04/06/2020

Romanian Orthodox Youth in the Americas held virtual regional Spring Retreats



ROYA New York

“For where there are two or three gathered in my name, there am I with them (Mathew 18:20).” During these troubling times of pandemic where we have become progressively more isolated, Romanian Orthodox Youth in the Americas (ROYA) provided the perfect opportunity to maintain a sense of Orthodox community. This was done in the form of a virtual spring retreat that was hosted by ROYA from the 22nd to the 25th of May. The main goal of the retreat was to practice communion with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and to fight the solitude brought on by Covid19. This was accomplished through numerous workshops and events that tackled questions that face our youth, as well as fun activities to keep them engaged. The events were held on a regional basis (East Coast, West Coast, Central USA, South USA, and Canada) with some activities

bringing all regions together.

The events were started on Friday May 22nd with an Akathist to St. Catherine, the patron saint of ROYA, led by his Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae and His Grace Bishop Ioan Casian. Afterwards the participants broke into their regional groups for introductions followed by evening prayers, and a bedtime story by Fr. Hrisostom. Saturday consisted of region specific activities and speakers, and a joint conference on the topic of courtship with Father Nikolai Sakharov. Vespers were served by Father Atanasie later that night, after which he preached a powerful sermon about our relationship with God during these troubling times. Participants were encouraged to watch their respective parish's live streams for Sunday service after which the regional groups convened with more activities and a wonderful folklore workshop by Roxanne Pletea-Popusoi. After evening prayers each of the regional ROYA chapters presented information about the purpose of ROYA and what ways participants can become more involved. Monday consisted of regional workshops and activities followed by the chance for participants to provide feedback and share their experience at the retreat with their groups. Metropolitan Nicolae and Bishop Ioan Casian once again joined us for the Akathist of the Resurrection, which was followed by a beautiful sermon by His Grace in which he compared the mission of ROYA to that of a ship spreading the word of God.

We would like to thank His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae and His Grace Bishop Ioan Casian for all of their support in the organization of our first virtual spring retreat. We pray that by next year the situation will allow the retreats to be held in person. We would also like to thank all the speakers and event organizers, without which this amazing event would not have been possible and such a success. We encourage those who participated to expand upon the connections made at the retreat, and those that were unable to attend to keep in contact with ROYA for upcoming events.

Darius Sabău

ROYA Midwest

The Midwest ROYA Virtual Spring Retreat was a major success! We did a wide variety of activities together all of which were led by different members, allowing us to learn more about each other and our heritage through faith. Some of these activities included a watch party of the documentary on Father Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa "7 Cuvinte," a book club on the memoir written by Princess Ileana of Romania titled "I Live Again," Romanian Orthodox bingo, baking workshop where we made Cremeschnitte (Cremes) together, and a Romanian heritage scavenger hunt. We also had an interactive discussion led by Father Silviu Bunta where we

talked about how Orthodoxy is not a system and how this affects both our traditions and our stance on relevant and sometimes controversial social matters. The small group setting allowed for intimate discussions and the feeling of being supported and respected by one another. The strong bond formed between participants from the Midwest retreat made us all anticipate future ROYA even., in person and online.

Diana Vancea

ROYA Ontario

We in ROYA Ontario were blessed this past Memorial Day long weekend to share in the spiritual retreat of the feast of friendship alongside a joyful group of youth from East to West, Edmonton to Montreal. It was a blessing to be able to share in a variety of activities through a digital platform that while artificial in nature, still served a greater good in enabling us to bond in discussion and fun activities, all centering along the theme of “When the Two Become One”. This title of a book by American Schema-monk Joachim Parr spurred our thoughts and vision seeking out what Marriage in the Orthodox Christian sense should embody, from the courtship stage to a day to day routine once bound in Christ. Starting Friday we were able to enjoy a theatre of analysis through role playing scenarios that contrasted husband and wife’s opposing viewpoints when found in common marital predicaments: mismanagement of funds, disciplining of children, or the best environment to raise one’s family and the roles each spouse should focus on. Saturday’s fun event centered upon a “Kahoot” of a time, testing participants knowledge of the lives of the Saints, seeking to draw common ground and knowledge for a Christ inspired life.

Like many of the other members of ROYA, we were blessed in common moments of spiritually absorbance from inspired sources such as Fr. Hrisostom who enlightened us with the deeper meaning behind Romanian Bazme/Children’s stories and Fr. Nikolai Saharov that emphasized the fairy tale nature of the Orthodox Christian perspective; in particular the purity that we should be seeking to approach marriage with.

On Sunday we were blessed to hear from Fr. Geoffrey Korz and the mature attitude we should have on our journey towards a Christ centered union, from basic principles of seeking a spouse, navigating courtship and how to be productive while single, to the very purposes of marriage itself. Besides the evening and morning prayers we were blessed to share time together in journal prompts which also permeated our inner life seeking personal answers that reflected on said activities and speakers. These sought to answer questions like what it means for the two to become one, the roles of each spouse and how to serve others as a preparation for

serving one another in marriage.

Finally, we were blessed to incorporate our sense of taste through a baking class held by one of our very own youth, uniting ingredients into a delectable traditional *salam de biscuiti* desert, and our kinesthetic sense in a postural re-education class for all those needing a pick me up while sitting at their desks. Overall, it is easy to say we felt truly blessed and transcendentally connected by the end of our time together, in spite of the distance and quality Wi-Fi connectivity. We have faith to believe our nous was able to descend just a bit more into our hearts and enable Christ to better unite all His members as one.

ROYA California

Our experience together was a blessing. The participants stated towards the end that they felt like having this retreat allowed them to feel more Romanian and Orthodox for the weekend. It was a great change of pace from everyone's busy lives in the world of school and work, where many of us feel like it is hard to find God. We are grateful for all the priests that spent time with us to share things that we can apply to our own lives. Our theme, though broad, was "How to work towards a relationship with God?" The conferences provided answers to this in an interesting fashion. The communal prayers were also a breath of fresh air. In addition, we had a Jeopardy game geared towards improving our knowledge of our Romanian heritage. Overall, though virtual, the 'retreat' fulfilled the definition of itself. We all got a chance to come together, pray together, learn together, and get to know one another a bit better. We thank God, His Eminence Nicolae, His Grace Ioan Casian, Fr. Atanasie, and the rest of the guest speakers: Fr. Calinic Berger, Fr. Paul Volmensky, and Fr. Nikolai Sakharov. Thank you to all the organizers for putting this together. We look forward to the next ROYA event so that we can once again come together and be with the rest of our family!

Pompiliu Gîrlonța

Source