canonicity,” when used inaccurately, distort the vision of our common vocation not only as Orthodox or Catholic Christians, but as human beings. That common human vocation, according to Maximos the Confessor, is to unite, rather than divide; to manifest through ourselves “the great mystery of the divine purpose: the union with each other ... culminating in union with God” (Ambiguum 41, I).

Sister Vassa will first establish how several important terms of Orthodox Christian tradition are commonly confused or obscured, for example, when the term “orthodoxy” is used as a synonym for “church”; when the term “catholic,” professed in the Creed, is absent from our vision of what it means to be “church”; and when “canonicity” is used with no clear understanding of the term “canon” and of the unifying purpose of “canons” in the divine economy. Further, she will review the traditioned meaning of these terms, based on patristic, liturgical and Scriptural texts. By way of conclusion, Sister Vassa will summarize the benefits of clarifying our ecclesial vocabulary as: 1. renewing our sense of purpose as individual human beings; 2. liberating us from self-isolating and divisive tendencies as church-jurisdictions or communities; and 3. helping us grow as agents not of identity politics and self-affirmation, but as agents of God-based unity, hope, and affirmation of His word.

Sr. Vassa Larin

Professor Sister Vassa Larin is an Orthodox Christian rhyssosfor nun, liturgiologist, professor of practical theology at the Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy, and host of the online catechetical programs, “Coffee with Sister Vassa.” She is author of many scholarly articles and books: a monograph on *Byzantine Hierarchical Liturgy* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 286, 2008), *Reflections with Morning Coffee* (Xenophon Press, 2022), *Lent with Sister Vassa* (Xenophon Press, 2022), *HealthyFast Lenten Guidebook*, and, most recently, *Praying in Time: The Hours & Days in Step with Orthodox Christian Tradition* (Wipf & Stock, 2023), a book now published in Italian, Greek, and German. She is presently working on a book titled *Godly Words: An Orthodox Vocabulary*.

Based in Vienna, Austria, Sister Vassa heads an online mission, “Coffee with Sister Vassa,” which includes an email newsletter with a brief reflection on Scripture, weekly audio podcasts (on patreon.com/sistervassa) on the practical applications of the liturgical calendar and Scripture, two video courses, “Introduction to Divine Liturgy” (available on YouTube) and “Divorce & Healing” (available at udemy.com), and many YouTube videos on Orthodox theology, tradition, and contemporary church-canonical issues.



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Master of Ceremonies

Aristotle Papanikolaou, Ph.D.
*Archbishop Demetrios Chair in Orthodox Theology and Culture;
Co-Director, Orthodox Christian Studies Center,
Fordham University*

Invocation

Rev. Protopresbyter Nicolas Kazarian, Ph.D.
*Ecumenical Officer and Director, Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical
and Interfaith Relations, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese
of America*

Greetings

George Demacopoulos, Ph.D.
*Fr. John Meyendorff and Patterson Family Chair of
Orthodox Christian Studies; Co-Director, Orthodox
Christian Studies Center, Fordham University*

Lecture

Sr. Vassa Larin
*Professor of Practical Theology,
Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy*

Benediction

John J. Cecero, S.J.
*Vice President for Mission Integration and Ministry,
Fordham University*

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