

Monastic Musings

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

November 2010

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite-elect Barb

Another month has closed and new month starts. As I sit here working on this newsletter, I look outside and see the wonderful rain. Finally, we are getting the much needed rain to help the earth start preparing for its long sleep of winter. What will this month bring to each of the monastics and for our Church? For us, it is the preparation of the Birth of Christ! Advent starts (since we follow the western calendar) on November 28th and lasts for 4 weeks, culminating in the Birth of Jesus (Christmas). For the monastics, it means that we prepare for our rebirth in Christ on Christmas Day. Advent always reminds me that it is time to take inventory of what we have done and not done as a monastic. It is a time to look at where we want to be in our monastic walk in 2011! It is a chance to really see if we have accomplished through the last year what we set out to accomplish. And yes, it can be both sad and happy in this review of the year. We have a chance to honestly evaluate our monastic walk. For me personally, it is also a chance to evaluate where I want to take the Eastern Rite Monastics within the church.

Actually my evaluation started back in June after Archbishop Charles visited the Community here. With his decision of elevating me into the episcopal rank in December, I had to start to put together ideas/plans for the Eastern Rite Monastics that could be presented to the Archbishop for his approval. Even though I have turned in my "document", that process continues to be fine-tuned as I get a better feel of where Archbishop Charles is taking the church as a whole and in my talks with the monastics. Is anything really going to change? No, not really. I am just building the framework around what we are already doing or plan on doing. My motto is really to keep things simple so that each monastic is able to develop spiritually as they feel necessary and are called to do. Rigid rules and regulations, at times, cause you to focus on the rules and not on your spirituality in the long run. That is one thing that is really wonderful about the Orthodox style of monasticism and that is what we are bringing with the Eastern Rite Monasticism to our Church.

I am looking forward to my trip to Ohio in December. It will be a chance to visit with the members of Our Lady of Peace Cathedral, make new friends, see old friends and finally put faces to the voices I have talked to over the past years. It will be a time to be with people who have such a love of Christ in their personal lives! I know that Archbishop Charles and some of the members of the Cathedral have been very busy "fixing up" to Church for my visit. It has

given them a chance to say, let's have things in this spot or we are not using this, let's give it a new home. Archbishop Charles has been purchasing new items for the Church also, so he is staying very busy looking at what he has and what he feels is needed or replaced!!! And yes, he has had to think about who is doing what for the day of consecration. Much work is going on behind the scenes for my consecration -- more than I will probably ever know! But then that is really what happens when you host a big event, and that is what the consecration is for the Church. A Church Jurisdiction in its infancy is raising up a new bishop for the Jurisdiction! It is a big step for all of the Church but a bold and proud step that is being taken by the Church. Archbishop Charles keeps me informed of the physical changes that are happening around the Cathedral. Yes, Sam, the work you did with the statue of the Holy Mother is beautiful! The liturgy has been written and ready for the printer. The assignments for the liturgy are slowly being handed out to the participants. I am slowly learning the liturgy used at Our Lady of Peace Cathedral. And everyone I have talked to are very enthused about the "big day". Yes, it is a little scary for me, but I know that in December when I step off the plane, I will find myself surrounded with love and kindness. I am looking forward to the new challenge that lies ahead of me. Becoming a bishop is an awesome responsibility! And one that I take knowing that God walks with me daily and that there are many people surrounding me -- teaching me and supporting me. I can only hope I can live up to the "faith" Archbishop Charles and the Church Board has placed in me! Now then, could someone please locate the Oil of Chrism and hide all but about an ounce. Archbishop Charles has threaten to pour a gallon or more over me!

I was working on the 2011 calendar that I put together for the Our Lady of Peace Cathedral's web site (which will be uploaded in late December) this week and realized that November is a month that is so very full of celebrations of Saints! Both the Eastern Church and the Western Church were very busy raising up saints in November! That is good though since saints help us learn to live our lives in a very God centered way when we study their lives. When you study some of the lives of the saints you shake your head at first wondering how did they ever overcome their pasts and move into a life that was so God centered. It was not always easy for them, just as we often find ourselves stumbling in our spiritual lives. They had to overcome many things in their lives, just as we have to overcome things. But they did overcome. That means that with perseverance, we also can overcome any obstacle we find in our way. Always remember, life is full of trials that are there to help us to develop a strong life in God!

Desert Wisdom

Souls that love truth and God, that long with much hope and faith to put on Christ completely, do not need so much to be put in remembrance by others, nor do they endure, even for a while, to be deprived of the heavenly desire and of passionate affection to the Lord; but being wholly and entirely nailed to the cross of Christ, they perceive in themselves day by day a sense of spiritual advance towards the spiritual Bridegroom.

St. Macarius the Great

Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple *by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair*

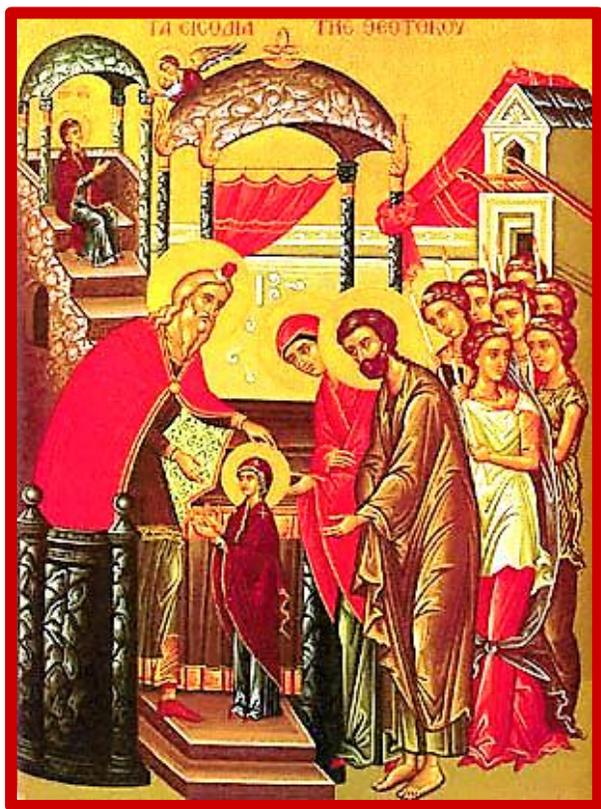
The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church and is celebrated on November 21. In the Western church, the feast is known as the

Presentation of Mary. This is a feast of anticipation in both of the Eastern and Western Churches. For the Eastern Church, this feast occurs during the 40-day Advent Fast, and for the Western Church, this feast occurs just prior to the first Sunday of Advent. Mary's entrance into the temple is the beginning of her preparation for her role as Mother of God:

"Today is the preview of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. Let us rejoice and sing to her: Rejoice, O Divine Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation." (Troparion hymn)

Although the birth and earthly life of Mary is not recorded in the Gospels or in any other books in the New Testament, information can be found in a second century work known as the Protoevangelion of James (also called the Infancy Gospel of James).

Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, vowed that if a child was born to them, they would dedicate that child to the service of God. When Mary was three years old, her parents believed that it was time to fulfill their vow and offer her to God. They dressed her in garments that were befitting of the "King's daughter, the Bride of God" (Psalm 44:13-15) and escorted her to the Jerusalem Temple.



Mary ran toward the Temple and was met by the High Priest, Zacarias. He blessed her saying, "it is in you that He has glorified your name in every generation. It is in you that He will reveal the Redemption that He has prepared for His people in the last days".

When her parents placed Mary on the first step, it would seem unlikely that she would make it up the 15 high steps by herself; however, Mary was strengthened by the power of God and quickly went up the steps until she reached the highest one. Then Zacharias "was possessed by God" and brought Mary into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest was permitted to enter once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The Holy of Holies was the part of the Temple that was believed to contain the dwelling place of God. Mary was led to Holy of Holies to herself become the holy of holies, the Theotokos (God-bearer), who is the living temple of God's Son. The Orthodox Church views this feast as marking the end of the Jerusalem Temple as the dwelling place of God: *"Today the universe is filled with joy at the*

glorious feast of the Mother of God, and cries out: "She is the heavenly tabernacle." (Kontakion hymn for Forefeast)

Little is known of Mary's life in the Temple, but there are accounts in Church Tradition which indicate that she spent much of her time praying, doing handiwork, and being prepared to become the Mother of God. St. Jerome said: "If anyone were to ask me how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, -- I would answer: that is known to God Himself and the

Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian". She stayed in the Temple until she reached puberty and was entrusted to Joseph's care.

Just as John the Baptist preceded Christ by announcing the coming of the Messiah, Mary's entrance into the temple foretells the promise of salvation through the Coming of Christ.

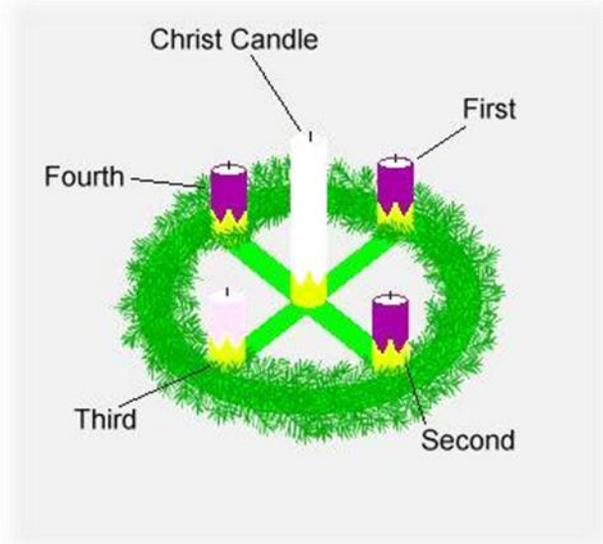
"Today is the prelude of God's goodwill/ and the prophecy of the salvation of men./ The Virgin appears openly in the temple of God/ and foretells Christ to all./ So let us cry to her with loud voices:/ Rejoice, thou who art the fulfillment/ of the Creator's providence." (Troparion hymn)

Advent Wreath

by: schema-Archimandrite-elect Barb

The Advent Wreath is a tradition that started in Germany during the 16th century to help children know when it was Christmas Day. You know how children can be. They are very excited about Christmas – all of the gifts they dream of.

Well, in the process of their excitement, they are constantly asking when Christmas will be. So, the Advent Wreath was one tradition developed to help with that question. Over time, many different Christian Churches have embraced the use of an Advent Wreath during the liturgical season of Advent. The wreath has been a way of counting down the four weeks before Christmas Day. Depending on what church you belong to depends on what color the candles are and what prayers are used as the candles are lit.



The basic wreath is comprised of four candles and a circle of fresh evergreens.

Some people will add pine cones, Christmas balls, ribbons, etc. to decorate the wreath. The four candles are usually three purple candles and one pink/rose candle. The pink/rose candle is for Gaudete (Rose/Joyous) Sunday, which is the third Sunday of Advent. A fifth candle is often added. This fifth candle is called the Christ Candle and is white.

Prayers are said and often hymns are sung when the candle is lit for the week. The topic of the prayers is often focused on the "meaning" of the particular Sunday.

Often families will have Advent Wreaths in their home. The family gathers together each Sunday evening to light the candle, pray together, and even sing Christmas carols. The Advent Wreath is a way to bring the "true meaning" of Christmas into focus when used in the family home. The "true meaning" is the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. The Advent Wreath gives each of us a chance to step back from all the other meanings of Christmas for a moment and focus on our faith. And yes, for the children, it is still a way to count down the weeks before they are visited by Santa Claus!

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yosi and Jim
Lt. James Byers
Bill Tenney
Linda and Wayne
Liz and Courtney
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-elect)

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***Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community
for the
Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church***

Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple



Advent Wreath

Notice that this wreath uses holly leaves and holly berries as the base instead of the usual evergreens.

