

Metropolis of San Francisco Presvyteres Retreat: An Orthodox Framework For Healing & Well- Being Of Soul & Body



The Sisterhood of Presvyteres of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco gathered at Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center in Dunlap, CA for their annual retreat the weekend of January 19 - 21, 2024. A total of 32 presvyteres and diakonisses attended, along with 22 children.

The presenter for this year's Sisterhood retreat was Corina Gheorghiu, MA, LMFT, DDS (www.passionforhealing.com). Corina combined Orthodox Christian teachings with modern neuro-physiology techniques to provide a unique framework and skill set for true healing of mind, soul, and body.

The weekend began with a Paraklesis service led by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco and His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea, followed by a sumptuous welcome dinner prepared by the culinary staff at Saint Nicholas Ranch. Metropolitan Gerasimos offered his blessings for a restorative and unifying experience, sharing with the Sisterhood that "this retreat is an opportunity to build a community of presvyteres, to build your connections to one another." He also challenged them to "learn from the presentations, but also as you talk among yourselves, as you pray and enjoy the ranch together, do not neglect the wisdom of

your ancestors, your mothers and grandmothers, the presvyteres who came before you. Combine the ancient wisdom with the new science so that you may make new commitments to health and well-being in your life, but also the lives of your families and friends.”

Metropolitan Gerasimos then led the traditional cutting of the Vasilopita, prepared by a beloved parishioner of Saint Anna Greek Orthodox Church in Roseville, CA. Metropolis of San Francisco Sisterhood President, Presvytera Dimitra Dogias of Saint Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in Redondo Beach, CA, formally introduced Corina to the group following which she began her presentations.

On Saturday morning, Metropolitan Gerasimos and Bishop Ioannis led the Sisterhood in prayer at the Orthros service. After breakfast, a meeting for the Sisterhood convened to elect new officers and to discuss needs for the upcoming 2024 Clergy-Laity Congress to be hosted by our Metropolis in San Diego, CA. In the afternoon, the group visited the Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring where they were greeted by Gerontissa Markella and they enjoyed the hospitality of the sisters before Vespers, Dinner and a final session with Corina.

Before returning home on Sunday, the Sisterhood worshipped at the Monastery for the Divine Liturgy and a memorial service for their fellow presvyteres who have reposed in the Lord.

Corina’s general approach to well-being incorporates two Ancient Orthodox instincts—Survival of the Body (perceived as a disconnection from God/self-preservation) and Deification of the Soul (a longing connection to God the Creator through the Holy Spirit)—combined with Modern Science (to address impact shaped by experience). Ultimately, the goal is to address illness of the soul (sin) and illness of the body (cognitive, behavioral, or somatic) to achieve well-being. When discussing true healing, we are to recognize:

Secular wellness - Healing of the physical body by restoring it to a sound state with treatment

Orthodox Christian wellness - Healing of the soul by reconciling one’s self to God and to others

As Orthodox Christians, our focus should be on soul-healing. We are called to retreat into ourselves where the Lord resides, to stand before Him, and to remain in His presence. Only here will we feel whole as it is from Him this wholeness comes.

Corina’s sessions included the use of Attention exercises in Orienting, Grounding,

Boundaries, Centering and Awareness to better position ourselves towards God, others and the environment in which we live.

Photos: Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco

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