

Monastic Musings

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

August 2012

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Ah, it is finally August and we have had a strange summer weather wise! Yes, we have had some really hot days! I know that our friends in Ohio had a week of over 100 degree weather and at times no electricity! And when we did get rain, it really was not enough to help the grass or plants. Sad actually, but then it is summer!

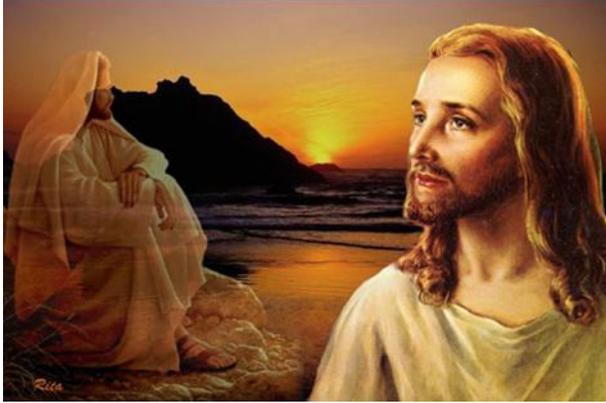


This month, Mother Myrella and I are going to do a little something different in our teachings. Hopefully it will be thought provoking. Actually we want to make you a little uncomfortable regarding where you are at in your spiritual walk so as to get you to think with more open minds and to challenge yourself and even the clergy to teach you more. We all can get stale in our spiritual walks thinking that what we already know is the true answer to our faith. But you know what, it is not the final answer, and there is always more out there to learn and develop within each of our spiritual walks. We just have to open our minds and hearts to learn new ideas and give them a try. Not all new ideas will fit for us, but at least we have had a chance at tasting it!

Spiritual Walk – What is this?

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Often you have heard me speak of your spiritual walk. Well, it is probably time to help you understand what I mean by “spiritual walk”. For the moment I am asking you to set aside everything you have been taught about church and God. I want you to open your mind, open your eyes and hear what I am going to say to you. No don’t think I have all the answers, but know that what I have learned on my spiritual walk may be of some value to you.



Over a year ago I shared with you my religious background. I told you that my father was Missouri Synod Lutheran and my mother was Southern Missionary Baptist. I was confirmed in my father's church/faith, but as an older teenager I decided I was drawn to the Roman Catholic Church. In time, I converted to Roman Catholicism and joined the Order of St. Francis. As you can see, I was grounded in the Traditional Churches, but none of them really fulfilled me spiritually. I found myself walking away from Church completely. Sure, I checked out several different churches but could not

find a home. I even went as far as being ordained a minister within an Independent Christian Congregational Church but that was not fulfilling for me either. However, I did meet one goal that I had set for myself – I was now preaching the Gospel as an ordained minister!

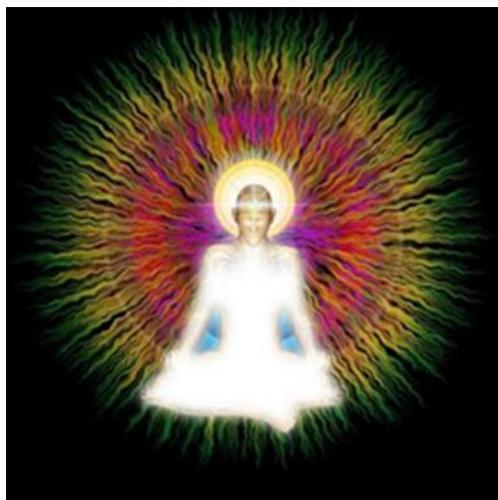
One day, about 4 years after I was ordained, I came into contact with an Old Catholic bishop in my area. That contact was what set my spiritual walk on a new path and one that I am still walking today. That bishop brought me back into a traditional church for Liturgy/Mass, but in the process, he encouraged me to question everything I was taught and to study any and all spirituality found in the world. Nothing was "off the table" as far as he was concerned! He pushed me to open my eyes and ears to see and hear the truth presented in the different spiritualities/churches. He encouraged me to be very open to the mysticism of the church as taught by the monastics of the 4th – 6th centuries. He never limited my questions or searching. Instead, he was always suggesting another book to study! As time passed, I found that I was drawn to the mystical nuns of the Roman Catholic Church -- especially those who the Church did all they could to silence and hide originally. I poured over their books learning what they had to teach my heart. I was also drawn to the teachings of the monastics of Mt. Athos (Eastern Orthodox monasteries) especially the Philokalia (a collection of monastic spiritual teachings and writings). Again, I poured over the writings/sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers and many other writings of the Orthodox monastics of Europe and Russia. During this time, I was also studying Orthodox Theology which is steeped in spirituality! I also have always kept my ties with the Native American Spirituality which I learned as a young child since my mother was part Native American. Even now I am still reading and studying different spiritualities! I draw from them what seems to feed my heart/soul and let go of the rest of the "stuff". Everyone has a little something that can move us forward on our spiritual walk.



So what did I learn? What I had been taught as a child concerning God was not the complete truth!

My relationship with God had to be a personal one and not mediated by or through the priest/ministers! God wants to talk and teach me on a one on one basis. I also learned that attending Liturgy/Mass provided an opportunity to gather with others of like minds to celebrate God's love and to thank Him for all that He has given each of us. I learned that I had to take time to pray and be open to God and to be very willing to walk with Him even if my brain and/or ego told me not too. It was a struggle to begin with, but over time it became so much easier. I

learned to keep God in my heart twenty four hours a day no matter what I was doing. Did this mean I was always going to be correct/right in what I did? Absolutely not! Mistakes happen in life, but God is always there with His love to help me “straighten out” the problem.



Today I am asking you to open your mind and to be free to do some learning. Don't let what the Traditional Church has taught you hold you back. The traditional Church -- along with its rules -- was built by man to control what we believe and how we act, limiting our individual relationship with God. Jesus came to free each one of us of the man-made rules so that once again we could live our lives openly as God directs. Reread the Gospels and you will see that Jesus was always challenging the rules and teaching of the church of that time! Challenge yourself to study the writings from the early Church. You will be surprised what you can learn in the writings. And yes, at times you will find yourself a little uncomfortable with what you are reading/learning, but don't stop, keep going! Be willing to ask yourself questions concerning your faith and

seek the answers. Don't be afraid that something does not fit what you had been taught in the past. And please learn that God is not to be feared but to be loved, honored, admired, etc. The Old Testament word “fear” was mistranslated! God is a loving God and that is what Jesus and all the Apostles taught the world. Each of you have left the church of your birth for some reason and have become part of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church. This is just the beginning of your spiritual freedom! Grab the brass ring and keep seeking the truth that you are a child of God, who loves you now and always! If someone with a different faith/perspective is in your “group”, take the time to learn all you can from them. You could be surprised by what you have in common about God. You might even learn some new insights that will influence your personal relationship with God!

Here at the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church, you are more than welcome to question us about anything and even challenge us in our teachings. We want you to be free to explore your spirituality and develop it to a point of understanding that God is in your life every day and not just when you come to Liturgy/Mass. Take advantage of the classes offered. Ask for even more classes to be provided and suggest what you are seeking for the classes. Each of you brings God-given gifts to the church which you can share with others. We are all on this walk together to love God and to love one another! Yes, there will be times that you might be fearful of someone else's spirituality, but set aside that fear and seek answers from them to help you overcome your fears.

I know that when I first joined the Old Catholic Church, I had some fears since there were members within the congregation who originally belonged to the Spiritualist Church and who believed in the use of gems and auras in their spiritual life. However, I realized that they were wonderful people to know and that they were more than willing to teach me about their beliefs. In time, I overcame my fears and found



common ground with them. Do I believe as they do, no; but I do know that their beliefs bring them closer to God and that is what is important. Judging people because of their beliefs is wrong. We must learn to put aside our judgments and seek the common ground of understanding.

Remember, man developed church and the rituals used within the Liturgies/Masses, but God wants you to have a very personal relationship with Him! Start today trying to find your spiritual path and open yourself up to the “*Wonders of God*”!

Christ’s Transfiguration – “At the heart of all that has life is the Light of God.”

By Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair



“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain 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 tents: 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.” (Matthew 17:1-8)

Do you feel as if you are stuck in your spiritual walk – having reached a dead end? Perhaps you have the opposite problem: you are at a fork or crossroad and just don’t know which way to go? So, you do what many people do: you stop the walk. You may even ask yourself, “Why am I doing this”. Rather than progressing to the Light - toward spiritual growth - you feel as if you are descending into darkness. Take heart, a spiritual walk is much like any other physical walk or journey that you take. At times the journey is smooth, and at other times, you may come upon obstacles. When you become too fearful to proceed, you need to stop in place and “listen to Him”. His Voice, the Holy Spirit, will guide you along the Way

Do not be disheartened by your confusion or paralyzed by your fear. Even Christ’s most trusted apostles, Peter, James, and John, were fearful of not only the physical journey they were on but also of their spiritual journey as well. Jesus had spoken of the kingdom and of his second coming in glory. To banish the doubts and fears from their hearts, he gave them a glimpse of His glorious divinity. After Jesus, Peter, James, and John ascended Mount Tabor, Jesus was transfigured. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light. Then the disciples saw Moses and Elijah appear, and they were talking to Jesus.

The cloud that overshadows the apostles is the glorious cloud of the Holy Spirit out of which the Father’s voice resounds, proclaiming that Jesus is His beloved Son. The Transfiguration is not

only a revelation of Jesus' divinity, but it is also a manifestation of the entire Trinity. For a moment the veil is lifted, and then the veil is back in place. Peter, James, and John once again see Jesus in His humanity. Make no mistake, Peter, James, and John continued to waver at times – even in spite of the fact they had experienced God! Knowing that they wavered should give us hope as we progress on our own spiritual walks. Although Jesus is not physically in our midst, we have been given the Holy Spirit to guide us along the Way. We, too, can be transformed if we take time to pray and “Hear Him”. No matter how busy our lives are, we must aside time to pray and meditate – “to simply be with God and to allow God to be present to us however God chooses – and in so doing, we are transfigured”.

God is already in each one of our hearts. All we need to do is allow God's Light to shine through us and manifest the glory of God that is within us. Once you have let God's loving Light



shine through you, let that Light encompass and surround all those with whom you come into contact. Invite them to walk with you – just as Jesus did. It may be that you will journey with them for just short a distance, and as you reach a fork in the road as Bishop Barb and I did with our Muslim friends, Tufail and Meher, you go your separate ways. We were all transformed by our moments of holiness spent together – and yet we all continued on our different spiritual paths knowing that at some point the paths will again converge....

Blessings to you on your journey!

Call to Action

*“The world is my cloister, my body is my cell, and my soul is the hermit within.”
-- St. Francis of Assisi*

St. Francis really could not have said anything more true today. That is how the monastics of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church feel each and every day. Whether it be the Franciscan Order or the Eastern Rite Order, all have been called to serve God in the place they are living at the moment and in a way that will help the community they live in. Our monastic orders do not have physical monasteries and they have to provide everything for themselves, but they live their lives as monastic hermit!

Have you felt the call to be a monastic or hermit? If so, why not explore this feeling with Archbishop Charles (chancery@ohioocc.org) and see just where it might lead you.

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Linda and Wayne
Fr. David and family

The Weber Family
The Our Lady of Peace Cathedral Congregation
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Our Archbishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

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All writings are the views of the author(s) on a particular subject and are meant to challenge your thinking so as to help you grow in your spiritual walk with God.

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