

Monastic Musings

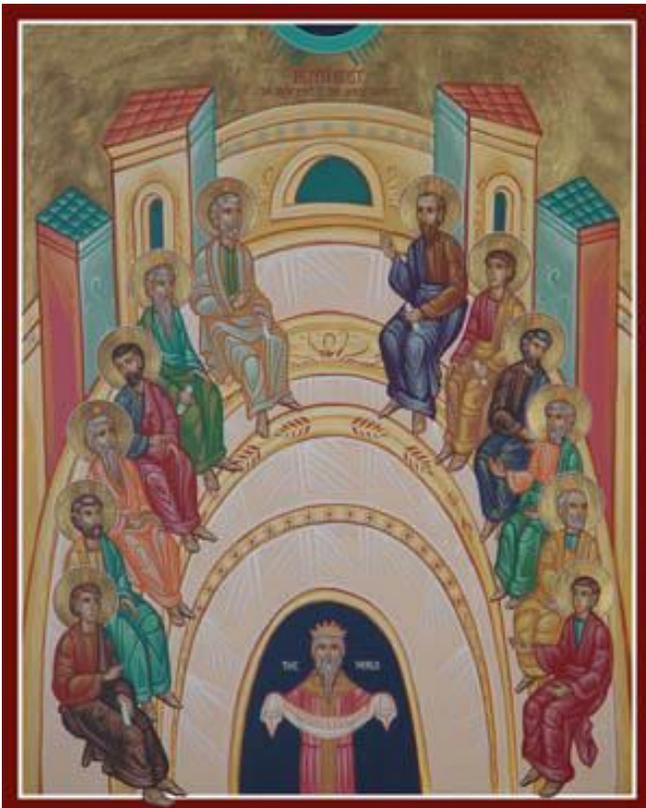
News and Views of the Eastern Rite Monastics
of the
Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church

May 2010

From the Idle keyboard

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

Easter Season comes to a close this month with the Feast of Pentecost on May 23rd. In the church, it is the celebration of the day that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. This Feast is celebrated 50 days after Easter and 10 days after the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven. In some ways, Pentecost is thought as the ordination of the Apostles as the Bishops for the Christian church since it is the day that the Holy Spirit came to the Apostles. In the Orthodox Church, the vigils and liturgy are very festive since the churches are decorated with greenery and flowers.



The icon shown on the left is the typical icon for this Feast. It shows the Twelve Apostles seated in a semicircle. At the top of the icon (barely visible in this particular icon) is the depiction of the Holy Spirit descending on the Apostles. At the center bottom of the icon is a figure that is allegorical and is the symbol of the world (Kosmos). Notice that Kosmos is crowned as if an earthly king, but sits within darkness as he is ignorant of God. In his hands he is holding a towel upon which 12 scrolls have been placed. Each of the scrolls represents the teachings of each of the Apostles.

In some icons of Pentecost you will see the Theotokos (Blessed Mary) seated as the center person of the

semicircle of the Apostles. Also, in some icons, the Gospel writers hold their gospels (still unwritten) in their hands. See the writing by Mother Myrella for another example of an icon of Pentecost with these “changes”.

Prayer of the Holy Spirit: Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us, cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One.

For many of us, May is the month that we start to really feel Spring in the air. We start to see the Spring flowers growing; trees are budding, and grass is growing green again. It is basically a rebirth of the earth. For us it is also a period of rebirth. We take upon us a new life that is Holy Spirit led – or we strive to. We look not at our past or even to the future, but look at each day as it arrives as a day to become more perfect in the eyes of God - to see each thing we do that day as a way to grow more spirit filled and God led. This is not always easy and yes we do make mistakes. But it is in these mistakes that we learn to do better. Life is so full of wonders! We see it every day when we look at Mother Nature. Our lives, also, should be full of wonders. We have a chance to not be like Kosmos, in the icon, who lives in the dark but to be more like the Apostles who have received the Holy Spirit and did all they could to spread the teaching of Jesus throughout the world. Are we perfect at it – No, but we must keep trying. It is through this trying that we become successful. We pick ourselves up each time we stumble or fall. We reach out and ask for God’s assistance throughout the day and not just when things seem to be the hardest for us. We have to learn to talk “with” God and not just talk “to” God. We must learn that God loves to have conversations with us where it is a give and take. He talks and we listen; we talk and He listens. It is in our conversations with God that we learn how to grow into the child of God that we were each created as!

I remember a conversation I had many years ago with another coworker. She was telling me about her young son who was about 4 at the time. They were driving home one evening when she realized that her son was talking in his car seat. When asked who he was talking to, he very calmly said –“I am talking with God”. It seems to me that children, before they start to school, have such capabilities of talking with God. Once we send them to school, that capability falls away. Why I often ask myself. Well, for me it comes down to the idea that little children have no problems listening and hearing the voice of God and enjoy talking with him in all their innocence. But, once they start school, we teach them that “hearing voices” is wrong and that having an imaginary friend is wrong. We remove the innocence that was within the child. We learn all the do’s and don’ts in this world to the point that we shut out God’s voice within ourselves. Then as we grow older, we find that we want to talk to God for things that we want/desire/need within life. Our prayers become begging conversations instead of praises and thanksgiving.

Remember Alice from Mother Myrella’s story last moth? Alice is a good example of how we have become in life concerning our prayer life. After completing her morning personal care, Alice gathers up all her prayer books, rosary, prayer cards and prayer list. Alice spends the next 5 – 6 hours praying to God every day. She has her list of people she feels she must remember and pray for. (This list is for those who have died. It seems it

does not include any people who are still living.). She has her calendar of saints that she has been taught she must pray to daily. But in all of her prayers, you never hear a “thank you” or “praising” of something. It is always the idea of “I need/want” in her prayers. Sad actually but then that is the way her church taught her. They did not teach her that God likes to hold conversations with us. They taught her that she cannot use her own words to talk with God but must use printed prayers. Self made prayers are not “perfect enough” for God’s ears was what she was taught.

Don’t get me wrong about printed prayers. They have their place in one’s prayer life. But what God’s really wants from each of us is to lay our hearts open in our own words. He wants the chance to “butt into” the prayer and give us advice/direction. If we only use printed prayers, we do not leave room for God to speak to us as we rush through reading the prayers. Maybe, just maybe, the printed prayers really don’t say what it is we really want to say. Long periods of prayer are also good. Our daily lives should become one of constant communications with God. But when you do not talk with God throughout the day, you don’t receive the necessary guidance you might need! You are not taking time to thank God for all that is happening in your life. Communications with God is so important in our daily lives!

For me, prayer time is really a combination of several things: printed prayers, spiritual readings, Scripture, and then an open ended conversation with God that includes some time of silence. Some of my favorite prayer time is just me sitting/standing outside looking around me and talking with God about what I am seeing/feeling at the moment. In the conversation, God is able to learn how I am seeing the world around me at the moment and then can “correct” my vision with his guiding words. He can sense my emotions and help me through the rough points. He can rejoice with me when I am happy. God becomes the receiver of my world and I of his when I just take time to talk with him. God loves to hear the praises and thank you in your conversation. He also understands there are times you come to him “asking for something”. That is part of God’s role as a parent! But asking and not giving him a chance to answer is like talking to a brick wall. Take the time to sit quietly and listen to the small quiet voice within your heart.

So I would ask as we approach Pentecost, take the time to hold a conversation with God. Learn to listen for God’s voice within your life and to be open and honest with yourself about your personal prayer life, making adjustment in it to be more open to God. Just as the tree comes to life first by budding then opening up of the leaves, so to our prayer life develops. It takes time and “practice” to learn to communicate with God. We have to unlearn many old habits to be successful in this process of communications but learn we can do. God has so much to share with us, if only we would take time to talk and listen!!!

Desert Wisdom

Self-examination

They used to say about Poemen that when he was ready to go out to the meeting for prayer, he first sat by himself for an hour in self-examination, and then went out.

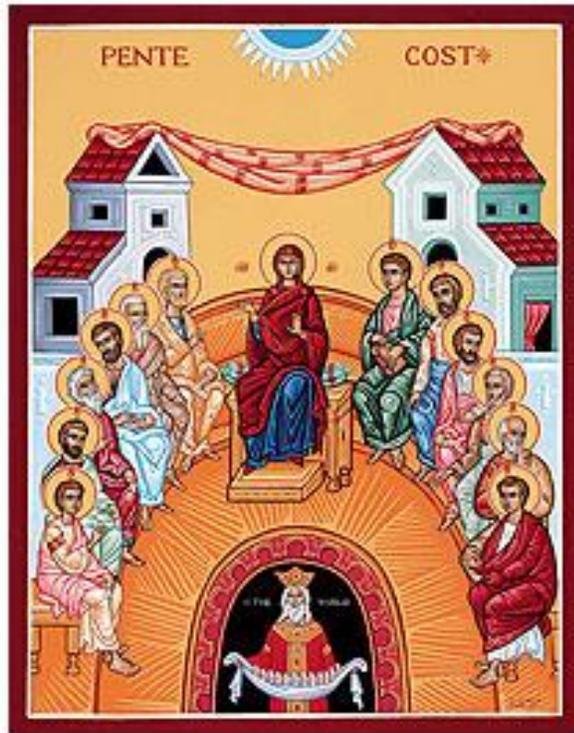
The Coming of the Holy Spirit *by Mother Myrella*

The day after Jesus' Resurrection was a stressful time for the disciples. They were mournful, fearful, distraught and had lost focus of what Jesus' mission was. When Jesus appears to the apostles on the evening of the same day, He says to them "Peace be with you" and then He shows them "His hands and His side. Then they were glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20:20) This is the beginning of their return to Faith.

Jesus later tells the disciples "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you". (Acts 1:8) On the fiftieth day after Passover on the day which the Jews celebrated the giving of the Tablets of the Law to Moses, the Holy Spirit descended on the assembled disciples "and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:4) These illiterate, uneducated disciples underwent a radical change and were now capable of fulfilling the mission that Jesus had given to them: "Go into all of the world and preach the gospel to every creature". (Mark 16:15) The disciples were to bear witness to the Resurrection to every creature in the entire world.

All Christians bear witness to the fact that the apostles did indeed fulfill their mission; they managed to keep their focus and faith on their mission because they were never alone.

Christ did not abandon them but gave them a Helper, the Spirit of truth, who dwelled with them and in them. They truly listened to the Holy Spirit and completed their spiritual journey from non-belief to complete and unwavering Faith in the risen Christ.



As Christians, we also have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but do we even hear Him when he calls our name. If we hear His call, do we then listen to what He is saying and place our Trust in Him. I know I need to stop what I am doing and Listen, truly Listen, to His guidance. Where are you on your spiritual journey? Are you like me, wavering and prone to falling off the path? There is blessed hope, my friends. The Holy Spirit abides in us. Let us approach Him with open hearts and minds and recommit ourselves to hearing that “still, small voice”.

Let us pray together: *Holy Spirit, wise Counselor, beloved Comforter, and dearest Friend, help us to hear your voice. Let us dwell with you every moment of the day. Guide us in our journey to Faith.*

Side Note

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

I would like to remind all the Eastern Rite Monastics that communications with me is very important. Why you might ask? Well, it is in the communications that we share that I can understand where you are in your daily monastic life, if there is anything going on in your life that you might need a little help with, and a general knowing how things are going with you. We may not live within a physical monastery together, but we do live in a “spiritual monastery” together. The old Elders of the monasteries have always taught, never be monastic by yourself. Always have an Elder that you can communicate frequently with. This helps you stay on the “right pathway” and helps you learn how to “combat the Evil One” in your life. It just happens that your Elder is me just as Bishop Charles is my Elder...All of us walk in the same vineyard here on earth, albeit in different locations of the country and doing different things with our secular lives. My role as your Elder/Abbess is to be sure that you are developing spiritually and provide you with whatever help you may need to accomplish your spiritual growth. I want us to build community where we can easily reach out to one another for “help” as needed. To be monastic within the world can be a big challenge, but together it becomes easier for each of us.

Given this information, I am asking that I hear from each of you at least once a month - more often if you choose! An email is all that is required. But in this email, catch me up with what is happening with your secular life and what is going on with your spiritual life. Let me know how you are doing with your daily rule. Lastly, please let me know if there is anything I can do for you to help you grow spiritually.... I would like to see everyone start this process this month. I can then be able to report to Bishop Charles what is happening with the Eastern Rite Monastics.

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yosi and Jim
Bill and Trish
Linda and Wayne
Liz and Courtney
Carol and Leonard
Fr. David and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Our Bishop -- +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-hegumen/abbess)

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