

Monastic Musings

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

December 2010

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite-elect Barb

Where has the year gone? We are now in the last month for the calendar year and in the first month of the Church year! How time flies when one is having “fun” in life.

Much has happened over the last year for all of the monastics. It was a little over a year ago that Mother Myrella and myself decided that we would approach Archbishop Charles about joining the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church as clergy and monastics. In that year we have increased in number. Brother Damien also asked to join the church and to be able to continue his monastic life. What a joy it has been for all three of us to be members of a monastic community together and in a church where we have found so much love and support! For each of us, it has been a year of adjustments in our spiritual lives and in our secular lives. But for all of us, it has been a year of joyous growth! I personally have been preparing over the last few months to become the Archimandrite/Bishop for the Eastern Rite Monastics – a position I never would have dreamed I would find myself in! God has been and always will be the guiding force within our monastic movement. We let God show us the direction that we as individuals -- and as a group – need to go. May we continue to grow in whatever way God elects for each of us personally and as a group!

The Christmas season is now upon us. All around us we see the sight and sounds of Christmas. Christmas tree were being bought and set up as early as Thanksgiving weekend! And to think, the poor trees are expected to last for a month in the warm homes. Everyone is in a hurry to make their purchases from lists they have prepared over the last month or so making sure they don't forget anyone. In all of this rushing around doing shopping, I wonder just how many people really remember what Christmas is really about. Over the many years, Christmas has taken a major turn to the secular side – how much money is spent on gifts and how many gifts did we receive. But what has happened to Jesus in all of this rushing around?

I always have to pause for a moment when I am setting up our small nativity set under the Christmas tree. It is a very small set compared to the sizes today, but it was what was available through the Sears catalogue some 60 years ago! Yes, it has been in my family for a very long time. It is always a reminder of the many wonderful Christmases I spent with my family as I was growing up. I remember the day my father gave me the set for use in my new home. It was the

passing of a tradition from one generation to another. I will pass the nativity set on to my brother's family one of these days so that the tradition of having this particular nativity set under the Christmas tree will continue. Every year I "dig out" the nativity set and slowly and gingerly set it up under the tree just as my parents did for so many years. Over a decade ago, just after I had become a monastic deacon, I added one item to the set. It is actually a tradition that was passed down by my bishop at that time. It is a very small red Christmas stocking. Each year I place it under the baby Jesus. It is always the last thing I place into the scene. Why the stocking? Well, it is a place for us to place our gifts for the baby Jesus. It is a place where we can set aside the past and give of ourselves to the work of Jesus within this world. I have found over the years it is a wonderful treat to be able to place something of myself in that stocking. No, usually it is not something that can be seen by the naked eye, but it is something that Jesus can see very easily even as a baby. It is a tradition that I have been sharing with others so that they might also find a way to bring the secular Christmas, Santa and the gifts to the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus. I want to wish all of you a very blessed Christmas. May each of you feel the presence of the baby Jesus in your heart and in your life.



I want to take the time to thank everyone who has been involved in the preparation of Our Lady of Peace Cathedral for my visit and consecration this month. Much has been done around the church and the friary from all the information I have been receiving! I am looking forward to my visit with everyone connected with Our Lady of Peace Cathedral! All I can say at this moment is that you all are very wonderful people. Thanks for doing all you can to make me feel welcome in your church home! See all of you very soon.

Desert Wisdom

Once some monks came to Scetis, and John the Short was with them. During supper, an eminent presbyter (priest) got up to give them each a little water to drink. No one accepted it except John the Short.

The others were surprised and said, "How is it that you, the least of all, dared to accept the ministry of a great old man?"

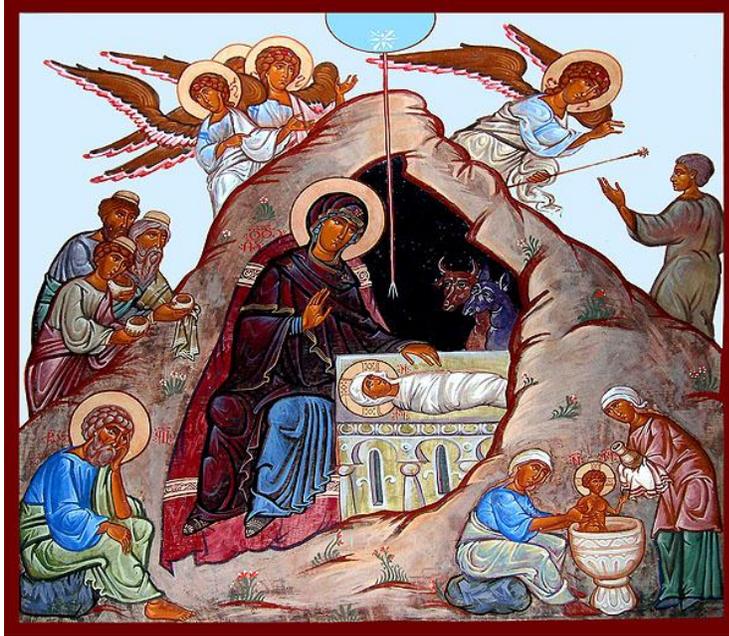
He replied, "When I get up to hand water round, I am glad if everyone takes it, because I have been able to do them a service and will have a reward. That's why I took it just now, to let the one who offered it have his reward; perhaps he would have been sad if no one accepted it."

They all admired his discretion.

Nativity of Christ

By Rev. Mother Myrella

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! That is the traditional Christmas greeting of an Orthodox Christian. Those simple five words reflect the true meaning of what Christmas is – a holy day not a holiday. Christmas has become secularized to the point that we have been brainwashed into believing that it is a time for proving our love for one another and not a time for celebrating Christ. Merchandisers would have us believe that the only way to make people feel loved is through giving them materials gifts. The celebration of Christ's birth has become secondary.



Does that mean that we should not buy gifts for one another nor enjoy all of the festive activities of the season? No, we can still enjoy all of the secular aspects, but we can keep Christ in Christmas by celebrating Christmas with a new perspective – one in which we keep Christ in our hearts, minds, and spirits. We remember that while we can enjoy exchanging gifts, the greatest gift we can give one another is the gift of our time, patience, acceptance, and forgiveness – the gift of ourselves. In other words, we practice Love as Christ taught us: Love without expectations or demands.

Written in the fourth century, St. Ephraim the Syrian's sermon "On the Night of Nativity" instructs us how to act Christ-like:

Pure is the present night, in which the Pure One appeared, Who came to purify us! Let our hearing be pure, and the sight of our eyes chaste, and the feeling of the heart holy, and the speech of the mouth sincere!

The present night is the night of reconciliation; therefore, let no one be angry against his brother and offend him!

This night gave peace to the whole world, and so, let no one threaten. This is the night of the Most Meek One; let no one be cruel!

This is the night of the Humble One; let no one be proud!

Now is the day of joy; let us not take revenge for offences! Now is the day of good will; let us not be harsh. On this day of tranquility, let us not become agitated by anger!

Today God came unto sinners; let not the righteous exalt himself over sinners!

Today the Most Rich One became poor for our sake; let the rich man invite the poor to his table!

Today we received a gift which we did not ask for; let us bestow alms to those who cry out to us and beg!

The present day has opened the door of heaven to our prayers; let us also open our door to those who ask of us forgiveness!

Let Christ be born in you. Allow your heart to be a cradle for Him, and Peace and Joy will follow.

Wishing you all a very Blessed Christmas!

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yosi and Jim
Lt. James Byers
Bill Tenney
Wayne and Lin
Carol and Leonard
Annamarie (nurse at Quaboag Nursing Home)
William and Cathy Vigneux
Tim, Holly and Romeo Weber
Fr. David and family
Br. Damien and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Our Archbishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

Eastern Rite Monastics within Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church

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Nativity (Birth) of Jesus (Eastern Icon)



Nativity (Birth) of Jesus (Western Picture)

