

Monastic Musings

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

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From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

I am learning very quickly that Mother Nature can be both surprising and cruel all at once, and I will have to admit I am not really happy about it. We humans are the caretakers of this earth. When I look at what is happening to this earth, I really wonder if we understand our role! On October 29 – 30, a storm came roaring through the East Coast/New England area with some very nasty snow and wind. In my area, Western Massachusetts, we ended up with a week of no power from the 12 - 32 inches of very wet snow. Many trees were damaged, and their broken branches led to power lines being taken down and some homes being damaged. With the storm came the 10 – 20 degree nights. The storm caused the area to look like a war zone! When I sit back and look at what happened, I realize that we humans have had a major hand in the problems that occurred from the storms. Property owners have not been trimming their trees back like they used to 30 years ago. Utility Companies have not been inspecting their poles and lines and doing tree trimming like they did 30 years ago! All of this was not done in the name of saving money. Well, money has not been saved since it now is costing the property owners and utility companies a lot of money to just get things back to working and that does not even include getting the properties completely back to normal. The worst part was that people were not helping each other get through this crisis. Many people were more worried about themselves and their own needs. What has happened to the old idea of helping one another? That surely has disappeared from what I can see.



Is this not the way we also treat our spiritual life? Until there is a crisis in our life, we don't think about God or even let God into our lives. We go merrily on our way figuring we can do anything we want. But then one day something happens to stop us dead in our tracks and we suddenly ask God to help us through the situation. Excuse me, but where has your spirituality been all along!

I often hear people blame God for what is happening around them or to them. Well, God is not the cause of the problem, but we are. If we would take time to let God into our lives on a constant basis, we would soon learn that life is much fuller and even a little easier to handle. No, God will not remove all the problems, but He will help you to understand how to handle the problem if you are willing to listen to Him.

God made the earth and it was good when He made it. He then gave mankind the job to be the caretaker of the earth. Being who we are, we have an unfortunate habit of taking what is really wonderful and turning it into something dreadful. Take a good look around you and you will see what I mean. Have you noticed all of the cement and asphalt that is present around you? Have you noticed that so many of the farms that produced our food have disappeared? Have you noticed that rivers and oceans now flood areas that were never flooded before? Excuse me, but where in our caretaking role did God ask us to destroy that which He gave us?

Is it not time to take inventory of your life and the way you live your life? Is it not time for you to encourage others around you to do the same? We have all made a mess of this world, and it is time that we start the healing process so that there is a world to live in. Maybe it is time to realize that you really cannot do anything without having God as your constant companion.

God has always been with each person in this world. It is each person's choice to allow God to give them guidance or not. God does not force Himself on his children since He knows that just causes us to be more rebellious. Instead, he patiently waits for His children to reach out and invite Him to join them in their walk through life. It is as easy as saying: "Father, I want you to walk with me. Please forgive my past errors and help me walk the correct path. Thank you." Before you know it, God is there walking with you and gently whispering words of guidance and/or encouragement to you.

Christmas is the day Jesus was born into this world. Why not make it a celebration of bringing God back into your life! Let God help you make a difference in this world. My one wish for you is that this is the Christmas that you find the joy of God in your heart and have the courage to walk with him in this world.

May all of you have a joyous Christmas! Jesus is born again in our hearts!

Desert Wisdom

Amma Syncletica said, "Those in the world who commit crimes are thrown into prison against their will. For our sins, let us put ourselves under guard, and by willingly accepting it now we shall avoid punishment in the future.

"If you fast, you should beware of thinking that it is by weakening your body that you have fallen ill, for people who do not fast fall ill in the same way.

"If you have begun some good work, you should not be turned from it by the enemy's attempts to hinder you, indeed your endurance will overthrow the enemy.

"Sailors beginning a voyage set the sails and look for a favorable wind, and later they meet a contrary wind. Just because the wind has turned, they do not throw the cargo overboard or

abandon ship; they wait a while and struggle against the storm until they can set a direct course again.

"When we run into headwinds, let us put up the cross for our sail, and we shall voyage through the world in safety."

The True Spirit of Christmas

By Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

When the tornado occurred on June 1st, the true spirit of Christmas was very evident. People helped one another. Even those who needed help joined in the effort to help those who were in even greater need of help. An attitude of "blessed hope" prevailed. That hope along with the love, selflessness and lack of judgment reflected what the true spirit of Christmas is: seeing the



Christ in everyone and acting as Christ did.

Unfortunately, that transformation of our hearts and minds lasted for only a brief time. By the time that the October Nor'easter devastated the area, the true spirit of Christmas had disappeared. Neighbors were back to practicing selective helping – limiting their helpfulness to their immediate friends and family.

You may ask what the true spirit of Christmas has to do with events that occurred in June and October. The true spirit of Christmas is often misunderstood even by those who do their best to keep Christ in Christmas. Although we celebrate Christ's birth on December 25th, we need to keep

the true spirit of Christmas from being just a one-day or seasonal celebration. Having the true spirit of Christmas is vastly different from having the Christmas spirit, which is a temporary transformation of being nicer and more helpful to others; however, once Christmas Day ends so does the transformation.

The true spirit of Christmas is that which Christ teaches us in the Beatitudes. It is a permanent transformation to having the mind and attitude of Christ. Now having the true spirit of Christmas does not mean that we cannot buy gifts for one another or enjoy all of the festive activities of the season. We can still enjoy all of the secular aspects, but more importantly, we can celebrate Christmas with the true spirit of Christmas by always keeping Christ in our hearts and minds.

Although written in the fourth century but still relevant today, 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 re-born in you today and every day. Wishing you all a very Blessed Christmas!



A Blessed and Merry Christmas to All!!!

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair

Br. Yossi and Jim

Linda and Wayne

Fr. David and family

Fr. Rick Hobbs

Our Archbishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

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