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San Francisco Presbyteres Sisterhood Retreat Focuses on Resilience



By Presvytera Dimitra Dogias (President of Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Sisterhood of Presbyteres)

The Sisterhood of Presbyteres from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco gathered virtually over Zoom for their annual retreat on January 22 – 23, 2021. The theme of the retreat was “Real Time Resilience – Cultivating Self-Awareness to Understand What is Going on in the Moment”.

Their gathering began on Friday evening with the Service of Paraklesis led by Rev. Father Niko Bekris from the Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church in Castro Valley, CA, with Presvytera Irene Supica from Spokane, WA chanting. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos also joined in prayer, and following the service he offered a greeting where he commended the Presbyteres for their enthusiastic response to this retreat by sharing, “We have complicated our lives unnecessarily, and we can simplify our lives deliberately. We have done that in some ways, and we can continue to explore other ways to continue that trend.” He continued on to address the theme of the retreat with this message, “Reclaim resiliency for your lives. There is no need to ponder in despair. Look to tomorrow – look at the hope and joy

that await us – and cross over the river, climb the mountain, pull yourselves out of the abyss – and focus on God, as your guide, and the Most Holy Theotokos and your helper and Protectress.”

Sisterhood President Presvytera Dimitra Dogias welcomed the 40 participants, sharing her vision to create a forum for dialogue, spiritual nourishment and personal growth.

On Saturday morning the retreat resumed, led in prayer by Metropolis Chancellor His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea. The Presvyteres had an opportunity to interact in Zoom breakout groups for informal discussion and sharing. The main session of the retreat was led by Licensed Social Worker Lea Christo, an Orthodox Christian and professor of Practice and Rehabilitation Services at Assumption University in Worcester, MA. The presentation addressed stress, responsibilities and duties that contribute to stress, and response mechanisms to stress. The concepts of self-compassion and self-kindness were discussed along with burnout. During the retreat, the Presvyteres engaged discussions and exercises in small breakout groups to guide them on a path towards resiliency in their lives.

In his closing remarks, Metropolitan Gerasimos challenged the Presvyteres with this message, “Now is the time to recover from the pandemic in an emotional way. It is a time to remember the challenges of this past year and use them as a lesson in resilience and how we can take the struggles of the past and use them as opportunities for tomorrow, to become more visionary in how we live our lives, how we live our faith, and how we can shift our priorities so that we are living in the moment – not worrying about yesterday, not being fearful about tomorrow. Live for today, prepare for tomorrow, but not with fear – prepare with faith, with prayer and with love.”

The Sisterhood is hopeful that they will return to an in-person retreat once again at Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center in Dunlap, CA in January 2022.

PHOTOS (Courtesy of Metropolis of San Francisco Presvyteres Sisterhood

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