

ORTHODOX WOMEN'S WEEKEND RETREAT
Calgary, September 8th - 10th, 2006



What a blessing we sisters in Christ, were given by attending our sixth Orthodox Women's' Retreat, once again held at the Entheos Retreat Centre, just west of Calgary!

All our services were beautifully served throughout the weekend by **Fr. Taras Krochak** from St. Vladimir's Ukranian Orthodox Church, **Fr. Michael Lupu** from St. Mary's Romanian Orthodox Church, **Fr. Demetrios Rougas** from St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, **Fr. Ibrahim Chahoud** from the Antiochian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation and by **Fr. Larry Reinheimer** from Holy Martyr Peter the Aleut Orthodox Church - all priests representing the different church families in Calgary.

Shirley Dinn, one of our four coordinators, warmly welcomed the ladies who arrived from Texas, Washington, Oshawa, Victoria, Cranbrook, Vernon, Fort Steele, Abottsford, Saskatoon, Northbank, Edmonton and Calgary. A number of ladies were wives of priests and one family attending, covered three generations! The other coordinators, **Ghada Ziadeh**, **Myra Reinheimer** and **Joan Popowitch** all contributed lovingly so that the schedule for the entire weekend was carried out beautifully.

Yet another true blessing was our speaker, **Khoureih Linda Funk**. Linda is the wife of Fr Bernard Funk, the mother of four adult children. Her life is a full one, as she teaches piano, is an Associate for the Antiochian Christian Education Department, conducting teacher-training workshops in Western Canada, the Northwestern States, and Alaska for the Orthodox Christian Education Commission. **Khoureih Linda** has a diploma of theology from Central Pentecostal College in Saskatoon. She, Fr. Bernard and most of her family live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Khoureih Linda shared her past experiences in such an honest, open manner. Our hearts were all touched. It seemed that each one of us could relate to her life's adventure in one way or another.

She spoke to us on the topic "Our Journey to Healing in Christ". As broken human beings apart from Christ, we were shown how suffering, self knowledge, death and resurrection were all part of a cycle which we partake of during our entire lives. Linda quoted Mother Raphaela of The Monastery of The Holy Myrrhbearers in Otego New York, in saying that self knowledge is the beginning of healing. Here we must honestly look at ourselves, to see who we truly are. Are we controlling our world or are we trusting our God to do just that? Kh. Linda wondered if we were responsible only to love the world, not to run it! The union of our will with God's will, will unite us to God. To become like God is our purpose here on earth.

Kh.Linda presented prerequisites to our healing, introducing two helpers that God sends us, stressing that sorrow and suffering are inescapable, are companions. They can connect us with our hearts, for the heart, not the intellect is the centre of our being. Our suffering helps our hearts receive God. The purpose of suffering is not to suffer but to lead us to death and resurrection, where our healing lies. We accept suffering as part of life. We live death and resurrection experiences all our lives. Christ's sufferings do no good unless we accept His sufferings. God is in our sufferings and we find God through them. Suffering and death are always followed by resurrection. Our life in Christ is always about transfiguration. Christ is transfigured and we will also be! Our emphasis is on holiness - to be holy people.

The Retreat ended in a most positive manner, with heartfelt thanks to Kh. Linda for her very informative and life changing presentation. May our Lord be with us all as we look forward to yet another Women's Retreat next year! The 2007 dates are Sept 21st - 23rd.

Respectfully submitted,

Marina Mantle of St. Peter the Aleut Orthodox Church, Calgary, Alberta