

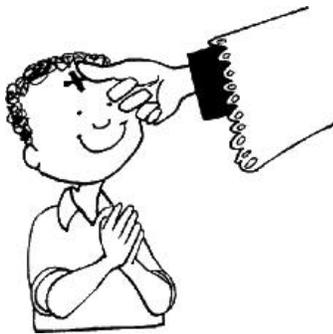
Monastic Musings

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

February 2012

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb



This month we move into the church season of Lent. The season opens with Ash Wednesday on February 22, 2012. Lent is a period of 40 days before Easter and is a time used to prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus. It is a period of time in which the church closely ties itself to the passion of Jesus and his resurrection.

In some cultures/traditions, there are celebrations held during the week before Ash Wednesday. Some examples are Mardi Gras, Shrove Tuesday or Fat Tuesday. Often during these celebrations it is the last time for “excess” before Lent starts. The last of the usual foods are cooked and consumed in preparation for fasting or abstaining from certain foods until Easter. I personally enjoyed Fat Tuesdays when I was growing up since it meant that some of the Churches got together to make wonderful, fat laden doughnuts that they sold! It was a day you did not even think about being on a diet if you knew what was good for you. Families would pre-order dozens of the doughnuts to enjoy over the next couple of days knowing they were not to eat such food until after Easter! Fresh deep fried doughnuts were a wonderful way for a family to use up the lard and yeast they had on hand before Ash Wednesday. Now you know why the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is called Fat Tuesday! The food was full of lard and you gained lots of weight.

There is also the tradition of fasting and abstaining once Ash Wednesday arrives. There is also the tradition of “giving up something” for Lent. Some churches even mix both of these traditions.

So why all these traditions you might ask? Well, people are hopefully taking time to evaluate what they have done with their lives as a child of God and what they can do to move forward to do more: whether it be more prayers, more volunteer work, being much more positive in their lives, etc. The idea of fasting/abstaining comes from the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert before he started his public ministry. It was a time where he was tempted to do what was not of God but of man. In following our church traditions, we are also trying to learn to follow God’s teachings.

What I find so interesting though is that people will “give up something” for Lent, and as soon as Lent is over, they return to life as though nothing has happened. They just went through the motions so that others around them thought they were being very righteous. In reality, they did not change at all. When we look at the way we treat Lent, it does not surprise me at all. Churches have over the years focused on the actions you are to do instead of teaching you what you should be seeking during Lent. God does not ask us to give up things unless they are not good for us. Instead he is calling us to greater action within our lives to be more Christ like in the world! I think back over some of the people I have come into contact with during Lent and one person really stands out in my mind of what not to be doing. The woman would proudly announce that she is giving up chocolate for Lent, but in the next sentence she continues to gossip about all the people she would hang around or complain about something that happened in church that made her angry. Now, really where is God in all of this! She was living by the “law” of Lent as taught by her church and missed out on what Lent really meant.



This year, I challenge each of you to not necessarily “give up something” but instead, take time to extend yourself more within the community you live in and in the church you worship with. Let the light of God show through you to all those who you come into contact with!

Desert Wisdom

A hermit said, "We suffer temptation because we are careless. If we always remember that God dwells in us, we shall never bring into ourselves anything that is not his. The Lord Christ is in us and with us, and watches our life. Because we have Him within us and contemplate Him, we ought not to be idle; we should make ourselves holy as He is holy. If we stand upon a rock, the power of the wicked one will be broken. Do not be afraid of him, and he can do nothing against you. Pray with courage this psalm, 'They that trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion; they that dwell in Jerusalem shall stand fast for ever' (Psalm 125:1).

2012 – Time for Transformation?

By Rev. Myrella LeClair

Christmas has been celebrated. All of the decorations have been put away. It feels as if the good will that permeated our spirits has also been put away. The celebration of Christ has vanished along with any stirrings of holiness within us. This new year seems much like every other new year – there is nothing really **new** about it! If we continue to think and behave in the same manner that we did in previous years, this new year will be the same as previous years. What a depressing thought!

So, how do we go about making 2012 not just a new year chronologically but into a different **kind of new year** – one that is truly transformative? First, we need to recognize that our egos will fight against doing something – anything – different from what we are now doing. Then, we need to understand that nothing will change unless we are willing to make what our egos

perceive as a dangerous choice. That is the ego's perception since **it** wants to continue to rule the mind and heart rather than to step aside and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us. So, if we truly want to change and not continue to plod along the same old path that leads to the same old dead end, let us make that dangerous choice by choosing to awaken to the quiet stirrings of the Holy Spirit within us. For this year, let us resolve to spend time in communion with God each day. We will take time in our busy schedules to stop whatever we are doing to be in His presence, resting in Him, bathed in His healing Light, and surrounded by His unconditional and ever present Love. In addition to this quiet time with God, we will also stop whatever we are doing several times throughout the day to offer a quick prayer of thanksgiving. We will listen for and to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and most importantly, we will practice extending forgiveness, love and mercy to one another.

The Lenten season – a time for transformation -- is quickly approaching. Rather than giving up candy or making small sacrifices for a short period of time, choose to spend time daily with the One who loves you – choose to feed your spirit. Surrender your judgment, anger, hate, and anxiety to the Holy Spirit so that He can transform them into forgiveness, peace, love, and trust. Let us work to change our hearts and minds in 2012 so that we can make it a different kind of new year – one in which we learn to live the Gospel.



Call to Action

St. Francis said: *“The world is my cloister, my body is my cell, and my soul is the hermit within.”* St. Francis really could not say 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. No our monastic orders do not have physical monasteries and each monastic has 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 with Archbishop Charles (chancery@ohioocc.org) this feeling and see just where it might lead you.

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yossi and Jim
Linda and Wayne
Carol and Leonard
Fr. David and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Our Archbishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

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