

# Monastic Musings

News and Views of the Eastern Rite Monastics  
of the  
Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church

August 2010

## *From the Idle keyboard*

*by: hieroschemamonk Barb*

August has finally arrived. We are one month closer to Fall which is a blessing in itself! This has been one very hot summer this year. I look around me and everything appears to be thirsty due to all of the heat and lack of rain... The farmers have to irrigate heavily to maintain the crops. Homeowners have been asked not to water their yards. So, everything around us is looking like a mowed hay field drying...Sad, but then Mother Nature is in control of the weather! Maybe with the La Nina starting to form, we will start to get some rain to bring the earth back the life.

This month is full of major feast days for the church. There is the Feast of Transfiguration; Dormition (death) of Mary, Mother of Jesus; and the Beheading of John the Baptist... But instead of my spending time teaching about a Feast, I am going to concentrate this month on the Monastic Daily Rule... I want to finish up what I started last month concerning Eastern Rite Monasticism. Mother Myrella will do the teaching and share her spiritual thoughts about the Feast Days.

Bishop Chuck has told me that the newsletter is being printed and left out for the members of Our Lady of Peace Cathedral; so, I wanted to include material for the children of the parish. I am including some line drawings of Orthodox Icons for the children to color if they so desire. The icon drawings are found on the last two pages of the newsletter. Icons are the "windows into heaven" for the Orthodox faithful. They are used much in the same way that the Roman Catholic Church uses statues. They are writings about biblical events and saints of the church. Mother Myrella and I feel a closeness with Our Lady of Peace Cathedral even though we have not had the pleasure to meet the members of the congregation, but in time we will be able to travel to Cincinnati to visit with the congregation!

## **Monastic Daily Rule:**

*by: hieroschemamonk Barb*

In the last newsletter, I gave an overview of what monasticism is as practiced by the Eastern Rite Monastics of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church. In this article I will cover the following areas: 1.) How do I formulate my Daily Rule? 2.) What can the Daily Rule do for me? 3.) How do I know that I am growing spiritually?

First, let us gain an understanding of what a Daily Rule is. The Daily Rule is the basis of how we live our lives spiritually. It includes our daily spiritual practices that we “perform” in order that we grow in our love for God and remain in constant contact with God in all that we do during the day. All monastics of any faith have a Daily Rule that they follow. Some Daily Rules are very strict and others are more liberal/open/fluid. Within the Eastern Rite Monastic of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church, the Daily Rule used by the monastic is of the open/fluid type. The Daily Rule for each monastic is developed from a discussion between the Monastic Superior and the monastic. In this discussion the Monastic Superior tries to gain an understanding of where the monastic is spiritually at the present, what does the monastic presently do as their “daily rule”, and what can be provided to help the monastic grow spiritually.

Let me be very clear at this point, that no monastic should try to walk the monastic pathway without having the guidance/support of an Elder! There are many “stumbling blocks” that are placed in the monastic’s spiritual pathway that will need the Elder’s guidance to overcome! Even the Elder has another monastic to turn to for “help and guidance”...It is not unusual for one to think they are growing spiritually, only to find out that the “evil one” is really playing with them. We must always keep in our minds the temptations that Jesus underwent in the desert before he started his ministry, the temptations he underwent in the Garden of Gethsemane, and again when he was on the cross. We as monastics live in that “spiritual desert” where we commune with God, but the “evil one” is lurking and is always looking for more followers. We as monastics must always be on the lookout to be sure that our lives are of God!

The monastic Daily Rule is developed to help the monastic overcome the temptations that are laid before the monastic! The Daily Rule starts out at first fairly simple and as the monastic grows spiritually, more is added to help continue that growth.

The basic pattern of the Daily Rule is:

1. Set time for prayer every day (Usually a period of prayer in the morning and again in the evening.)
2. Set time for reading the daily Scriptures
3. Set time for reading some spiritual writings
4. Set time for meditation – opening one’s heart to hear God speaking to them.
5. Set time for work – since we as monastics live within this world, then this is our secular job time
6. Throughout the day, the monastic will keep the Jesus Prayer in their heart constantly

It is through a discussion between the monastic and their Elder that the “time requirements” are set. Also, the Elder will suggest reading material that will challenge the monastic’s thinking and spirituality.

So what can the Daily Rule do for you as a person and as a monastic? Basically, it helps you focus on your spiritual self. It forces you to take time away from the worldly activities to spend time with God. It helps you slowly learn how to control your personal life so that it is in tune with living with God and showing God’s love to all in this world. God is always with us, but we as humans have a habit of putting God in a “box” to be opened only when we choose. As a monastic, we have to learn to change that attitude in ourselves. God comes first in our lives, and everything else should be a reflection of our relationship with God. Nothing that we say or do in this world should be done without God’s direction! What a concept! God leads our lives and not us....Not easy to do, but in following the Daily Rule, it is really possible in time to let God control our lives completely.

So how do I know I am growing spiritually? Will there be times that we feel lost or all alone? Yes, that is part of growing spiritually and walking with God. If you don’t feel the loneliness and/or being lost, then you are NOT growing spiritually. God at times has to challenge us to keep us moving forward. Think about the Scriptures that reflect a person talking about feeling abandoned by God, only for the person to realize it was not God that abandoned them, but they abandoned God. God wants us to constantly work to be more open to him and to listen to His guidance. As any good parent will do, God has to step back at times and just let you do your thing until you come to your senses and realize that you have stepped away from God! God never forces himself on you. We as monastics have asked that God be our guide in this life, so we have to constantly work to be open to his communications and directions. That is what the Daily Rule does for the monastic. It teaches self-discipline, listening to God and walking with God! It is up to each monastic to decide if they want to listen and follow, but if they choose not to, then my question is, why be a monastic to start with? A monastic’s life is not an easy one, especially for those of us who do not live within a monastery. But, the monastic life is a rewarding one every time you touch someone’s heart with God’s love! In time, one finds such peace during time spent in prayer and meditation. It takes much practice to reach this point but it does happen. When we know we cannot walk in this world without God, we know we are growing in our spirituality. We learn that in God – ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE...And as in anything we learn, there will be periods of “ups and downs” but then that is all part of growth. Embrace those moments when you feel alone and search within yourself to see what you are missing. God is there and you only have to reach out and He will guide you to the Promised Land!

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## ***Desert Wisdom***

Words from St. Symeon the New Theologian

*When a man walks in the fear of God he knows no fear, even if he were to be surrounded by wicked men. He has the fear of God within him and wears the invincible armor of faith. This makes him strong and able to take on anything, even things which seem difficult or impossible*

to most people. Such a man is like a giant surrounded by monkeys, or a roaring lion among dogs and foxes. He goes forward trusting in the Lord and the constancy of his will to strike and paralyze his foes. He wields the blazing club of the Word in wisdom.

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### **The Three August Feasts**

*by: Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair*

At first glance, one sees the Transfiguration, the Dormition of Mary, and the Beheading of John as very separate events and feasts. What could they possibly have in common?

We know that that the Transfiguration is a theophany – a manifestation of God. In this case, the Transfiguration is a manifestation of God as the Holy Trinity. God the Father is present as the Voice coming from the Cloud, while the bright Cloud is the Holy Spirit, and Jesus is transfigured into the Christ – as God the Son. Although John the Baptist and Mary the Mother of God are not present at this theophany, they both were present at two other theophanies.

When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit appeared:

*It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11 NKJ)*

The theophany at the Dormition includes only the manifestation of God the Son. Christ appears to take his mother's body to Heaven and to reunite it with her soul. She will be with Him in everlasting Paradise.

What binds the figures in these three feasts is that John the Baptist and the Theotokos did what God the Father commanded Peter, James, and John the Evangelist to do: "Hear Him!" John the Baptist and the Theotokos both united their wills with God the Father and did what was asked of them.

Let us imitate John the Baptist and the Theotokos by listening to Christ and uniting our wills with His. Let us pray: "Let it be done to me according to your word." Amen!

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### **Transfiguration of Jesus**

*by: Mother Myrella LeClair*

The Transfiguration of Jesus, celebrated on August 6<sup>th</sup>, is a Feast in both the Eastern and Western churches.

The Transfiguration is a theophany – a manifestation of God, and the greatest of miracles in that it happened to Jesus himself. Jesus is transfigured into a brilliant radiance; he speaks to Moses and Elijah, is overshadowed by a bright cloud (God the Holy Spirit) from which the voice of God the Father proclaims that Jesus is His beloved Son:



Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain [Tabor] by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." (MT 17:1-9 NKJ)

The Transfiguration occurred during the Jewish Festival of Booths, which was a Feast of God dwelling with humans. That is why Peter offers to make "three tabernacles" (booths). Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, representing the Prophets, appear with Christ to show that the Messiah is here and that he is God's Son – that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17 NKJ

Peter, James, and John witnessed Jesus as the Christ in His divine glory. Jesus wanted them to see the glory of the Kingdom of God and to know what his death and Resurrection mean: "God became man so that man might become God." Ultimately, this Feast is the anticipation of the Second and glorious Coming of Christ. It is the time when all of creation will be transformed and glorified and live in God's everlasting kingdom.

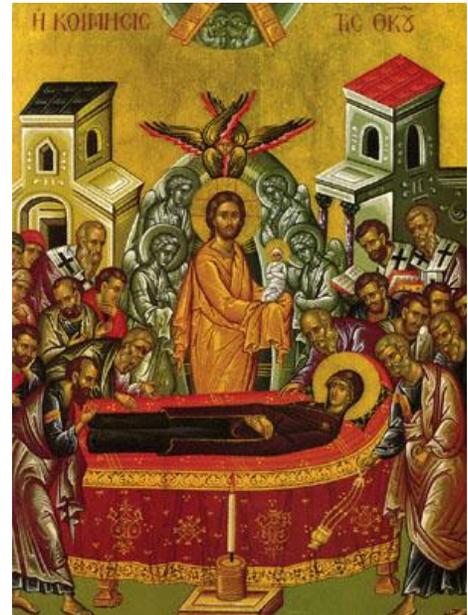
*"Today all mortal nature shines with the divine Transfiguration a  
And cries with exultation:  
Christ the Savior is transfigured to save us all"*

### ***Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos*** *by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair*

The Dormition ("falling asleep") of the Theotokos, celebrated on August 15<sup>th</sup>, is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church. This Feast not only commemorates her death but also her subsequent Resurrection and Ascension. For this reason, the Orthodox Church celebrates August 15 as a "second Pascha, the resurrection of her who is already united to Christ before the Last Judgment and the general resurrection" (The Living God – p.385.) The Orthodox Church also teaches that Christ received Mary's soul upon her death, that her body was resurrected on the third day after her death, and that at that time, Mary's body was taken into heaven. Just as with her Son, Mary's tomb was found empty on the third day.

According to sacred tradition, Mary is believed to have been living with the Apostle John in Jerusalem when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her once again and revealed that to her that her “falling asleep” would occur three days later. Although the apostles were scattered throughout the world, they were all (except for Thomas) miraculously brought to her side when she died. Thomas is said to have come three days after death, at which time he asked to see her grave so that he could say goodbye; however, when he arrived at the grave, her body was gone. As with all humans, Mary was subject to death, but Christ glorified her by taking her body to Heaven to be reunited with her soul.

*Neither the tomb, nor death, could hold the Theotokos, who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb. Troparion (Orthodox Hymn) for the Feast*



The Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos reminds us that what happened to Mary, the Mother of Life, is part of God’s plan for all of us. The life of Paradise is promised to all who “hear the word of God and keep it”. (Luke 11:27-28 NKJ)

### ***Behheading of St. John the Forerunner*** *by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair*

The feast of the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner (St. John the Baptist), celebrated on August 29<sup>th</sup>, is the commemoration of his martyrdom. After St. John baptized Jesus, he was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, the governor of Galilee, for openly denouncing Herod for divorcing his wife and unlawfully living with his brother’s wife, Herodias. When Herod celebrated his birthday, he had a feast for his guests, and Salome, Herodias’ daughter, danced for the guests and charmed Herod:



*“Because John had said to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she [Salome], having been prompted by her mother, said, “Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.” And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.” Matthew 14:4-12 (New King James Version)*

The Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner is one of the oldest feasts to be commemorated in both Eastern and Western liturgies.

### **Orthodox Hymns for this Feast:**

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise,  
But the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner.  
You were shown in truth to be the most honorable of the prophets,  
For you were deemed worthy to baptize in the streams of the Jordan Him whom they  
foretold.  
Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy,  
You proclaimed to those in hell God who appeared in the flesh,  
Who takes away the sin of the world, and grants us great mercy.

The glorious beheading of the Forerunner,  
Became an act of divine dispensation,  
For he preached to those in hell the coming of the Savior.  
Let Herodias lament, for she entreated lawless murder,  
Loving not the law of God, nor eternal life,  
But that which is false and temporal.

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### ***Prayer Requests***

Mom LeClair  
Marty Sullivan and Family  
Br. Yosi and Jim  
Bill and Trish  
Linda and Wayne  
Liz and Courtney  
Carol and Leonard  
Roseanne  
Fr. David and family  
Br. Damien and family  
Fr. Rick Hobbs  
Sam, Teresa and Chloe  
Our Bishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

***Eastern Rite Monastics within Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church***

Br. Damien Simmons (Riasaphor monastic)  
Mother Myrella LeClair (Stavrophor monastic)  
Mother Barbara Martzall (Schema-hegumen/abbess)

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***Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community  
for the  
Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church***

The Feast of Transfiguration



*The Feast of the Dormition (death) of Mary, the Mother of Jesus*



\*\* Just a little note about the Dormition Icon. Notice in the hand of Jesus there appears to be a small child. This is actually the “soul” of Mary the Mother of Jesus. Jesus has accepted his mother’s soul into heaven.