

True/False? Right/Wrong?

The Challenge of Relativism Today

Sheptytsky Institute Celebrates Annual Study Days in Ottawa (2011)

This summer the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies (MASI) hosted Study Days for the fourth consecutive year. Once again, it proved to be an Eastern Christian feast for the mind and heart.

With well over 100 participants, MASI reached out to Eastern and Western Christians in offering an academic and spiritual conference to enlighten and deepen their faith. The theme this year True/False? Right/Wrong? The Challenge of Relativism Today initiated a lively exchange of views and debate among those who participated. The four-day gathering of plenaries, workshops and prayer provided the intellectual and spiritual richness typically experienced in Study Days.

Plenary speakers and topics were as follows:

Dr. Valerie Karras (Assistant Professor of Church History at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University located in Dallas, Texas) Topic: Relativism and Culture: Connections and Difference

Dr. Peter Bouteneff (Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, which is situated in Yonkers, New York) Topic: Relativism, Tolerance, and Heresy: Negotiating the Waters

Father John Jillions (Associate Professor at the Sheptytsky Institute in the Faculty of Theology at Saint Paul University) Topic: Jesus – Myth, Metaphor or Messiah?

Workshop leaders consisted of Fr. Andriy Chirovsky, Fr. Andrew Onuferko, Fr. Michael Winn, Presvitera Melita Mudri-Zubacz, Subdeacon Brian Anastasi Butcher, Dr. Catherine Clifford, Fr. Lucien Coutu, and Fr. Maxym Lysack. Workshop topics varied from discussing what happened at Vatican II and why this is important for Eastern Churches, responses to New Age “spiritualities”, other churches and other faiths, early Christian teaching on the struggle with tempting thoughts, and Cantor training.

Here is a sampling of what some of the participants said about their experience:

- It was wonderful to be exposed so intensely again after many years to the Eastern liturgy which was a home coming for me. I am enriched again!
- It's inspiring to have people come from far and wide to satisfy a hunger for education about the Eastern Church. Study Days are like being on Mt. Tabor (the one in the Bible, not California) and not wanting to come down from the mountain.
- I have had a desire to come here to learn and indeed, God thought it was time.
- The music was wonderful. Father Peter Galadza was a joyful presence throughout all the services.

- This has given me a chance to learn, reflect and study while meeting others from various places and walks of life.
- I am simply in awe. This was my first experience at Study Days and I hope to be here again next year.
- I greatly appreciated the connection between people from different churches, the Liturgy which was so amazing, the relaxed atmosphere, the deeply spiritual atmosphere that was present in and outside of the Chapel.
- The musical performance by the children at the community supper was beautiful and included everyone.
- I always enjoy Study Days, especially the sense of community, fellowship, friendship and inclusivity.
- Interesting theme and very timely. Excellent workshops and very pertinent plenary speakers.
- The integration of faith, prayer, music and scholarship in context of a faith community of all ages.
- I came here to learn and leave with a sense that I got a head start and some very clear directions.

MASI is preparing for Study Days 2012 next summer and anticipates another successful event.