

Monastic Musings

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

October 2012

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb



Another new month has arrived. What shall it bring for us? Hopefully not what the East Coast received last year for Halloween weekend! I hope for nice mild weather with the leaves changing slowly through their wonderful colors, but one never knows what Mother Nature will throw at us!

I want to take this time to say a big thank you to the wonderful benefactors for the food we had during Synod. Our Lady of Peace is truly blessed to have such wonderful loving people. Yes, there is a change happening within the local parish, but I think that change will be good for everyone in

the long run. It will take some time for everything that the local parish is dreaming of to come to fruition, but the dream will be accomplished so long as you let the Holy Spirit guide you. Dream big and let the Holy Spirit help you move forward is my suggestion to all of you! Remember, Rome was not built in a day and neither will the parish. I had a chance to see a little bit more of what Cincinnati has to offer near the river and even across the state line in Indiana and enjoyed everywhere we went. Thanks for all the hospitality! See you all in 2014 hopefully!

Over the next couple of months, Mother Myrella and I will be talking about our plans for this newsletter for the coming year. We are presently kicking around a couple of ideas and as of yet, we have not settled on anything specific. We have a process of listing of our ideas – where you list the pros and cons of ideas -- and see what the Holy Spirit moves us to do. Basically, we both feel that it is time for a change in what we are doing with the newsletter since we have been doing the same type of articles for 3 years. Hopefully the change we come up will be a good one for not only us but for all our readers. Both of us are also open to any ideas that you might have. We definitely want to move away from talking so much on the Saints and Holy Days to more teaching about spirituality and how to bring it into our everyday lives. We have touched on that area at times but want to be more focused in that area. We are monastics and teaching spirituality is what we are called to do by the Holy Spirit. Monastics are to be the Elders

(Spiritual Mothers and Fathers) who help people learn to live their lives in a fuller spiritual manner. We will see where the Holy Spirit will lead us; for us, it is really a great adventure we are about to undertake! So stay tuned as we start to close out 2012 and begin a new year of challenges in 2013.

What is Mass/Liturgy?

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Before I get started in my “teaching”, I would ask you to take a moment and ask yourself this: “Why do I attend Mass/Liturgy?” Do you have your answer? Okay then, let’s start looking at Mass/Liturgy and see if I can help you find a new meaning for it.

Mass/Liturgy – what is it? Well, basically it is the gathering of people to praise and celebrate God for all He has done for us! That is simple enough, right? No fancy words in that statement. So, what role do you think the Priest “plays” in this celebration? First, let’s clarify one idea concerning a Priest and maybe this will help you see Mass/Liturgy in a new light.

In the Roman Catholic Church, one is taught that the Priest “*represents*” Christ to the people. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, one is taught that the Priest “*presents*” Christ to the people. The Protestant Churches don’t even get tied up in this “role of a priest”. They see the Minister as the leader who is there to lead them in Praise/Thanksgiving and to preach the Word of God. Okay, we have laid out how some of the churches see the “role” of a Priest. How we view these roles influences how we feel about attending Mass/Liturgy.

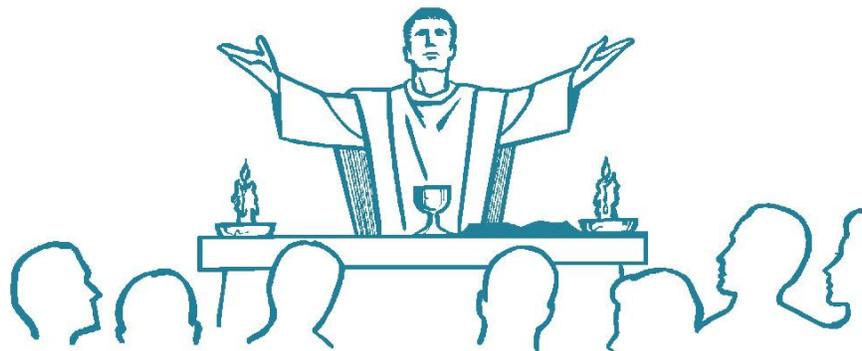
Remember, if Mass/Liturgy is a sacred celebration of God’s Love, then we need to come away from the service with that feeling. So, how do we find that feeling of celebration? Well, first off, we have to be willing to allow our priests to “present” Christ to us. This is done through the manner that the Priest celebrates Mass/Liturgy and how he/she preaches. It is also done by the pace and tone that the priest sets for the Mass/Liturgy. The other thing that sets the “mood”, if you will, is if the Mass/Liturgy is spoken or is chanted. A mix of the two can really be a jolt to your spiritual tone. I know for me, if the Liturgy is spoken and suddenly someone decides to chant a part, it causes me to suddenly come back to “reality” instead of continuing in that wondrous space of celebrating and praying with the angels. The whole tone of the Mass/Liturgy changes with something as simple as this. Now then, if the Mass/Liturgy is completely chanted, except for the readings, it sets a wondrous tone for a person to possibly feel as they are floating with the angels, experiencing the sense of being joined with heaven.

Let’s take a look at what I mean for a moment. Over the years I have visited many churches of differing faiths. The one thing that I can say that really drew me to a specific Mass/Liturgy is the feeling that the priest gave the people as the Mass/Liturgy was celebrated. This feeling was very contagious to the people within the congregation. Part of the problem that I see - and remember I am coming from this as a priest - is that the words of the Mass/Liturgy are read or recited but without much feeling or sense of celebration. Why, because of the way so many priests are trained! They are not trained to do anything but to read and recite the words that are found on the pages in front of them.

When I was going through Holy Orders and attending class on Saturday evenings, one of my tasks after class was to set up the altar for the Priest who was celebrating on Sunday. That was done so that we would be ready to celebrate Liturgy in the morning. I would turn to my Bishop

and say: “Who is doing Liturgy tomorrow”. This Bishop became unglued over the term “doing” and would always correct me to say “celebrating”. One day, however, he took me aside and asked me why I always said “doing” rather than “celebrating”. I looked calmly at him and said “Because that is what it feels like with some priests. They don’t seem to be celebrating the Liturgy but just reading the words on the pages.” That took the Bishop back for a moment and then he decided it was time for a change. It was time for the Priests to *celebrate* Liturgy! Classes were held so that priests not only would learn how to celebrate but also what not to do. Once this change was made, the congregation started to grow and became very active! That growth happened all because of a small change made by a bishop who was willing to ask a question, listen to the answer, teach his priests, and foster the change.

What is the difference of celebrating versus doing or reading the Mass/Liturgy? Basically it is this: does the Priest recite the words in a way that draws you in and fills you with emotion, or are the words read basically in a monotone and unfeeling way? We priests want to fill our pews with people, but often we do not realize that we drive them away by the way we celebrate the Mass/Liturgy. Mass/Liturgy is a grand and wonderful sacred celebration, and we as priests – along with the congregation – need to make that joy come forth. Priests need to help the congregation join together with all the saints of Heaven celebrating with Jesus and the angels.



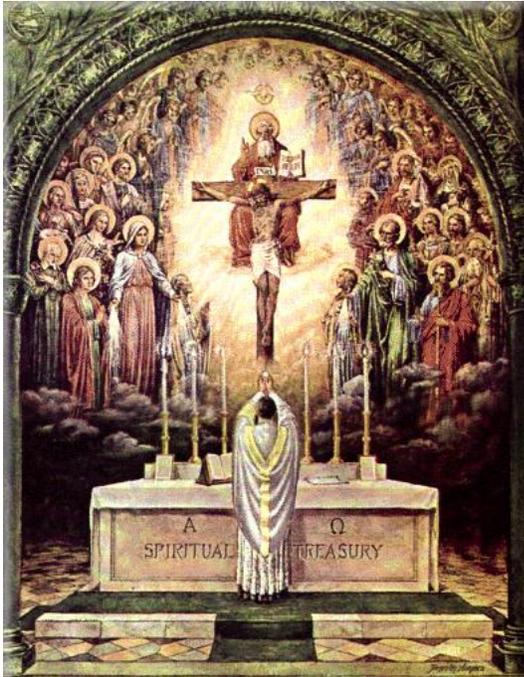
I remember a few years back when a young priest took me aside one day and said: “It is great to have a Missal of the Liturgies, but I don’t know how to ‘say’ the Liturgies. There are no rubrics listed as to what to do.” I chuckled a little to myself as I remember my learning to celebrate the Liturgy – I needed to know what to do when. So, I turned to the priest and asked: “Do you have instructions on how to dance to the music when you go to a party? Liturgy is one big celebration. Let the words tell you what to do. If you have time I will gladly give you some of the basics needed to celebrate the Eucharistic part of the Liturgy so that you can start to feel comfortable to celebrate the dance of the Liturgy.” Yes, there was a moment of silence from the young priest and suddenly there was this great big smile and the response came. “You are right. I need to let the words move me into my actions.” That is what a Mass/Liturgy is. For the priest, it is really a sacred dance that happens in his/her mind as he/she vocalizes the words. We move to the words – hopefully.

We as priests and even congregants have to realize that we need to slow down what we are saying, put some feeling into the words, and show that it is really a grand sacred celebration of all that our triune God has done for us in our lives. The priests and the congregation need to reach a point where everyone joins together as one happy family celebrating in joy that which we are proclaiming. Will this mean that Mass/Liturgy might last a little longer? Maybe, but Mass/Liturgy should make you feel joyful – to feel as if you never want to leave. Mass/Liturgy should never be a “have to” but something that you look forward to each time you are able to

attend. Just like when you hear that favorite song you love so much! No I am not asking for the raising of hands and dancing in the aisles, but rather the bringing forth of joy and peace in your hearts through celebrating together with – as the Eastern Orthodox say - “this and the other side – heaven and earth”. Let your mind and hearts flow with the words and “float” for a while with all the angels of the Heavenly Choir!

Liturgy - A Joyful Celebration

By Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair



“Remembering that when we gather, we do so with the whole Church on this and the other side; heaven and earth are joined in prayer. In peace let us pray to God.” (from The Liturgy of the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community)

Reading Bishop Barb’s writing brought back so many memories for me. For the first 20 years of my life, I was a Roman Catholic who attended Mass faithfully every Sunday because I was obliged to; otherwise, I would suffer eternal damnation. Although I attended Roman Catholic grammar school with nuns as teachers, I never learned what the Mass was or should be: a joyful celebration in which heaven and earth are joined together. As far as I was concerned, the shorter the Mass was, the more I appreciated it. It didn’t matter if the Mass was in Latin, English, or French, just so long as it was short because short or long, I had fulfilled my obligation. Heaven’s gatekeepers could check it off on the positive side of my check sheet. Yes, I was taught – and believed –

that God had all those angels to keep track of every mistake that I made. So I also had to say many prayers to redeem myself. Notice I used the word “say” – not pray. Being Roman Catholic for me was all about following rules so as to avoid punishment. It was not about Love.

In later years after meeting Christians from different religious denominations and speaking about our religious beliefs, I soon realized that as a Roman Catholic, I had certainly drawn the short straw. My friends actually enjoyed attending church and did so not to satisfy some man-made rule but because they wanted to! They actually enjoyed coming together to worship God. Their services were filled with joyful celebration. If they did not attend service, they were not threatened with being eternally punished. God was presented as a loving God – not as a vengeful, unforgiving dictator, who condemned you for such minor sins as eating meat on Friday. What a difference that made in my life to find the God that I knew deep in my heart was the true God who unconditionally loved His creations.

Many years later, I was blessed to have the same bishop who taught Bishop Barb. He also taught me what each of my roles and duties were – and more importantly, the mystical spirituality associated with each – as I went through all of the minor orders up to the major order of priesthood. By the time I was ordained as a priest, I knew that my role as a priest in the Liturgy was to “present” Christ to those assembled and to lead this assembly (that is, the

Church) “to throne of God, to the glory of the heavenly kingdom”. Liturgy is not about *saying* the words in the shortest amount time; it is about ascending to the Heavenly Kingdom and experiencing but an instant of blessed eternity where Heaven and earth are joined together praying the Sanctus and experiencing the Mystical Supper at His Table in the Kingdom. Once the assembly has partaken of the Mystical Supper, the priest then leads their descent back to this world to bear witness to God and to bring His Joy, Peace, and Love into this world.

Let us pray:

May this worship bear fruit in our lives. May God be praised in our words and deeds.

*May we walk with God and be blessed in the name of the ✠
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever and unto
ages of ages.*

*Let us embrace one another in peace, then go forth to serve God
in friend and foe, in neighbor and stranger. Peace be with you!*

(from The Liturgy of the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community)

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.

Prayer Requests

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

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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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