

Monastic Musings

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

September 2010

From the Idle keyboard

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

The summer is quickly passing us by. It has been an interesting and busy one for me. As some of you are aware, I was announced as Archimandrite-elect on August 15, 2010. That means I have been very busy trying to prepare the necessary information that Archbishop Charles has asked from me for the upcoming consecration. My head has been spinning ever since Archbishop Charles told me what he was planning on doing. Originally when we had talked, the Archimandrite rank would be one step below the Bishop rank, which is the norm within the Orthodox tradition. Then one day I received an email with the draft of the mandate (*Archimandrite is an office in the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church that is equal to that of Bishop in the Eastern Monastic Order of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church.*), and I realized that Archbishop Charles was planning more for the rank than I had imagined.Boy, did that get me wondering if I was ready for the new rank. But after many talks with Archbishop Charles I realized that it was time to “shake off the past fears and step up to the plate”.

So I have been very busy ordering the necessary monastic vestments for the new rank (Decided since I like simplicity, I would use the Archimandrite Mantle instead of the Bishop Mantle), designing my personal crest (+Charles is now having it professionally computerized for me.), picking out music, picking out scriptures, deciding who to invite as my personal guests. Then there is the method of transportation over to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace in Cincinnati, Ohio. I do not like to fly particularly, but will when I must. And the train, well, it is a nice idea; however, given I don't want to spend two days getting there, it is not practical on this particular visit. Since it will be winter, driving is really out of the question, so flying it is! After deciding what mode of transportation, I started dreaming of what pectoral cross I might like and the bishop's ring. I realize I am monastic and I just love the simple things. I have never really gotten caught up in the outer “trappings” of vestments, etc. I did finally find a ring and a cross that met my “qualifications for simplicity” and they have been ordered and received. The plane tickets have now been purchased after talking with +Charles about what days to fly. I also have to get a box to pack my vestments, etc. in to so that I can send them ahead. I have decided that shipping the vestments ahead of my arrival would be a smart thing given what I need to take. Don't need TSA to think there is a problem with my suitcase given that I have a crosier to pack! And I don't need the airlines to damage my monastic hat!! So now I think, at least for the

moment, I am caught up on things needed for the ceremony in December. But, I never know what my loving Archbishop will pop on me next which keeps me on my toes....And for that I have much to be thankful!

Meanwhile here at the hermitage, Mother Myrella and I continue to clean out and rearrange things. We had to place Mom LeClair in a nursing home located in a town nearby in March as she was at a point of not being able to care for herself and a danger to herself if one of us was not at home. It was not an easy situation for any of us in the house. Mom LeClair realized at times that she could no longer care for herself and agreed that moving to a nursing home was the best thing for her. We have taken our time trying to decide what we wanted to keep and what needed to be gotten rid of. Finally we were able to accomplish that task. It was then time to have our furniture (that was in storage in several locations in the house) moved into their



appropriate places. We have been able to set up a room for celebrating private liturgy (putting up our altar and some of our icons), reading and meditating. It has been a slow and long process but it is finally coming to an end. At least the majority of the “heavy work” is done. We are both very happy to have our meditation room, as we have named it, to be able to have a place where we can be still for a moment and be with God without the interruptions of the world around us. We both have missed that over the last 6 years. All through this process, God has guided us to the right people to help us through this long and laborious process. We are so thankful for that!

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Writing Icons vs. Painting Icons

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

There is a misconception by many outside of the Orthodox Church that icons are painted. I have even noticed at times that some of the Orthodox web sites say painted when it comes to icons, but I realize that there is confusion as to what icons are and “how they come about”. People often see icons as a “work of art”, but in all reality, that is exactly what they are not. Icons are written history/stories from the Scriptures and about the saints of the church.

The person who is undertaking the writing of the icon prepares themselves spiritually after they have selected the subject that they plan on writing about. They spend time studying about the subject and then hours of prayer and even fasting. They allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit as to how to present the subject. The person doing the writing is in constant prayer to bring forth the spiritual side of the subject.

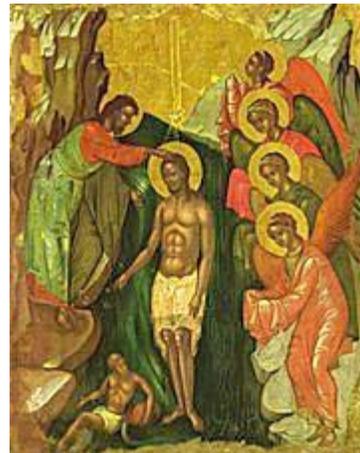
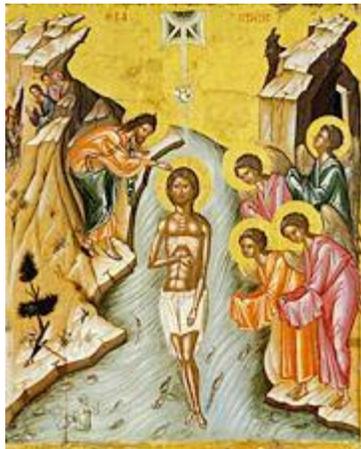
Yes, there are certain “rules” that must be followed when writing icons. One of the major rules that will catch your eyes when you look at an icon is the “style” that is used in the writing. The icon of a person really does not look actually as the person did in life. The Icon depicts the person’s inner spiritual struggle; it portrays how he attained to that state where he is now considered an angel on earth, a heavenly man. An Icon is an image which leads us to a holy,

God-pleasing person, raises us up to Heaven, or evokes a feeling of repentance, of compunction, of prayer, a feeling that one must bow down before this image. The value of an Icon lies in the fact that, when we approach it, we want to pray before it with reverence. If the image elicits this feeling, it is an Icon. It should never look like a photo! You will also note that the perspective of the subject seems not of the norm as in a painting. It really is a 2D representation of the person and surrounding environment. The environment is not what is important, but the “activity” happening with the person shown in the icon.

One interesting thought is that in Orthodox icons we usually don't see Christ or the saints in agony, but in inner peace, security and consolation. In the western religious paintings, we frequently see Christ as the person in agony!

In the olden days when people could not read, the icons became the way of teaching the scriptures and the history of the saints. If you look at one particular subject, let's say the Resurrection of Christ, you will notice that no matter who has written the icon, you can recognize it as the Resurrection. There are certain rules as to color, maintaining the same “physical characteristics”, etc. that are followed in every icon of the Resurrection.

Let take a look at an icon of Jesus being baptized. The two icons below were written by two different persons in different centuries. Notice much of the similarities of the two icons.



But once you see one icon of a subject you will always be able to recognize that subject again as all writers use the same basic manner in their writings.....

Icons are the windows into Heaven. They teach us the spirituality of a person, the divinity of the person as seen by God. Icons are not meant to be beautiful, but as you get used to seeing them, you may find you are drawn to one writer over another. I know I have my particular favorite writers. But icons are to open you up to the spiritual life of the person(s) you see written about. It teach us the spiritual struggles that person went through/overcame. Icons become the tool to help us learn our faith and reach our spiritual potential...

Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos

By Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

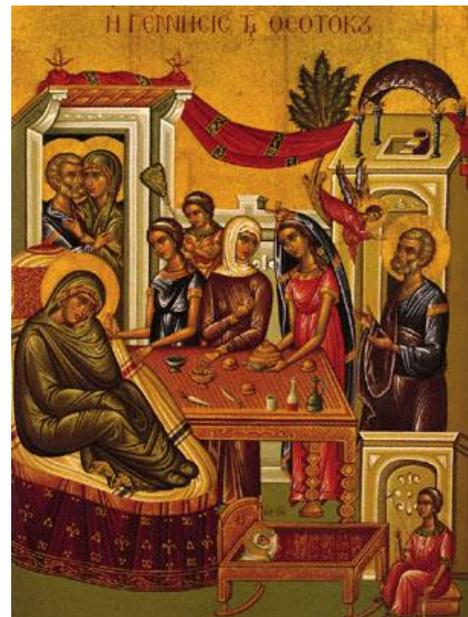
The Nativity of the Theotokos (Mary), celebrated on September 8th, is one of the 12 Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church. The story of Mary's birth is not found in the New Testament, but in the writings of the Book of James, which is not part of the canonical scriptures. Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, were an elderly pious Jewish couple, who were childless. They both believed that with God, all things are possible and continued to pray for a child, never losing hope. Among the Jews, being childless was seen as a sign of God's punishment

On one of the feasts, Joachim brought his sacrificial offering to the Temple, but the High Priest rejected his offering, considering Joachim to be unworthy since he was childless. Grief stricken, Joachim went into the wilderness and prayed to the Lord for a child. Anna had learned about what happened at the temple, and she also began praying for a child. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to both of them at the same moment to announce the joyous message: their prayers were heard by God, and from them would be born a blessed daughter, through Whom would come the Salvation of all the World.

Following are the two essential Orthodox prayers of this feast:

Your Nativity, O Virgin,
Has proclaimed joy to the whole universe!
The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,
Has shone from You, O Theotokos!
By annulling the curse,
He bestowed a blessing.
By destroying death, He has granted us eternal
Life.

By Your Nativity, O Most Pure Virgin,
Joachim and Anna are freed from barrenness;
Adam and Eve, from the corruption of death.
And we, your people, freed from the guilt of sin,
celebrate and sing to you:
The barren woman gives birth to the Theotokos, the nourisher of our life!



Without Mary, God could not have become flesh and blood, since there first had to be a woman spiritual capable of being the Theotokos (literal translation: God-bearer) and she herself had to be born to people who were spiritually capable of being her parents.

The Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos is not only the glorification of Mary and her holy parents but also a celebration of the first preparation for the salvation of the world.

The Feast of the Elevation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

This is an old feast within the Orthodox Church. There are several different stories written about



the finding of the cross that Jesus was crucified on. But the basics of the stories are the same. St. Helen, the mother of St. Constantine the Great, made a trip to Jerusalem in 362 to locate the Cross. When she arrived at the place where the Cross was, she discovered that all three crosses used that day were present, the two crosses of the thieves and the Cross of Jesus. Now how to tell them apart was the next problem for her. Well, the Archbishop of Jerusalem was in the party locating the Cross. He knew of a woman in Jerusalem that was very ill. He suggested that the woman be brought to the crosses. So the woman was brought to the crosses lying there on the ground. She was asked to kiss the crosses. With the first two crosses nothing happened, but when she kissed the third cross, she was healed! Thus she found the true cross! The reading used at Matins on September 14th is John 12:28-36. It basically tells us that in the death of Jesus on the Cross that people will be drawn to Him. The Cross that Jesus died

on became known as the Life-Giving Cross for two reasons. First it brought life back to those dying or had died when they were placed on the cross. Secondly, all who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus receive salvation and eternal life in God's House.

So every September 14th, the Orthodox Church brings a cross to the center of the church so that all the faithful may pay their respects. It is a constant reminder that Jesus died so that we all may be free as children of God and that with God's help all things are possible!!!

Desert Wisdom

A layman of devout life came to see Abba Poemen. Now it happened that there were other brethren with the old man, asking to hear a word from him. The old man said to the faithful secular, "Say a word to the brothers." When he insisted, the layman said, "Please excuse me, abba; I myself have come to learn." But he was urged on by the old man and so he said, "I am a secular. I sell vegetables and do business. I make bundles into pieces, and make smaller ones; I buy cheap and sell dear. What is more, I do not know how to speak of the Scriptures, so I will tell you a parable. A man said to his friends, "I want to go to see the emperor. Come with me." One friend said to him, "I will go with you half the way." Then he said to another friend, "Come and go with me to the emperor," and he said to him, "I will take you as far as the emperor's palace." He said to a third friend, "Come with me to the emperor." He said, "I will come and take you to the palace and I will stay and speak with the emperor."

They asked the layman what was the point of the parable. He answered them, "The first friend is asceticism, which leads the way; the second is chastity which takes us to Heaven; and the third is almsgiving which with confidence presents us to God our King." And the brethren went away edified.

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yosi and Jim
Bill and Trish
Linda and Wayne
Liz and Courtney
Carol and Leonard
Roseanne
Fr. David and family
Bishop Lynn and family
Br. Damien and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Sam, Teresa and Chloe
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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***Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community
for the
Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church***

The Nativity (birth) of Mary, Mother of Jesus
(can you find the 2 baby Mary's?)

