

Monastic Musings

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

October 2010

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite-elect Barb

Summer has finally come to a close and Fall has arrived. I can only hope that our weather will respond to the change! We here in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts are running around 2.5 inches below norm in precipitation. Not a good thing in the long run. State government has to finally say the area was in a moderate drought situation. Not that it was a surprise given we knew that the rain storms seemed to pass around us 99% of the time.

I am still staying somewhat busy preparing for my consecration in December. Archbishop Charles and I have been working hard on the Liturgy. I have much to “learn” since Liturgy is celebrated differently at the Cathedral than what Mother Myrella and I do here locally. But then we are both very used to “shifting gears” (our as we like to say, “just go with the flow”) when it comes to Liturgies. The different Liturgies that are used within the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church are what makes us unique in so many ways. Each parish/community ministers with the people in a way that is “comfortable” for them. One of the pleasures I will have at my consecration is that I will be able to celebrate the Eucharistic section of the liturgy with my brother bishops and the deacons. As Archbishop Charles told me, you are the celebrant and we are there to help you! Fortunately, Archbishop Charles is a great teacher and leader, so I am really not worry about the Liturgy. I am more worried about how much Chrism oil he will use as he has been teasing me that he has a gallon of the oil he can use during the consecration.

Archbishop Charles and I decided that I better start my travel on the Thursday of that week so that if there are any issues with the flights, I will have plenty other flights to use to get to Cincinnati, OH by midday Friday....I will then plan on flying back on the Monday after the consecration. It actually will mean I will have some time to “relax” before we start the practice Friday night. I will have a chance then on Sunday to worship with the members of the Cathedral. It will be great to sit back and be spiritually fed at the Cathedral. I am actually looking forward to my time spent with Archbishop Charles and the members of the Cathedral.

Here at the hermitage, we are finally getting into a rhythm for prayer and for celebrating liturgy. That’s been something we have not been able to do for almost 7 years. We have discovered that Blackie, our wonderful loving cat, has decided that the “feel” of the room we set up for

meditation/liturgy is so great that she has taken over the altar! We discovered this one evening when we were looking for her when we got home from work. There she was sound asleep up



against the wall on the altar. We tried to discourage her from sleeping there, but cats have minds of their own. So instead of fighting with her, we have decided to fold back the altar cloth after liturgy and put a towel there for her to lie on. She basically told us, it was a perfect place to look out into the back yard and to comfortably sleep away her day when we are not home. She at least lets us have the altar to celebrate liturgy so we are willing to share with her the rest of the time. But in all of this she is really saying, "I like the new feel of this room". It was a room that she would not go into much in the past. I have even

discovered that she tried out the one shelf of the bookcase where I store our needs for the celebration of the liturgy. Yes, little black hairs on the linens gave it away.....Now when we celebrate liturgy, she comes in just before the consecration of the elements and takes her place on the rug in front of the altar. She loves the incense that we burn during the liturgies! Blackie has given her stamp of approval to the meditation room and that is really great! Cats are really great "sensors" of the environment if you just watch and listen to them...

St. Francis of Assisi – Holy Fool *by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair*

October is a quiet month in the church calendar. There are no major feasts; however October 4th is observed as the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi by the western church. He is honored as the patron saint of animals, ecology and as one of Italy's two patron saints. He is also a Holy Fool – a Fool for Christ.

Francis took to heart Christ's admonition of "Do not be afraid" and St. Paul's exhortation: "We are fools for Christ's sake..." (NKJV Lk 4:10) Francis renounced all of the riches that his prosperous father had given him – even the clothing his father had provided him. Francis dressed in rags and devoted himself to a life of poverty, charity, and simplicity. He rejected worldly ideas and challenged accepted norms – caring for lepers, preaching to the birds, seeing God in the entire natural world:

"We are all creatures of one family. If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who deal likewise with their fellow men."

Francis sought to imitate Christ by practicing the love and forgiveness taught to us by Christ in the Gospels. He saw God in all creation and love and praised Him in all creation.

Although we cannot all be fools for Christ in the manner that Francis was, we can learn from his example and attempt to be fools for Christ in a more conventional way. We can all be instruments of peace just by being gentle, peaceful, courteous, and respectful to and towards all of God's creatures. Christ was the light of the world, and it is our function as Christians to bring that light into the world: to love our enemies, to replace hatred with love by practicing radical forgiveness:

A man really loves his enemy when he is not offended by the injury done to himself, but for the love of God feels burning sorrow for the sin his enemy has brought on his own soul, and proves his love in a practical way.” (St. Francis of Assisi)

Although we may want to emulate St. Francis, for most of us, it will take time and effort to change our minds and hearts – to be able to see all with the eyes of Christ as Francis did. So, do not be discouraged and do not be afraid, but step out in Faith, taking one small step at a time. Be a witness to Christ by word and by example – offering love, forgiveness, peace to one person, one creature at a time....



May the Lord bless you
and keep you;
may the Lord show his face to you
and have compassion on you!
May he turn his face to you
and give you peace!

Amen.

Not In My Neighborhood

by: schema-Archimandrite-elect Barb

Over the past 20 – 30 years, I have noticed that so many of the communities across America have a “battle cry” that they always use to prevent some sort of change within their community. It is always, “Not in my neighborhood. This “battle cry” really comes from a basis of fear! I have sat back so many times and listened and read the editorials in the newspapers concerning the “not in my neighborhood” issues and wonder what is going on with the people.

People attend church on Sundays where they are taught to love one another and help the less fortunate. That is the “battle cry” of the churches, no matter what their theology is. The people subscribe to this thinking while they are spending their time in church, but as soon as they walk out of the door of the church, they are back to their old habits and forgetting what they just learned in Church. What has happened to the faithful? Why is it they live dual lives – one within the community and one within church. Why have they lost the old ways of bringing their faith into their entire lives and communities?

Here locally, a religious group wants to offer a ministry to homeless men. They want to provide them a place to live, help them get jobs and thus help them become productive members of the community. All of a sudden, it is the old “battle cry” of: Not in my neighborhood; it means we will have a group of drug addicts and alcoholics. But is this really the case? What are they basing this thinking on? Not all homeless people are drug addicts and/or alcoholics. Many are just people who have fallen on hard times. They live on the streets because they have lost their jobs or their homes have gone into foreclosure. They have lost their home or apartment since they cannot afford the housing cost.

Instead of helping, we prefer to stereotype people using what we fear the most. Instead of sitting down with the religious group and talking with them about what their ideas/plans are, it is so much easier to raise negative feelings. What happened to sitting down and talking? Learning exactly what the plans are and then working with them to make it work. Where have we put our faith? Where is God in all of this? What is happening to the world around us?

Today, more than ever we have a chance to really put into practice our religious faith! If we look at things really face on, was not Jesus homeless! He did not have a permanent address. He sought food from wherever he was staying at the moment. And lets be really honest with ourselves, Jesus did not hold a secular job. So in all terms, he is a great example of a homeless person. But do we tack on the labels of drug addict or alcoholic on him – No. We have been taught that Jesus is the Son of God! Did not Jesus teach that we should see God in every person we encounter? Shouldn't we be treating people as Jesus treated people – Bless them and help them become the child of God that they are. Jesus refused to stereotype people. He tried his best to see the good in them. He always reached out to give people a chance to change, to become the person that they were born to be. He did not turn people away just because they were poor, unlearned, or even a criminal. If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, why are we not following his example?

Time has come for us to return to the “old ways” with our faith. It is high time that we reach out to all we come into contact with and find a way to help them become the true person they are. It is time to stop stereotyping people but see them for the truth! That means, we have to be willing to do things we would not normally do – help in the community to help better all people. It means sitting down and talking with groups that are trying to help the “needy” in order that they will become successful. It is time to stop living in fear but live as we are taught in church – Love one another as God loves you! Get out of the “me only” attitude and get back into the “we can together” attitude. Will it always be successful? No, failures will happen. But the failure will not be because of fear or lack of trying. Working together will help to build for success. And in the process, you will find God and his love! If each of us are not willing to step up and be part of the solution, then nothing ever will be solved and the “not in my neighborhood” attitude will only get worse to the point where we will be totally withdrawn from the world! God teaches love, we teach fear and hate. What is wrong with this picture?

Desert Wisdom

by: St. Symeon the New Theologian

The roof of any house stands upon the foundations and the rest of the structure. The foundations themselves are laid in order to carry the roof. This is both useful and necessary, for

the roof cannot stand without the foundations and the foundations are absolutely useless without the roof - no help to any living creature.

In the same way the grace of God is preserved by the practice of the commandments, and the observance of these commandments is laid down like foundations through the gift of God. The grace of the Spirit cannot remain with us without the practice of the commandments, but the practice of the commandments is of no help or advantage to us without the grace of God.

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yosi and Jim
Bill and Trish
Linda and Wayne
Liz and Courtney
Carol and Leonard
Roseanne
Frank and Beatrice
Bill Tenney
Fr. David and family
Delores and Bishop Lynn
Br. Damien and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Our Lady of Peace Cathedral family
Our Bishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

Eastern Rite Monastics within Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church

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

Picture of one of the 20 Orthodox monasteries located on Mt. Athos (Holy Mountain) located on the far end of the peninsula of Greece. It is surrounded on three sides by water!

