

SUPRASL & THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

Impact Report and Proposal for Further Development p 1 - 10

Participant List page 10

Verbatim excerpts from the Focus Group 11 - 17

“SUPRASL offers the OCA an international connection difficult to replicate in normal youth ministry, a way to cultivate future lay and clergy leadership, and an experience of Orthodoxy beyond America's borders.”

- The partnership thesis articulated by Archpriest Justin Patterson

CREATING AN INTERNATIONAL FORMATION NETWORK

for OCA young adults

Based on two post-event focus-group conversations with OCA participants
of SUPRASL Summer 2026

Executive Summary

The participation of young adults from the Orthodox Church in America in SUPRASL has the potential to-and in some ways already does-make an impact that extends well beyond a successful summer program.

For OCA participants, SUPRASL provides something difficult to create through parish-based or diocesan or all-church specific programming alone: an opportunity to encounter Orthodox Christianity as a genuinely international reality while simultaneously discovering their own place within the life of the Church.

Two focus-group conversations held after SUPRASL Summer 2026 show the original case for the partnership being confirmed almost point for point in participants' own words. Young adults experienced renewed belonging to the worldwide Orthodox Church; encountered peers who take their faith seriously; formed relationships that continue beyond the gathering; saw meaningful lay leadership in action; and returned to their parishes with renewed confidence and motivation to serve.

The experience is also reciprocal. OCA young adults did not simply receive from older Orthodox cultures. Their presence encouraged Orthodox Christians both in Poland and among their fellow participants, helping those gathered to recognize that American Orthodoxy has something real to contribute to the worldwide Church, over and above YouTube influencers.

SUPRASL can become an important partner for the OCA in developing young-adult ministry - not as an OCA program, but as an international platform through which OCA young adults can be formed, connected, equipped and sent back into the life of the Church. The opportunity now is to move from participation to partnership.

SUPRASL Summer 2026 at a Glance

21	85+	20+	28 years
17 Students 1 Bishop 1 Priest Family	total participants	countries represented	from one participant's formative visit to his return as clergy

The Impact

1. International Connection and a Larger Sense of Belonging

As a relatively small, albeit growing, community of believers, the Orthodox Church in America is geographically the largest Orthodox Church in the world, and numerically one of the smaller autocephalous churches.

One effect of a modest population spread over such a large geographical area the Young adults of the OCA may in some instances live hundreds of miles from one another and may encounter relatively few Orthodox peers in daily life. Naturally, when considering the other jurisdictions,

especially in metropolitan areas, that fact changes a bit, but the fact remains that opportunities for our young adults to form deep and lasting friendships with Orthodox peers are few and far between, although that too is changing with the success of the Assembly of Bishops IPA and OYM initiatives.

SUPRASL creates a temporary but powerful opportunity: it allows an OCA young adult to experience the Church not merely as “my parish”, diocese or “jurisdiction” but as a worldwide community in which they have a place.

“At least for us Americans, the Orthodox Church in America is a minority here. And I think there's some sense of similar struggles that comes from that - a shared understanding of what that experience is like.”

“It's encouraging as an American to have contact with people who live in countries where Orthodoxy is a lot older. In a way it was encouraging to see that what matters to them and the challenges they have being Orthodox in the world isn't so different from my experience. It was really encouraging to me and reminded me that I am not alone.”

I'm from a small Orthodox parish in Montana, and there aren't many Orthodox people there. At my parish there were actually only about 125 people, and I'm 25. I found SUPRASL really encouraging because I realized that, for the most part, if people came all the way to SUPRASL, they were deeply serious about their faith. You can't really force someone to come and stay for something like this. Everyone who came was really encouraging to me because it showed me that there are people my age who take their faith seriously. That's not always the case with young people in America. Sometimes it's simply, "Mom made me come to church."

The encounter worked in both directions. Orthodox young adults from Australia, the Middle East and Europe were genuinely encouraged to discover that Orthodoxy is not merely surviving, or a digital phenomenon, but growing in North America - through monasteries, parishes and converts, and that it has a rich and deeply connected history to their own national histories.

It was really encouraging to me to see how interested people are in Orthodoxy in America. It made me feel that we have something real to offer the Orthodox world even if we are younger and smaller.

SUPRASL should not be understood as an OCA program sending Americans to “learn from Europe.” Europe forms American Orthodox young adults, and American Orthodox young adults encourage Orthodox Christians in Europe. That reciprocity is one of SUPRASL's greatest potential contributions to the OCA ministry.

2. Serious Faith Without Insularity

One of the most striking findings from the focus groups is the description of the community as both serious and relaxed. Participants encountered young people making intentional decisions to honor Christ and follow Him. At the same time, the atmosphere was grounded rather than socially or ideologically intense.

SUPRASL demonstrated that young people can be deeply committed to Orthodoxy without constructing a particular Orthodox subculture around themselves. The gathering was noted as being:

- serious but joyful;
- traditional but not performative;
- international but not political;
- spiritually demanding but socially relaxed;
- structured but participatory.

That combination is difficult to reproduce through a conventional conference model.

I'm a convert. It was really valuable to meet people from other countries who grew up Orthodox or who had a much stronger foothold in the faith. It was also interesting to see how different people lived out Orthodoxy.

One of my biggest takeaways was that I want to go back and be Orthodox in America, rather than trying to copy what I think Orthodoxy is supposed to look like. Even in Poland, where Orthodox Christians are a very small minority, you can see people simply living as Orthodox Christians. They aren't "LARPing" or cosplaying Orthodoxy—they're just living it.

I don't want to be someone in America who is copying Orthodox people from Russia or Poland or Finland. Those are beautiful countries, but I want to be Orthodox in America. Sometimes we're trying to imitate other Orthodox cultures, while at the same time, uniquely American Orthodox practices are developing right in front of us. That's something I really took away from the experience.

3. A Retreat Experience That Produces Spiritual Formation

Participants did not describe SUPRASL as a conference. Some called it a retreat, distinguishing it from a conventional youth camp. Some noted that the combination of services, shared meals, prayer and community created the spiritual retreat he had been looking for. Others felt the best word for what SUPRASL 2026 was is ‘gathering’.

The spiritual life at SUPRASL is not an add-on to a youth program. Worship structures the experience through morning services, evening prayer, the Midnight Liturgy, prayer before and after meals, prayer within activities such as iconography, and life in proximity to a monastery.

The Deeper Impact

Young adults experience a way of life in which prayer, friendship, learning, work and recreation all combine to create a life of thanksgiving.

4. Confidence, Lay Leadership and Service

SUPRASL does not primarily teach young adults about leadership. It places them in an environment where they experience themselves as capable of leadership. Participants returned with greater confidence that they could serve the Church without waiting for a particular age, position or ordained role.

I was impressed with how much a lay person can do within the church, because so many of the workshop leaders were lay people. That wasn't something that I had seen before. And it was an example to me of how I might serve the Church in the future.

The Church needs future priests and deacons, but it also needs teachers, artists, musicians, organizers, writers, parish volunteers, youth leaders, ministry entrepreneurs, cultural leaders and people willing to create new initiatives.

Participants also experienced sustained, informal access to bishops - something most young adults rarely encounter outside a formal receiving line.

Having unstructured time with bishops is so rare. It's often in a very formal setting. To have a week of unstructured time with Bishop Gerasim was really cool. And then with the bishops of the Polish Church as well, Archbishop Jacob and Bishop Andrew, just added to it.

I need to really be proactive about greeting people, new people who come to church... sometimes I feel uncomfortable and I'm dragging my feet, but I should jump to do that for people - you don't know how much that means to them.

SUPRASL changed the way I think about service in the Church in the long-term sense. It definitely gave me a different attitude toward involvement in the Church. For lack of a better word, I became a little more "chill" about it.

Sometimes when you don't know what you're doing, you can become uptight and think, "I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what I'm supposed to do."

SUPRASL made me think, "Just be normal. Don't try to be something you're not. Take a role in the Church and just do it. Don't overthink it."

It also demystified ministry for me. You just saw people doing things.

It changed how I think about my vocation. I brought home the desire to connect more with people my age at my parish and share the joy in Christ that I experienced at SUPRASL. If we can experience that joy with a group of international people, I think we can bring it home to our parishes and share it with the people we are around all the time.

5. Relationships That Become Ministry

The clearest evidence that SUPRASL is more than a one-week experience is found in the relationships participants began developing. They described continuing conversations several times each week and believed those relationships could remain meaningful years into the future.

I have continued to have weekly discussions with friends I met at SUPRASL. We want to learn how to continue supporting each other as brothers and sisters.

Evidence of Return: Parish-Level Impact

The strongest signal of real impact is what participants do after returning home. One participant described an already-scheduled presentation at her diocesan conference and active outreach to other young people. Samuel returned wanting to prepare a presentation for his parish and become more involved in youth ministry. Thea, who was a volunteer at SUPRASL 2026, is organising her own youth event in Texas and has been working with SUPRAL on that event.

I'm doing a presentation at the diocese conference in October... I've been reaching out to a couple people, especially young people who I know would be very chill about going - start thinking about it now.

The OCA does not simply send 17 participants to Poland. It sends young leaders back into its parishes. A participant becomes a witness, an advocate, a parish leader and, in time, a mentor.

“These events have left a lasting impression on me. It was great to see that the same spirit and connections people forged back then are still being made today... If the experiences that affected me so positively are now affecting others the same way, I think it points to great things ahead for the church. Honestly, I was very, very encouraged by everything.”

- Fr. Gregory Ealy, participant in the 1998 institute and returning clergy in 2026

Reaching Those Who Fall Between Existing Structures

SUPRASL is unusually well suited to young adults who live without strong Orthodox youth ministry, lack a substantial local Orthodox community, or do not fit neatly into existing jurisdictional structures.

“I really appreciate SUPRASL's vision of being a place for people who fall between the cracks - if there's not a strong church in the country where they live, or if there's simply not youth ministry in the church where they attend. I saw a lot of people at Suprasl coming from countries that don't have a big church, and that was something really special.”

Not every OCA young adult attends college, participates in OCF, lives near a large parish, belongs to an established young-adult group, is connected to diocesan structures, or identifies with a particular Orthodox subculture.

How SUPRASL Complements Existing OCA Programs

OCF, diocesan conferences, OYM/Assembly of Bishops programs and other initiatives all serve important purposes. The missing element participants identified was the international component. Existing programs can bring OCA young adults together; SUPRASL brings them into relationships with Orthodox young adults from around the world.

SUPRASL can function as an international layer of formation that strengthens existing OCA ministry: a young adult encounters Orthodoxy locally, participates in OCA or pan-Orthodox programs, attends SUPRASL, develops international relationships, returns with new confidence and ideas, becomes more active in parish or diocesan ministry, and eventually mentors others. Why the SUPRASL Setting Works

Because SUPRASL operates in the context of an autocephalous Church without competing jurisdictional claims, it avoids some of the politics that complicate larger pan-Orthodox events. It also deliberately seeks young adults who are not already connected to official delegations or church institutions.

“One thing SUPRASL wants to do is to catch the people who aren't necessarily connected to church structures or institutions.”

- Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, SUPRASL Director

Was the Investment Worth It?

The OCA's participation in SUPRASL was clearly worthwhile. It gave young adults a rare opportunity to encounter Orthodoxy beyond the American context, deepen relationships with one another, and experience the unity of the Church as a lived reality. Meeting cradle Orthodox Christians from many cultures helped them distinguish the universal faith from the temptation to imitate traditionally Orthodox cultures, encouraging them to return home committed to living an authentically American Orthodoxy. The presence of Bishop Gerasim and other OCA clergy demonstrated meaningful pastoral investment in young adults, while the interest shown by international participants affirmed that, although the OCA is younger and smaller than many Orthodox Churches, it has something distinctive and valuable to offer the wider Orthodox world.

What the 2026 Focus Groups Tell Us

The evidence from participants can be summarized in five outcomes:

1. **Belonging.** Young adults discovered that they are part of something larger than their local parish.
2. **Formation.** They encountered a lived Orthodox Christianity integrating prayer, friendship, learning, creativity and recreation.
3. **Confidence.** They returned with greater confidence that they can participate meaningfully in the life of the Church.
4. **Relationships.** They formed friendships that continue beyond the event and, in some cases, have already generated ministry.
5. **Mission.** They returned wanting to tell others, involve friends, serve their parishes and work with other young people. This is the beginning of a network effect.

The recommendation is not for the OCA simply to continue sending participants. The greater opportunity is to develop a strategic partnership while preserving SUPRASL's relational character.

1. Continue and Expand Annual OCA Participation

Establish SUPRASL as an intentional annual opportunity for young adults who demonstrate spiritual seriousness, openness to other cultures, willingness to participate in parish life, curiosity, leadership potential, artistic or creative gifts, and a desire to serve.

Selection and follow-through should focus not only on who will benefit, but also on who is prepared to share the experience, serve locally and invite others into the network.

2. Stay Connected

Help returning participants remain connected without making the network unnecessarily institutional. The participants have already demonstrated the desire to continue these relationships.

- periodic online gatherings and small discussion groups;
- parish and diocesan presentations;
- shared projects and international collaborations;
- opportunities to mentor future participants.

3. Use SUPRASL as a Leadership Laboratory

Treat selected participants not only as recipients but as young adults ready to develop projects. SUPRASL could provide mentoring, international partners, practical experience, a platform, connections to clergy and opportunities to test ideas.

Together, the OCA and SUPRASL could create a powerful incubator for young-adult ministry.

Conclusion: From Sending Participants to Building a Network

The OCA's relationship with SUPRASL has reached a point where it can be understood as more than an annual travel opportunity. SUPRASL is providing OCA young adults with something increasingly difficult to create within a geographically dispersed Church: a lived experience of the worldwide Orthodox Church in which they themselves are active participants.

- They encounter serious young Orthodox Christians.
- They experience the liturgical life of the Church.
- They encounter different Orthodox cultures without having to imitate them.
- They discover that American Orthodoxy has something to offer.
- They develop friendships across jurisdictions and countries.
- They return home with new confidence.
- Some of those relationships are already becoming ministry.

The opportunity for the OCA is therefore not simply to send more young adults to Poland. It is to help create a network of young Orthodox Christians who know one another, learn from one another, serve their local churches and understand themselves as participants in the worldwide life of the Orthodox Church.

SUPRASL can be one of the places where that network is born.

The Orthodox Church does not need another institution. It needs more relationships, more young leaders, more imagination and more opportunities for its young adults to discover that the Church is larger than the place where they happen to worship on Sunday.

Source Note

This report draws on two focus-group conversations with OCA participants after SUPRASL Summer 2026

SUPRASL 2026 OCA Participants

Ksenia Alvarez - Diocese of the South
 Sophia Huse - Diocese of the South
 True Jones - Diocese of the South
 Edward Shea - Diocese of the South
 Nina Tarpley - Diocese of the South
 Hannah Lee - Diocese of the South
 Thea Fredrick - Diocese of the South
 Eden Lyda - Diocese of the South
 Hannah Kirk - Bulgarian Diocese
 James LeGendre - Diocese of the West
 Calista Pettit - Diocese of the West
 Tala Jarecke - Diocese of the West
 Hannah Hibbard - Diocese of the West
 Jacob Simms - Diocese of the Midwest
 Nathaniel Ijams - Diocese of New York and New Jersey
 Matthew Fleishman - Diocese of New England
 Samuel Estrada Zapata - Archdiocese of Washington D.C.
 Bishop Gerasim - Diocese of the South
 Fr Gregory Ealy - Diocese of the Midwest
 Matushka Miho Ealy - Diocese of the Midwest
 Nino Ealy - Diocese of the Midwest
 Mila Ealy - Diocese of the Midwest

SUPRASL 2026
VOICES FROM THE OCA FOCUS GROUP
*Excerpts**

**this represents only a portion of the meeting, the transcription failed at the beginning of the meeting*

A Genuinely Worldwide Room

When Fr. Justin asked how many autocephalous churches had people at SUPRASL this year, the answer itself made the case for the partnership better than any statistic could. This document gathers the fuller reflections from that focus group - in participants' own words - organized around the themes that came up again and again.

What did you experience at SUPRASL because you were surrounded by Orthodox Christians from different countries that you would not normally experience in the OCA?

“At least I think one thing that makes being in Poland special is that Orthodox Christians are a minority here. There is something meaningful about the perspective and attitude that comes from that.”

Facilitator:

What exactly is special about that? Can you say a little more about why being a minority church matters?

“At least for us Americans, the Orthodox Church in America is also a minority church. I think there is some sense of shared experience that comes from that.”

“Of course, the similarities stop at the surface level, but there is still some shared understanding of what it is like to be part of a minority church.”

Facilitator:

I think going forward that will become much more the case. The people you met in Ogrodniczki, for example, were very inspired by you when we had the picnic.

It may sound cliché after all these years since the fall of communism, but there is still this sense of, "Wow, there are Orthodox Christians in America." And to actually see young Orthodox Christians from North America and be part of that experience was a huge encouragement to them.

They're all online, regardless of their age, and they hear about the growth of Orthodoxy and the wave of converts in America. But to actually see it and experience it in person was really important to many of them.

In some way, you brought them a gift simply by coming here.

Facilitator:

Whatever opinion or vision you had of Orthodoxy and of the worldwide Orthodox Church before coming to SUPRASL, how did the experience influence that?

Did it change your opinion? Reinforce what you thought? Bring something new?

"I'm from a small Orthodox parish in Montana, and there aren't many Orthodox people there - there were actually only about 125 people, and I'm 25. I found SUPRASL really encouraging because I realized that if people came all the way to SUPRASL, they were deeply serious about their faith. You can't really force someone to come and stay for something like this. It showed me that there are people my age who take their faith seriously. That's not always the case with young people in America - sometimes it's simply, 'Mom made me come to church.'"

Asked what "serious" actually meant, participants pointed to something closer to groundedness than intensity:

"I think it's an intentionality about how they're living their lives. You could see a deep respect for the holy places we visited. That made me realize that we are all making certain decisions in our lives to honor Christ and try to follow Him."

"I have many serious young people in my parish, but some of them are a little unhinged. It's a minority, but one of the qualities of this gathering was that it didn't feel unhinged. It felt pretty grounded."

One participant connected that groundedness to something simpler still - the difference between an online faith and a lived one:

"There is something about being together in person that is really important. You can't hide behind a screen. Everything I'm hearing really comes back to the beauty of being together and sharing experiences in person. It shows how important that is for the Church."

Perhaps the most striking single reflection in the entire focus group came from a convert participant, describing what meeting cradle Orthodox Christians from other countries taught her about her own identity as an American Orthodox Christian.

"A lot of the people I met were cradle Orthodox. I'm a convert, and I'm pretty sure 99% of my parish is convert, so it was really valuable to meet people who grew up Orthodox or had a much stronger foothold in the faith, and to see how differently people lived it out. One of my biggest takeaways was that I want to go back and be Orthodox in America, rather than trying to copy what I think Orthodoxy is supposed

to look like. Even in Poland, where Orthodox Christians are a very small minority, you can see people simply living as Orthodox Christians - they aren't 'LARPing' or cosplaying Orthodoxy, they're just living it. I don't want to be someone in America who is copying Orthodox people from Russia or Poland or Finland. Those are beautiful countries, but I want to be Orthodox in America. Sometimes we're trying to imitate other Orthodox cultures, while uniquely American Orthodox practices are developing right in front of us."

This is a different and in some ways more mature version of the "cultural exposure" benefit typically claimed for study abroad. SUPRASL did not just expose this participant to other Orthodox cultures - it helped her stop trying to imitate them, and start owning her own.

"Another takeaway that changes how I see the Church came from meeting international people. We had people from Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania, and I realized that even in countries where Orthodoxy is the majority religion, the number of young people who are actively participating in the Church is not necessarily a majority of the population. As Americans, we sometimes have a fantasy that Orthodox countries are filled with Orthodox people who are all actively practicing. I hadn't traveled enough to know otherwise. It gave me a sense that, while the solutions are going to be different, some of the ministry challenges are actually very similar across cultures-especially the challenge of reaching a secular and religiously apathetic generation. We have a lot of work to do, but we also have a lot of things we can do together."

"This relates to what you just said about there being no "unhingedness," and also to why I was surprised that the age range worked. I thought there would be some obvious wife-hunting-or spouse-hunting-but there really wasn't. Perhaps it was happening in the background, but it was very neutral. "

"I'm going to add to what Nathan just said. At my church, sometimes it can be a little difficult for young women in that regard, and I had talked about that beforehand. I didn't feel that at all at SUPRASL. There was no one obviously hunting for a husband or a wife. There were connections that happened between different people, but it wasn't the focus. I really appreciated that."

Facilitator:

You're all part of the OCA, and depending on where you are and your history in the Church, that can mean something different to each of you.

As the OCA grows and spreads into new missions and communities, I think it becomes increasingly important to have a sense of what it means to belong to this family.

There are opportunities such as the All-American Council for young people to meet, but those gatherings are often skewed toward people 18 and under.

So I'm curious: Was it valuable for you to come all the way to SUPRASL and meet other young people from the OCA? Is there value in going to a third place that isn't common to any of you?

And beyond that, what is the value of developing friendships with Orthodox Christians from other countries? Is there something you learned or took away from those friendships?

“I really did find it valuable to make connections with other people from the OCA. SUPRASL was a life-changing experience for me because it changed how I think about certain things. Being able to share that experience with other Americans and know that I'm not the only one who experienced it was really valuable. So beyond meeting people from other countries, it was great to meet more Americans as well. “

“One thing that was particularly meaningful at this gathering was having Bishop Gerasim there for the entire event. Having unstructured time with a bishop is incredibly rare. Usually, it's in a very formal setting. To have a week of unstructured time with Bishop Gerasim was really cool. “

“In the most practical sense, you meet people who are very active in their local churches, and then you can collaborate on church projects with them. My imagination goes wild when I think about how many projects could come out of this if we simply create spaces for people who are doing exciting things in their local churches to meet one another.”

A Genuinely Worldwide Gathering, by Design

Fr. Justin asked directly how many autocephalous churches had participants at SUPRASL this year. The answer:

- Ecumenical Patriarchate (Australia, UK, Netherlands)
- Patriarchate of Jerusalem
- Patriarchate of Antioch
- Patriarchate of Moscow
- Patriarchate of Romania
- Patriarchate of Serbia
- Church of Greece
- Patriarchate of Bulgaria
- Autonomous Church of Finland
- ROCOR
- Orthodox Church in America

Two more jurisdictions applied but could not ultimately take part: the Patriarchate of Alexandria (applicants from Ghana, Uganda and Kenya, prevented by visa and funding constraints) and the Patriarchate of Georgia (applied too late, with no space remaining).

This breadth is not accidental. Fr. Joseph explained that SUPRASL deliberately does not invite local churches to send official delegations:

“One thing that is intentional about SUPRASL is that we don't invite local churches to send official delegations. We feel somewhat differently about the OCA because I know the people and the context, but in general, our experience with organizations such as Syndesmos was that if you invite a patriarch or bishop to send a delegation, you tend to get their nephew or people who are already connected to the institutional structure. One thing SUPRASL wants to do is reach people who aren't necessarily connected to church structures or institutions.”

Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, facilitator

“One thing I didn't want to let go of was something you pointed out: that SUPRASL can be a place for people who fall between the cracks. Maybe they don't have a strong church in the country where they live. Maybe there isn't youth ministry in their jurisdiction. I think we saw a lot of people at SUPRASL who came from countries that don't have a large Orthodox Church or strong youth structures. That was something really special about SUPRASL.”

Did SUPRASL make you think differently about your role in the Church?

Did it change how you think about serving in the Church, your own ministry, your vocation, or how you might become involved-as clergy, lay leadership, or simply by becoming more active in your parish?

Did SUPRASL inspire anything like that?

“It gave me a different attitude toward involvement in the Church. I became a little more ‘chill’ about it. Sometimes when you don't know what you're doing, you can become uptight. SUPRASL made me think, ‘Just be normal. Don't try to be something you're not. Take a role in the Church and just do it. Don't overthink it.’ It also demystified ministry for me - you just saw people doing things.”

“It changed how I think about my vocation. I brought home the desire to connect more with people my age at my parish and share the joy in Christ that I experienced at SUPRASL. If we can experience that joy with a group of international people, I think we can bring it home to our parishes.”

“I realized I need to be more proactive about greeting new people who come to church. There were so many people who greeted me at SUPRASL. Sometimes I do that at my parish, but sometimes I feel uncomfortable or drag my feet. You don't know how much something as simple as greeting someone can mean to them.”

"I heard another reflection - someone was impressed by how much a layperson can do within the Church. So many of the workshop leaders at SUPRASL were laypeople, and that wasn't something they had seen before."

If you were responsible for OCA young adult ministry in your deanery, diocese, or for the whole OCA, what would you want to do with SUPRASL in the future?

Would you simply continue sending people? Would you want to become more involved in organizing? Would you want to do additional events?

Would it make sense to have OCA-specific events in a place like Supraśl? For example, an OCA group could come to SUPRASL, spend time together, and meet people from other countries.

What could you imagine?

"I think it would be really neat to bring some of the people from other countries to America."

"We can build it together. There isn't a lot happening structurally in the OCA right now at the national level for young adults, although there are some good things happening through the Assembly of Bishops' OYM ministry - but they miss the international component. One of the problems is that OCF is very robust, but it excludes people who are 23 or older, as well as people who never go to college."

- Archpriest Justin Patterson

"I'd love to see a SUPRASL-style event or spin-off event somewhere in America. I've personally talked to a lot of people about SUPRASL, and they think it's a great idea, but they can't come to Poland. They don't have the time or money, and some people have military obligations or other commitments that make international travel difficult."

"There is precedent for this. After the international events in Russia in the early 1990s, a group of Russian young people came to St. Tikhon's. They flew into Chicago, and we drove from Chicago to New York, visiting major Orthodox sites along the way, Cleveland, St. Tikhon's, New York, St. Vladimir's, and so forth. In 2023, Archbishop Daniel of Chicago invited us to organize an event there. We recruited about 22 international students, and the diocese recruited only three from their own diocese. It ultimately didn't happen." Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak

A Thirty-Four-Year Circle: Father Gregory's Reflection

The focus group closed with a reflection from Fr. Gregory Ealy, who had deliberately held back to let the younger participants speak first. His words connect this year's gathering to a lineage stretching back more than three decades - to the very origins of what would become SUPRASL.

“As Father Joseph mentioned when we were at SUPRASL, I attended the 1992 event in Russia and the 1998 event in Supraśl. Those events had a lasting impression on me. It was really good to see that the same spirit and the same kinds of connections that people were making then are still being made now. I don't want to say that nothing has changed, because obviously many things have changed - but in that regard, nothing has changed, and that's a really good thing. I was very encouraged by everything, not just the setting, the Church, Poland, or the Sunday liturgy, but especially by the people. If this spirit of connectivity among young people could continue in other places and through other events, I think that would be extremely positive for the Church.”

- Archpriest Gregory Ealy