

# Monastic Musings

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

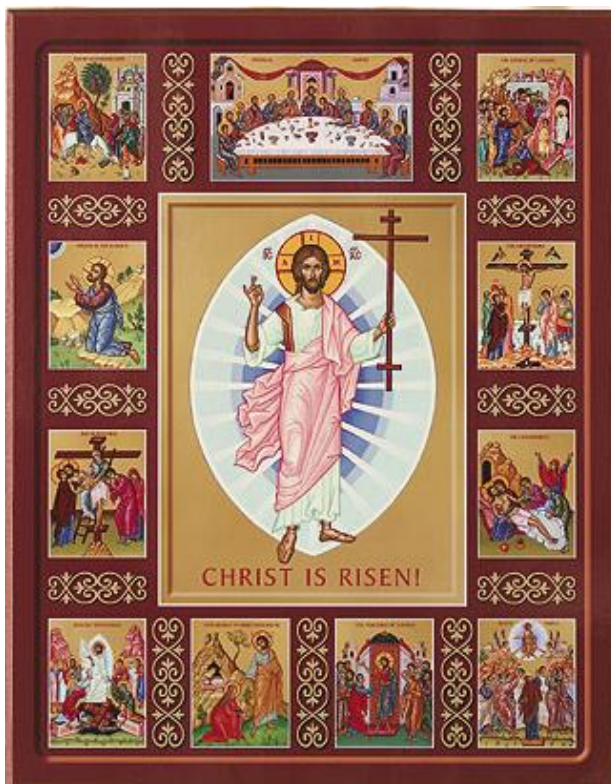
April 2010

## *From the Idle keyboard*

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

I wish each of you a very Blessed Easter. *Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed!!!!*

This icon of the Resurrection is very joyous as is shown with the colors used for Jesus,



which is not the usual color (pink!) in orthodoxy. It is very effective in showing us that through all the darkness, there is life and light! The main "picture" is of the risen Christ while the smaller "pictures" around the edge show Jesus' life.

I have often been asked why eastern monastic wore black for habits. It is a symbol that we have died to that which is of this world and have taken upon ourselves a new life. Resurrected if you will... We strive to show God's love to everyone we come into contact with. That is not always easy but it is important for us to remember to do. We all are human and will make mistakes (sins if that is what you want to call them) as we live in this world. But, God's love is so great, that if we just ask for His forgiveness, we receive it.

What we forget sometimes is that God has already forgiven us as soon as we made the mistake, but He really appreciates it when we reach out and ask for His forgiveness. It then helps us to forgive ourselves for the mistakes we make. Our resurrection occurs every morning when we wake and move out of our beds. We awake, hopefully a

renewed person ready to walk with Christ every moment of the day. Just like Jesus, we will stumble throughout the day. We will lose our temper and forget to show love. But, that is our human side that we have to learn to control. Before saying/doing anything, take a deep breath and see Christ in the person/situation and you will find you will handle the situation more positively. And when you do make a mistake, take another deep breath and then ask God for forgiveness and guidance to do better the next time. As for the person you "hurt", ask for their forgiveness also!!!! Don't forget if someone hurts you, take a deep breath, and ask God to forgive them and then you forgive them also. Bearing grudges is not what Jesus taught when he walked this earth! Through Christ, all of us are set free to be the child of God we were called to be...Let each of us this Easter reach within ourselves and find that child of God that we are, show that child to the world and live our lives as a true child of God!

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## ***Desert Wisdom***

### Commandments of God

In Scetis, there once went out an order that they should fast for a week, then celebrate Easter. During the week, some brothers happened to come into Egypt to visit Moses, and he cooked a little vegetable stew for them.

The nearby hermits saw the smoke, and said to the clergy of the church, "What is that smoke? Moses must be disobeying the order, and cooking in his cell."

The clergy said, "We will talk to him when he comes."

On Saturday, the clergy, who knew the greatness of his way of life, said to Moses in front of the entire congregation, "Moses, you have broken a commandment of men: but you have kept the commandments of God valiantly."

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## ***Monasticism – What does it mean?***

*by: hieroschemamonk Barb*

Monasticism is a call from God to individuals to live a life that is not within the usual way life is lived within this world. Monastics are called to live a life that is completely God centered at all times! Not always easy to do if you are not living within the walls of a monastery. Monastics living outside of monasteries have to find a way to live their lives centered in God, but still live within the world as we know it. We have to provide ourselves shelter, food, clothing, along with a job to provide these things to live. It means that we have to find a way of "balancing" our secular life (living in the world) along with our spiritual life. In doing so, we have to be very aware that we are not so "tied into" the secular life that our spiritual life is not fed correctly on a daily basis. This is not always easy. So many secular life influences affect us constantly. But as we learn to balance

both “worlds/lives” we find in time that our spiritual life becomes the true driving force of everything we do.

It is important for the monastic to build within their living space, a space that they can “retreat to” to be with God privately several times a day. We have to learn how to build periods of time throughout our work day for prayer. The hardest part is probably seeing our secular work as really a ministry for God without being “preachy” about religion and faith to our co-workers. Instead, we have to learn to “walk the talk” when we are out in the secular world -- to let others learn of God’s love through the way we live our lives and in the contacts we have with others. Sometimes, it is just that simple smile you show to a stranger when walking down the street. Maybe it is taking a moment to listen when someone needs to share. It could be that little something you do out of the ordinary to help someone when they need it but really don’t expect it!

When I think about being monastic without living within a monastery, I often find myself thinking about the “fools for Christ”. Who are these “fools for Christ” you might ask. Well, they are monastics who have lived their lives helping others in what ever manner they could. This help has come in so many different forms. The “fools for Christ” live within the world, but not necessary the rules that the world thinks as “normal” but the way they believe that God has called them. They live basically with one foot in this world and with their other foot in the spiritual world!! They seem very strange to others around them....

One example that comes to mind very quickly is St. Maria of Paris. She was a nun who ran a homeless shelter in Paris. No one was required to pay if they had no money but they needed to help around the house. She would often go around the city to seek donations for the shelter. She was often seen sitting at one of the outside cafes enjoying a beer and smoking while wearing her habit. At first this shocked some people, but in time they realized that Mother Maria was a nun on a mission! It was a mission to help as many as she could and to show people that monastics are human also! Her bed at night was a pile of blankets under the stairs to the second floor of the house. Simple woman who did everything she could to help people. She later died in a Nazi prison camp for her ministry! Some of her wonderful sayings: *“Each person is the very icon of God incarnate in the world.”* *“The meaning of the Liturgy must be translated into life,”* Mother Maria said. *“It is why Christ came into the world and why he gave us our Liturgy.”*



Another monastic that comes to mind is St. John of San Francisco. During some of my visits to San Francisco when I was living in the San Francisco Bay area, I remember hearing stories of a priest that loved to walk around the Russian Hill area. He was known as Vladika (Father) John...He was very slight in built, bent over a little, and using a walking stick to help him walk. At night he would go up on the roof of his living quarters and pray for many hours. Later when I asked who this priest was, I learned he was

Bishop John of San Francisco! Who would have known he was a bishop when looking at him and that he stayed up all night praying on the roof top!!!! He would visit with those who were ill. Everywhere he went, children would flock to him. Vladika John was a true lover of God in all that he did and with all the people he came into contact. It never matter to him whether you were an Orthodox Christian or not. He would take the time to



minister to you! Couple of his teachings: *"Rely on God and put your faith in Him, at the same time serve Him sincerely and diligently."* And: *"Sanctity is not simply virtuousness. It is the attainment of such a spiritual height that the abundance of God's grace, filling the saint, overflows on those who associate with him. Great is the blessedness of saints in which they dwell contemplating the glory of God. Full of love for God and man, they are responsive to man's needs, interceding before God and helping those who turn to them."* Vladika John was a true child of God and a great monastic!

So what shall each of us be as we grow in our monastic lives? Just how many people will our lives touch while we walk this earth? Can we show God's love to all those who see us? These are but a few challenges we face as monastics living outside of a monastery. But with the help of one another and God, we shall be the monastic person we have been called to be!!! God protect each of us and watch over us...

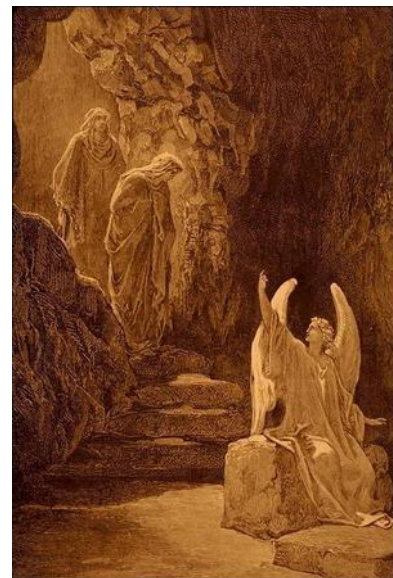
### ***"The Tomb is Empty"***

*by: Mother (hieromonk) Myrella LeClair*

Holy Week – from the transitory adulation of Christ on Palm Sunday to the triumphant Rising of Christ on Pascha – is a journey from pain to healing and from temptation to redemption. The Resurrection transforms time from temporal to Eternal. Christ has freed us from our sins and given us eternal life.

Forgiveness has replaced death. But, are we willing to accept that Forgiveness? Or, are we stuck in the tomb, refusing to let go of our chains and see others and ourselves as Christ sees us? Christ looks upon us and loves us. That kind of forgiveness is foreign to most of us.

I know that I am still stuck in the tomb. Yesterday, I awoke to "watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38), but I ignored the Holy Spirit's guidance. Just like the disciples in Gethsemane, I failed to be vigilant and prayerful. Today was going to be the first time that I was going to visit Alice since she had entered a nursing home a week ago. Although "watch and pray" continued to dominate my thoughts on the ride over, my ego kept telling me otherwise. From the very first words out of Alice's mouth, I knew why I had been urged to



watch and pray. Alice expressed anger from the outset. She was no longer in control of her daily activities and was very resentful of that fact. Alice had prepared a list of demands that I was supposed to fulfill. When I chose not to enable her and instructed her to address her issues with the Staff, she decided she could dismiss me, refusing to say good-bye. All of the old feelings of hurt, anger, and disappointment surfaced. My spirit was severely distressed – so much so that I could not even offer my unforgiveness to the Lord.... Yes, I was stuck in the tomb. Today, I am making the effort to climb out of the tomb – to listen to the Holy Spirit, to follow the Light, to rise with Christ. It's time to move from crucifixion to the resurrection, to offer Alice the lily of forgiveness rather than the thorns of judgment. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! He has given us the Holy Spirit to show us the Way so that we too can rise to eternal life.

“Dying you destroyed our death,  
rising you restored our life.

Jesus, come in glory,  
Jesus, come in glory,  
Lord Jesus, come in glory.”

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### ***Internet Resources***

There are several places that you can read books on line for free. Some of them ask you to register so that you are able to bookmark or track your reading. Below is a list of some of those places.

Early Church Fathers: <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>  
Search for any religious classic book: <http://www.ccel.org/>  
Search for “old books”: [http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page)  
Search for “old books”: <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/>

Here is a nice resource for daily readings, office readings, scripture readings, etc. Note it is provided as a service for the Roman Catholics, but it is a wonderful site!

<http://www.universalis.com/>

Want information concerning Orthodox Saints? Here is a good resource.

<http://www.oca.org/FSIndex.asp?SID=4>

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### ***Prayer Requests***

Mom LeClair  
Br. Yosi and Jim  
Bill and Trish  
Barry Lillis  
Linda and Wayne  
Deacon Mary and family  
Br. Damien

Fr. Rick  
Our Bishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

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***Eastern Rite Monastics within Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church***

Br. Damien Simmons (Riasaphor monastic)  
Mother Myrella LeClair (Stavrophor monastic)  
Mother Barb Martzall (Schema-hegumen/abbess)

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