

Monastic Musings

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

March 2012

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Well, we are almost through winter! It has been a strange one to say the least, but I must admit I like not having so much snow this year given all the bad weather we had in the summer and fall. The break was greatly appreciated!

So I am wondering, how is your Lenten journey progressing for you? Have you found ways to participate more within your community and/or parish? Have you found ways to show/teach God's love to those around you? I surely hope so. Each time you make even one step forward you are growing spiritually closer to God as the innocent child he made you. It is not an easy pathway, but it is really an important pathway for each of us to walk daily. Yes, we will stumble and even fall, but we just pick up ourselves, dust off the dirt and try again. We will be successful in time. You all know the old saying our parents/grandparents taught us: Practice make perfect! Well, they were right.

Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church Synod is coming!

Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church will be having it's Synod September 7 (starting at noontime) through 9 (ending after Mass) 2012 in Cincinnati, OH. There will also be a Church Board Meeting during the Synod. Time for the Board Meeting will be decided later on by Archbishop Charles.

The Our Lady of Peace Cathedral will be hosting the Synod since it is the home parish for Archbishop Charles. *Everyone* is invited to the activities. You do not have to be clergy to come. Laity are welcome as this is their church also!

So far, Archbishop Charles has assigned the celebrants for the three Masses/Liturgies that will be celebrated during the Synod. I will be celebrant for the opening Mass/Liturgy on Friday, Fr. Richard Hobbs will be celebrant for Saturday's Mass/Liturgy, and Archbishop Charles Smith will celebrate Sunday's Mass/Liturgy. It will give everyone a chance to experience the two official Liturgies of the Church.

There will be different guest speakers during the weekend. Archbishop Charles is in the process of lining up the guest speakers and the topics that will be shared with all. There will also be time to gather with the laity who can visit during the Mass/Liturgies and meetings. And always, there will be time to eat and relax together. There will be a period of time when the clergy gather to vote on some necessary items for the functioning of the clergy within the church. Archbishop Charles has already started the process for the Clergy Meeting using email to reach some agreements so that the official meeting will not really take much time other than to vote on the items.

Archbishop Charles tells me that we as clergy will go home with lots of new information along with copies of the new Church Missal. He is hoping to have everything on CD's to make things easier to carry and store for future use. I am working on putting together a CD of public domain church music for each of the clergy and ministries.

I would encourage everyone who has a chance to come by the church and participate. It should be a "fun time" for everyone who comes. I am looking forward to seeing my friends from the Cathedral again and meeting many more new people. More information will be published as it is received. Mark your calendar! See you there!!!!

A Call to Repentance

by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

Lent is a time for repentance and transformation – for turning away from our sins and failings and turning toward Christ. That is why in Eastern Orthodox Churches and Greek Catholic churches, Luke's Gospel account of Zacchaeus is read on the Sunday preceding Lent because the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus illustrates the divine call to humanity and the subsequent answering of the call through repentance:

Luke 19:1-10:

[1] Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.

[2] A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.

[3] He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd.

[4] So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

[5] When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

[6] So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

[7] All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.' "

[8] But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

[9] Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

[10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."



Zacchaeus, which in Hebrew means pure and righteous one, was a tax collector, but not just any tax collector. He collected taxes and tributes from the Jewish people for payment to the Romans and became wealthy by collecting more money than Rome demanded of him and keeping the extra money. Zacchaeus was seen as a traitor who profited from the Roman occupation at the expense of his own people. He was hated by the townspeople of Jericho.

Yet, this man who was a sinner felt compelled "to see who Jesus was" so much so that he braved the hostility of his townspeople and climbed a sycamore fig tree so that he could see this man who was creating such a stir and fuss among people wherever he went. Zacchaeus was a short man and the fruit of the tree he had climbed was considered as "unclean" since it was fed to pigs. Zacchaeus had no respect for "the law".

So, it was no wonder that the people began to mutter and grumble when Jesus called out to Zacchaeus by name, commanding him to come down out of that tree immediately for he wanted to stay at his house that evening. The crowd must have thought that if Jesus was truly a prophet, he certainly would have known who and what kind of man was sitting up in the tree. Surely, Jesus would have more sense than to go to the home of a sinner. Many of the people in the crowd had seen Jesus perform miracles; yet, they still could not understand Jesus' message of repentance. They were shocked that Jesus would be the guest of a tax collector.

Jesus certainly saw something in Zacchaeus that the crowd did not: he saw Zacchaeus as one who was lost and needed to be saved. Zacchaeus immediately publicly repented of his corrupt acts and vowed to make restitution by going beyond the requirements of the Law. Jesus

showed Zacchaeus love and acceptance, and Zacchaeus recognized his own sinfulness, repented, and accepted Jesus' invitation to be saved.

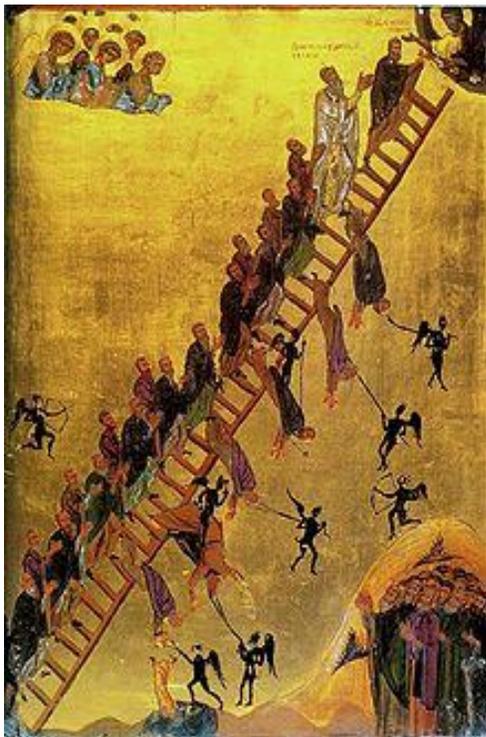
Do we have the same desire that Zacchaeus had to see Jesus and listen to Him? Are we willing to accept His invitation to come to the feast? Are we willing to sacrifice our pride as Zacchaeus did and recognize our own sinfulness? Jesus wants to come to your house today and offer you salvation. All you have to do is let Jesus in.

John Climacus (John of the Ladder)

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Saint John Climacus also known as John of the Ladder, John Scholasticus and John Sinaites, was a 7th century monk at the monastery on Mount Sinai. He became a novice when he was about 16 years old. Elder monk Martyrius taught Saint John Climacus about the spiritual life. After the death of Martyrius, John, wishing to practice greater spiritualism, withdrew to a hermitage at the foot of the mountain. It was in this isolation he lived for some twenty years, constantly studying the lives of the saints and thus he became one of the most learned Church Fathers. When he was about seventy-five years of age, the monks of Sinai persuaded him to become their Igumen (Abbot). It is said that he led the monastery as abbot with the greatest wisdom.

Of Saint John Climacus' literary writings we know only the *Scala Paradisi* (Ladder of Divine Ascent), which was composed at the request of John, Abbot of Raithu, a monastery situated on the shores of the Red Sea, and a shorter work *Liber ad Pastorem* (To the Pastor), thought to be a sort of appendix to the Ladder of Divine Ascent.



The Ladder of Divine Ascent describes how to raise one's soul and body to God through the attainment of spiritual virtues. Saint John Climacus uses the parallel of Jacob's Ladder as the framework for his spiritual teaching. There are thirty rungs of the ladder, which correspond to the age of Jesus at his baptism and the beginning of his earthly ministry. It is a challenging book to read but really helps one focus their spirituality to be a child of God in all ways.

An icon known by the same title, "Ladder of Divine Ascent", depicts a ladder extending from earth to heaven (cf. Genesis 28:12). Several monks are depicted climbing the ladder and at the top (right corner) is Jesus, prepared to receive them into Heaven. Also shown are angels helping the climbers (upper left corner), and demons attempting to shoot with arrows or drag down the climbers, no matter how high up the ladder they may be. Most versions of the icon show at least one person falling. Often, in the lower right corner Saint John Climacus himself is shown, gesturing towards the ladder, with rows of monastics behind him.

A quote from Saint John Climacus helps us in our daily spiritual life: "Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honor your patience."

St. John Climacus' feast day is celebrated in both the Western and Eastern Churches on March 30. He is also celebrated on the Fourth Sunday of Lent in the Eastern Churches.

Call to Action

"The world is my cloister, my body is my cell, and my soul is the hermit within."

---- St. Francis

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 the monastics 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 with Archbishop Charles (chancery@ohioocc.org) this feeling and see just where it might lead you.

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Bill and Monica
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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