

**First Annual AWE Fall Retreat  
October 12, 2019: Holy Protection Monastery, White Haven, PA**



Our first annual AWE Fall Retreat, which took place Saturday, October 12 at Holy Protection Monastery in White Haven, Pennsylvania, was a great success, which will certainly become a highlight to look forward to each year. Thanks to our President, Rula Khoury, and AWE Officers, who organized the retreat, thanks to our Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Don Shadid, who spoke at the retreat, and thanks to the warm hospitality of the sisters at Holy Protection Monastery, this was a special day of fellowship and growth.

Early that morning we were blessed to take part in a beautiful Liturgy in the monastery church, which is dedicated to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. The chanting of the nuns in the quiet, candlelit church turned our busy minds to the depth of the prayers of the Liturgy.

Following breakfast and registration, Fr. Don Shadid, AWE Spiritual Advisor, gave an edifying presentation on the subject of the retreat: *Resisting Temptation in the Modern World*.

Fr. Don explained how temptation doesn't necessarily lead to sin - it can be ignored and rejected. However if we don't turn away from the temptation, then next we find ourselves rationalizing the suggestion, and we will soon have a list of seemingly good reasons why we should go right ahead and act on it.



As Fr. Don reminded us, our Lord himself was tempted three times by the devil in the wilderness - and therefore one sure line of defense, when we face temptation, is to turn to Christ in prayer.

Fr. Don also reminded us that there is no salvation without temptation. For if we do not have cause to struggle, how will we make progress? And how will we learn to be humble and turn for help to the Lord if we do not recognize our weakness?

Father Don's presentation was accompanied by lively discussion, a delightful lunch with more time for fellowship, and introductions by the AWE President and Officers.



Later that afternoon we were given a tour of the Monastery. Our gracious guide, Sister Marina, began the tour by explaining the origins of the Monastery's patronal feast: the Protection of the

Most Holy Theotokos. This feast celebrates an episode which occurred during the tenth century, when the great city of Constantinople, capital of the Christian Roman Empire, was miraculously saved from an overwhelming enemy fleet. At this time the Fool for Christ, St. Andrew, and his disciple Epiphanius, saw, during an all-night vigil in the Blachernae Church in Constantinople, our most Holy Lady Theotokos surrounded by an assembly of saints, praying to her Son and spreading her protecting veil over the faithful in the crowded church.



The Monastery's mountainside location was even more beautiful that afternoon, with Pennsylvania's fall foliage at its peak, and the monastery gardens beckoned us to a quiet stroll. Aside from the main building with the monastic cells and the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, the Monastery also has a bakery, an icon painting studio, woodworking and candle making shops and a guesthouse, as well as the garden, fruit orchards and a greenhouse.

At the close of an edifying and inspiring day we attended Vespers before saying our goodbyes. It was a much-needed break, a true retreat from our busy lives, and we returned to our families and parishes encouraged and renewed.

Anna Veniamin  
AWE Religious Coordinator

