



**DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM & EDUCATION**  
**DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA & EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA**  
325 NORTH WALNUT STREET  
BATH, PA 18014

December 9, 2019

Your Eminence, Very Reverend Fathers, Fathers, Brothers & Sisters in Christ,  
Master Bless!

Glory to Jesus Christ!

On November 16, 2019, over thirty-five women representing the Diocese of Eastern PA, Diocese of New York/New Jersey, Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., Diocese of the Midwest, ROCOR, and the Greek Archdiocese attended the Annual Women's Retreat held at St. Tikhon's Seminary sponsored by the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern PA.

Fr. Theodore Petrides, parish priest at Ss. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church and our guest speaker, opened the retreat with prayers. This year's topic was "We are Pilgrims on this Earth." During the morning session, Fr. Theodore spoke on the history of pilgrimages, how all Orthodox Christians are on a lifelong pilgrimage of the heart, and then shared some of his personal experiences as a pilgrim. These personal experiences included trips to the Holy Land and about the time he and his family lived in Greece. Before breaking for lunch, Fr. Theodore divided the ladies up for a "break-out session" to share their own pilgrimage experiences.

During lunch, the ladies were given time to visit the bookstore, tour the museum, and walk the monastery grounds. Matushka Emilia Burns graciously fed us two homemade soups, salad, and dessert. She also provided us a delicious and filling continental breakfast that morning.

The afternoon session was filled with wonderful stories by Fr. Theodore of Orthodox Christians who excelled on their pilgrimage throughout this earthly life. Some of his stories are from the book *Ascetics in the World*, which he helped to translate from Greek into English. He shared many inspiring miracles that happened on the Holy Mountain, in Egypt, and at St. Paisios Monastery in Arizona. During the afternoon break-out session, Fr. Theodore gave everyone self-reflection handouts for a spiritual health and growth evaluation.

We are currently in the process of planning a Spring Women's Retreat for Saturday, February 22nd at St. Tikhon's Monastery. Although a speaker has yet to be confirmed, we are speaking with a couple of potential people. Based on surveys collected, some recommendations for future retreats include hosting it at Fr. Noah's church in Souderton, PA, Holy Protection Monastery, or the Antiochian Village. Ideas for speakers include Fr. Noah (from Souderton), Fr. Sergius, Dr. Mary Ford, or Bishop-Elect Alexis Trader.

If anyone has ideas or suggestions for future department activities, please contact me at: [officermillie79@gmail.com](mailto:officermillie79@gmail.com).

Matushka Emilia Shepherd  
Interim Director of Curriculum & Education