

# Monastic Musings

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

November 2012

*From the Idle keyboard*

*by: schema-Archimandrite Barb*



Once again we are coming to the close of the church year and preparing for the beginning of a new year. Thanksgiving is a time when we realize that Advent (the beginning of the new church year) is upon us. We gather together as a family to thank God for all our blessings of the last year. In this process we, without even knowing it, prepare ourselves once more for the new year within the Church.

I would ask that as you join with your family and/or friends that you take the time to ask for forgiveness of all the issues that divide you and ask for their support to start anew in the love of God. We need

to take this time for preparing our hearts for God's direction in our lives. So often we get so tied up in life that we forget there is even a God who wants to be involved in our lives to help us through things. So to prepare ourselves for Advent, take a moment to look at yourself and see what areas you need to "fix/heal" and ask God to help you seek the strength to ask for forgiveness of those you may have hurt in some manner. Also, thank those who have walked with you this last year for being there with you as a friend.

As this calendar year slowly draws to a close, Mother Myrella and I are redefining our teaching ministry through this newsletter. We will be finishing out 2012 with the publishing of the December newsletter. With the start of 2013 we will be publishing this newsletter quarterly and focusing on one topic basically with our viewpoints on the topic. Hopefully, the topic will be helpful to everyone on their spiritual walk no matter what their church background may be. As monastics, we are called to teach and to mentor spiritually, and we take this role very seriously and with great humility. That is really the purpose of this newsletter that we have been lovingly putting together. We both feel it is time to focus more on what topics we are called to write about and in doing that, it means taking more time to gather the information that we want to share and then put it on paper. We ultimately want to help people to think a little outside of their comfort

zone when it comes to their spiritual walk. Challenge your thinking and be open to seeing God in a new way. God is Love and God is always with us even when we turn our backs on him! But, God has never forbidden us to close ourselves off from experiencing Him in many different ways. He has always asked us to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That means that we have to be willing to listen and to learn from those around us, even if we do not agree with their thinking. We walk in a world where there is not one right or wrong when it comes to our spiritual walk. As one spiritual advisor taught me:

*“There is only one tree (God) but there are so many branches (faiths/churches/jurisdictions/denominations) that make up that tree. Pick whatever branch is comfortable but challenging to you so that you can learn of God’s love and experience God’s love. But realize that you may find changing a branch at times is necessary to continue your spiritual growth.”*

May this Thanksgiving bring you not only forgiveness needed but new joy within your life that is filled with family and friends surrounding you in God’s love!

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### **Thanksgiving Day – A Spiritual Celebration**

*By Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair*

November can be a rather gloomy month. The skies are for the most part are overcast, and the vegetation becomes dormant - resting in God until once again the cycle of Nature’s resurrection occurs in the Spring. So, it is no wonder that we look forward to Thanksgiving Day festivities to shake off the doldrums of the late Fall cycle.

Although it is a secular holiday, Thanksgiving Day can be a day in which we feed the soul just as heartily as we feed our bodies -- if we approach the day with a reflective mind and a grateful heart. It can be a day in which we experience God through the love of our families and friends -- if we turn off all electronic devices, set aside our biases, and engage in actual communication with our loved ones. Perhaps, you will understand that God has blessed you with one another.

As a child, Thanksgiving was a day for the family to gather together, to lay aside our differences and disagreements, and to enjoy one another’s company. We children would run around the house until it was time for the parade to begin. Then, we would be huddled together in the living room watching the balloons and bands. At the time that the parade ended, the adults would have us come to the dinner table. Together, we thanked God not only for the food we were about to eat but for all of the blessings He had given us and continued to give us in every moment of our lives. God’s love surrounded us....These joy-filled hours that we spent together was for me a spiritual experience – something I did not realize until many years later and the thought came to mind that Thanksgiving Day was a grace-filled day!



Consider if you will just how much this celebration parallels the ultimate Thanks-Giving (Eucharist comes from the Greek noun *eucharistia*, meaning "thanksgiving".) On Thanksgiving Day, we gather together to share a meal. Before the meal, some families offer a prayer to God to bless the meal and to bless those sharing in that meal. Collectively, they thank God. Throughout the celebration, there are remembrances of those who are not physically there. During that celebration, we have many opportunities to perceive the Christ in one another, and in the manner that Christ has taught us in the Beatitudes, we extend His Love, Mercy and Forgiveness to one another. Although the bread that we eat and the wine that we drink does not become the Body and Blood of Christ, He is present in this gathering. Just as when we join Him at His Table during the liturgy, He joins us at our table and fills us with His grace.

When you celebrate with your loved ones at Thanksgiving, reflect on the blessings you have received. Give thanks not only for the food and fellowship, but most importantly for the unchanging, unconditional Love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Wishing you a blessed Thanksgiving!

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## **A New Advent**

*by: schema-Archimandrite Barb*

Advent starts the first Sunday after Thanksgiving. What will Advent be for you this year? Another year of saying "Yes this year is done thank goodness" or will it be "What can I experience through God's love this year." How we approach Advent through our celebration of Thanksgiving will set the "tone" for the rest of the year for each of us.

First let us look at the word Advent and see what it actually means. The word Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus* meaning "coming", a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The movement of the season may be marked with an Advent calendar, a practice introduced by German Lutherans. At least in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Moravian, Presbyterian and Methodist calendars, Advent starts on the fourth Sunday before December 25, the Sunday from November 27 to December 3 inclusive. Or as I like to remember it, it is the Sunday after Thanksgiving here in the United States. For the Eastern Orthodox, Advent is a period of 40 days before Christmas (November 15 through December 24). Latin *adventus* is the translation of the Greek word *parousia*, commonly used in reference to the Second Coming of Christ. For Christians, the season of Advent serves as a reminder both of the original waiting that was done by the Hebrews for the birth of their Messiah as well as the waiting of Christians for Christ's return from Heaven.

So now you have a little understanding of what the word Advent means as per the church's usage. What does the word Advent mean for each of us as individuals? In all reality, it means our preparing and waiting for the return of Christ through his Second Coming. But, it also directs us as to how we should be living our lives – expecting Christ to return any moment. We need to then take the time to live our lives as guided by the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. Advent gives us a chance once more to turn to God and live our lives in a very spirit driven manner.

So often as God's children we have a habit of forgetting to let God direct us in everything that we do. We get so tied up in what is happening around us – at home, at work, and even in the world. We often get into the mode of we can handle everything ourselves; so, we don't take the

time needed each day to ask God to walk with us and then to thank Him for all He has given us that day. That is so sad since God truly wants to be a part of our lives and not just a part time friend but as a full time friend. We can count on God at all times. He will not run from us because of our mistakes but forgives us and stay with us. That is really who God is for each of us.

God sent us the Holy Spirit to be our guiding light in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is constantly speaking to each of us if we only would take the time to listen. Have you ever had a moment in your life when you decided to do something, but there was this Voice within you that told you that maybe it was the wrong decision? Well guess what! That was the Holy Spirit talking with you and helping you to make the correct decision for the moment. I have to often laugh to myself when I get out of my shower. I have taken the time to clean my physical body and the Holy Spirit has taken the time to clean my spiritual mind! It is not unusual for me to climb out of the shower realizing just what little tidbit of knowledge I've received from the Holy Spirit when I was least expecting it. Showers are a time where I just let my mind wander for a while and not focus on anything. I can always expect some sort of a surprise placed in my mind at that moment. Maybe it is an answer to a problem I was having at work -- maybe an answer about how to handle a situation the best way or even a new topic for the newsletter! And no, shower time is not the only time the Holy Spirit talks with me, but it is one time she can without any fighting on my part.

See as humans, we think we can handle everything ourselves. But when things go wrong, we have a habit of "yelling at God" for help. Now how would our lives be if we only took the time to walk with the Holy Spirit in our hearts all the time? If we listened to the small still voice that is in our hearts constantly, I would suspect all of us would be leading much happier lives. I know when I let the Holy Spirit direct things, everything is so much better. Does that mean that we will not experience pain, discomfort, anger, misunderstanding, etc.? No, but the "pain" of the situation will be lessened by knowing we have listened to the Holy Spirit and followed her suggestions.

This is what I consider the New Advent: Learning to let go and let God direct each and every one of us every moment of each day. Learning to treat others around us exactly the way we want to be treated. Learning to talk with others as we would like them to talk with us – with love. But first we must take the time to heal and forgive the mistakes that we have made this past year. This means taking the time at Thanksgiving to reach out in love and forgiveness to everyone in your life. Thanksgiving is a time where everyone should be setting aside their differences and coming together in love. That is what the very first Thanksgiving was all about! The American Indians and the Pilgrims came to gather with whatever food they had and shared together their love for what they had. Thanksgiving is a time to remember the past but also a time to start fresh with your relationships around you. What a blessing Thanksgiving truly can be and should be. It is a time of new birth! To become who you are meant to be – a child of God.

So are you ready for you New Advent? Are you willing to say openly and honestly to yourself that you want and need the Holy Spirit within your heart? Are you willing to see Jesus in everyone with whom you come into contact with? If you can say yes to just one of these questions, you have already decided that you are a child of God and want to be who you were created to be!

May your walk be joyful and light. May you find Jesus in everything you see each moment of each day. May your find your heart be filled with love today and always.

## **Call to Action**

*“The world is my cloister, my body is my cell, and my soul is the hermit within.”  
-- St. Francis of Assisi*

St. Francis really could not said 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 they 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.

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## **Prayer Requests**

Mom LeClair  
Linda and Wayne  
Fr. David and family  
Fr. Ron and Sam  
The Our Lady of Peace Cathedral Congregation  
Fr. Rick Hobbs  
Our Archbishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF  
Bill and Monica

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**All writings are the views of the author(s) on a particular subject and are meant to challenge your thinking so as to help you grow in your spiritual walk with God.**

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