

Monastic Musings

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

June 2011

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

The Easter Season comes to a close this month with Ascension (June 2) and Pentecost (June 12). Easter Season has been a wonderful way to celebrate Spring this year. Yes, we have been hit with many natural disasters, but in all of this, people seem to be finding their strength in their faith in God - sort of the old is destroyed and the new grows forth. Is that not the message of Easter? Jesus' death is the destruction of the old way of thinking and brings us forth into a new way to think: to see everyone around us as God's children and to work together to spread the love of God.

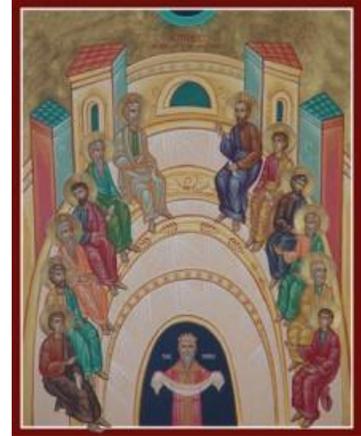
Ascension is important as it is the final teaching from Jesus to the Apostles before he takes his place in Heaven with his Father. In this teaching the Apostles learn that they are to take up the mission of teaching the world about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus instructs them to make disciples of all the world. He also teaches that with His Ascension, He would be able to send Holy Spirit to them to help them accomplish their mission. The Holy Spirit is often called the Spirit of Truth, as she speaks directly to us from God in truth and joy.

The Apostles learn that Jesus goes to God's house to prepare a place for all believers. In time, all believers will join together with the Holy Trinity. He is also able to teach them that there is life after their bodily death. The Apostles have had several weeks to walk and talk with Jesus even though his body was destroyed. They had their eyes and hearts opened to God's wondrous ways even if they were still looking for an earthly reign of the Messiah! Slowly they understood what the scriptures of the Old Testament said about Jesus.

Jesus' Ascension actually reconciles our earthly bodies and our spiritual bodies which have been separated by the sins of humankind. For if we accept God into our lives, our spiritual bodies will remain unharmed and we shall be raised up into the House of God when it is time. We too shall overcome death just as Jesus has! What a wondrous thought! We shall join together once again with all who have gone before us and rejoice together in the love of God.....

Pentecost is the day that the Holy Spirit (the Comforter or Spirit of Truth) descends from God upon the Apostles, Disciples, and Mother Mary. They were waiting in Jerusalem as they had

been instructed to do during the Ascension. The Holy Spirit ordains the Apostles, Disciples, and Mother Mary to carry out their mission as given them by Jesus at his Ascension. They are to go out into the world preaching, teaching and converting those who would listen so that they may become the children of God who would walk in the laws/ways of God. In the process those who they baptize would also receive the Holy Spirit so that God's love could spread throughout the world. For each person who receives the Holy Spirit receives their "Sonship" in God and thus live for the Second Coming of Christ when all believers will be gathered into God's house and live forever with Him.



Pentecost becomes in many ways the very first ordination of Bishops and Priests within the Church. Ordination is accomplished by the laying of hands so that the Holy Spirit may once again build up the person to be able to preach, teach, and convert. Pentecost is the setting apart a group of people to be the "leaders" of the faithful. Just as Mary was called by God to be the Holy Mother and Jesus called the Apostles, the Holy Spirit now calls all to the royal priesthood, setting aside certain people to fulfill certain roles within that priesthood.

May we all continue to live our lives with the Holy Spirit being our Guide. May we feel the Holy Spirit within our hearts so that we may walk boldly teaching our faith in God so that someday, we may all join together in God's house praising God forever!

This month the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community is pleased to present a writing by a monastic friend, Br. Yossi. Br. Yossi has been a friend of Mothers Barb and Myrella for many years. He has explored many different religious traditions (as so many of us have), though keeping his feet grounded in his love of God. Each tradition that he has explored has brought him closer to God. He has learned to sift through the different traditions – accepting what is important to his monastic growth and rejecting the rest. If you really talk with him, you soon realize that he is really a monastic "Fool for Christ" looking always to find a way to serve God more fully in his life and in the world as a whole. Br. Yossi is also poet and writes frequently. He has a wonderful way with words to present tough theological concepts and day to day life in God. Br. Yossi has started a new blog -- ***Spirituality without Borders*** (<http://spiritualitywithoutborders.blogspot.com>). When I read his writing *My First Language is Silence*, I asked him if I could share it within this newsletter. He has given his permission for me to reprint it in this newsletter. Please note that the writing is copyrighted by Br. Yossi.

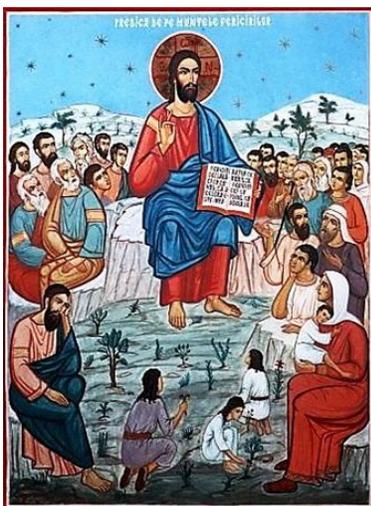
Journey to Discipleship – The Beatitudes (Part 5)

by: Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

Last month as we continued our journey, we learned that we must be "pure in heart", and I ended that writing with "Peace be with you as you "go forth to serve God in friend and foe and neighbor and stranger". In order for us to continue our journey, we must first be at peace with God and ourselves to be able to move to the next step, for Christ calls His disciples to a ministry of Peacemaking:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

We know from Christ's instructions in the first six beatitudes that God's gift of Peace comes to us when we have placed our trust in Him and have learned to love all of creation as He does. That Peace is unlike any other:



Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Notice that the Peace that Christ gives us can best be described as an absence of fear or concern. Our concept of "peace" is the absence of conflict. It is the kind of peace that is tenuous at best – the kind of peace that is somehow negotiated, such as in ending of a war or a disagreement. That kind of peace is not built on the basis of Love, Mercy, and Forgiveness, but on the weak foundation of egocentric beliefs – personal, national, religious, etc. Christ did not broker treaties or end conflicts between warring parties. Instead, Christ – the Prince of Peace - brought a message of Reconciliation to the world.

So, how do we become active makers of Peace in this world? First, we accept Christ's gift of Peace ourselves – the inward peace that we know when we live our lives according to His guidance. We then spread His Peace by showing love, mercy, and forgiveness to all – just as Christ did. That means we must respond to evil with good and to hate with love. With every choice we make, we have an opportunity to "sow peace and love or bitterness and hate". When surrounded by anger and discord, we can calm our minds and still our hearts by praying to be filled with Christ's Peace.

As Christ's disciples, let us choose to be active makers of Peace in the world through reconciling with God and with one another, the children of God.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Colossians 3:12-15)

And so we pray,

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.*

Peace be with you!

Desert Wisdom

Macarius said to Zacharias, "Tell me, what makes a monk?"

Zacharias said, "Isn't it wrong for you to be asking me?"

Macarius replied, "I am sure I should ask you, Zacharias my son. There is something that urges me to ask you."

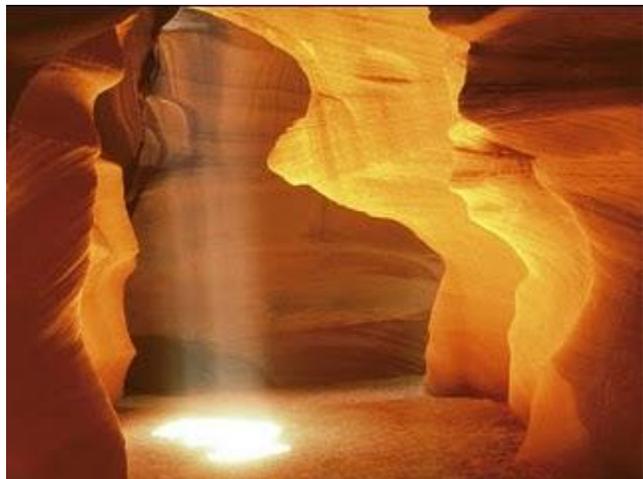
Zacharias said to him, "As far as I can tell, abba, I think that anyone who controls himself and makes himself content with just what he needs and no more, is indeed a monk."

My First Language is Silence

by Br. Yossi A. Lopez-Hineynu, CoS Cam

Talk is cheap. It's amazing how often we can verbalize merely to hear ourselves sound important or to drown out the silence, perhaps both. Many folks seemingly have to have a radio playing or television blaring--white **noise**--in order to feel secure. Others cannot be apart from their beloved texting, which, while silent in and of itself, creates a cacophony within.

Silence is not merely the absence of external sound. It is, in reality, a state of being, and, as such, does not drop out of the sky, but needs cultivation, through a life of contemplation, meditation, and prayer. St. Romuald, founder of the Camladolese Benedictines, tells the monk and nun "like a skilled angler on the lookout for a catch keep a careful eye on your thoughts. The path you must follow is in the Psalms--never leave it...and if your mind wanders as you read, do not give up; hurry back and apply your mind to the words once more" (*Brief Rule* 3,4,6). But even when one is not reading, he or she is called back to mindful attention; this applies to all, not just the vowed Religious.



Like a beautiful garden, weeds need removing, the soul needs emptying of attachments which block its way to the Beloved. This is *kenosis*. As this weeding takes place, emptiness takes hold, wherein the temptation is to fill it with the white noise mentioned above. It is here that letting go even further must take place, this terrifying vulnerability wherein God must be realized; this is *theosis*.

Are people afraid of what God might be saying to them? Maybe it's what we **don't** want to hear sometimes, so better to drown it out, rather than be pulled kicking and screaming from our comfort zone. Discipleship in Christ is not about having things exactly as we want them, but transformation. It is through silence that we learn to listen to that still small voice, whether we are in a physical monastery, or our monastic cell, which is wherever one finds oneself.

So, yes, Silence is my first language, because it slows me down, fine tunes my inner hearing, opens me not always to happiness but, in fact, oftentimes pain, but, a deep-found joy, nevertheless. It is to this that my monastic life witnesses.

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Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yosi and Jim
Linda and Wayne
Carol and Leonard
Fr. David and family
Br. Damien and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Our Archbishop -- +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-Archimandrite)

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Feast of Ascension



Feast of Pentecost

