

Monastic Musings

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

April 2011

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Spring is officially here! It is good to see winter be gone and the new plants starting to show themselves. It seemed as though the 5 – 6 foot snow piles would never melt away, but they have and that is wonderful to see.

Fair warning, this newsletter is longer than usual, but then there was a lot that needed to be shared with you. There are so many important Feasts for this month that I am only going to cover the three major ones. You will find just before the pictures for coloring, instructions of how to make a Palm Cross if you want to make one!

I pray that you all of you have a Blessed Holy Week and Joyous Easter! May your love for God be reborn again within you. May you share your faith with all those with whom you come into contact so that they may know the love of God!

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!!!!

Palm Sunday (Triumphal Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem)

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb



Palm Sunday is a moveable feast. That means that it is always the Sunday before Easter but moves within the calendar depending on when Easter is celebrated. This Sunday is a joyous Sunday. It is the day that Jesus enters Jerusalem. The people place palms on the pathway that Jesus, riding on a donkey, will take into the city. The palm branch was a symbol of triumph and victory in Jewish tradition. They treat him as though he is a king! But for we Christians, this Sunday is also the reminder of what is to come during the rest of the week. It is the start of what we all call Holy Week -- a week that leads to the Resurrection of Jesus. The people sang joyously -- *...Blessed is He who comes in the*

name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father, David. ... (Psalms 118:25-26).

Depending on where you live, many different customs are seen for this feast. In Russian, it is too cold for palms to grow so they use pussy willow branches that are in bloom for their symbol. In some churches, the palms are given whole or in strips/fronds. In other churches, the palms are made into small crosses. In all churches, the faithful are given the “symbol” so that they can take it home to have at their personal devotional area.

Good Friday (Crucifixion of our Lord)

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Good Friday is the observation of the Crucifixion of Jesus after the Sanhedrin trial. The crucifixion took place on Friday of Jewish Passover week.

The Gospels teach us that Jesus was found guilty by the Sanhedrin Court (although some of them did not vote for the death of Jesus since they were secret followers of Jesus) and condemned to death by crucifixion. He was required to drag his cross to the hill where he was to be hung. What a test of faith that had to be for him! Once at the hill, he was nailed to the cross and the cross was elevated into an upright position. Standing at the base of the cross was his mother, Mary Magdalene, John the Beloved disciple, and the centurion. The other disciples could not “deal with” seeing their master being crucified so they did not attend!



Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin and secret follower of Jesus, went to Pilate to request the body of Jesus (Luke 23:50-52). Meanwhile Nicodemus, another secret follower of Jesus and member of the Sanhedrin, brought a mixture of spices and helped wrap the body of Christ (John 19:39-40). Pilate asked confirmation from the centurion whether Jesus is dead before he would honor Joseph’s request (Mark 15:44). The centurion pierced the side of Jesus with a lance, causing blood and water to flow out (John 19:34), and the centurion informs Pilate that Jesus is dead (Mark 15:45).

Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body, wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and placed it in his own new tomb that had been carved in the rock (Matthew 27:59-60. Nicodemus (John 3:1); he also brought myrrh and aloes and placed them in the linen with the body, in keeping with Jewish burial customs (John 19:39-40). They rolled a large rock over the entrance of the tomb (Matthew 27:60). Then they returned home and rested, because the Shabbat Feast had begun at sunset (Luke 23:54-56).

Journey to Discipleship – The Beatitudes (Part 3)

by: Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

We are now about to embark on a new path in our journey to Discipleship. In the previous four Beatitudes, Jesus instructed us how to relate to God:

1. We must become aware of our need for God – that we are spiritually impoverished. We learn to communicate with Him through prayer.
2. We approach God with a deep sorrow for our sins and seek His mercy and forgiveness.
3. We learn to see God in everything, to listen attentively, and to have no will apart from God's Will.
4. We passionately “hunger and thirst” to do God's Will – to live an upright life in God (righteousness). We seek to make God the center of our lives.

In the fifth Beatitude, Jesus no longer instructs us about our ongoing relationship with God. He now instructs us how to relate to one another:



“Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:35-40 – NKJV)

Our direction now changes, and the first step of that new path is Mercy:

*Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.
(Matthew 5:7 – NKJV)*

Before we can love our neighbor, we must understand what that love entails. Mercy is the central part of this love. God has freely given us His mercy - showing us unconditional love and forgiveness. He now expects us to freely give mercy to all of His children. There cannot be any strings attached.

To hear Jesus make the statement that one must be merciful must have been shocking to his audience. The Pharisees, who followed the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law, saw themselves as superior to others. They were self-righteous, very judgmental and showed little mercy to anyone other than members of their Sect. The Romans despised mercy – seeing it as a sign of weakness. The unfortunate had become used to being treated badly. Yet, Jesus ministered to the unfortunate – the weak, the sick, the poor, the sinful – with compassion, love, and forgiveness. He was merciful to them.

In today's world, we still confuse being merciful with merely feeling bad about someone's situation. Mercy is much more than empathy. Being merciful means looking at everyone through Christ's eyes rather than through our eyes. To be merciful is to be forgiving and loving even when we know we are right and feel justified to be angry, to be hurt, etc. It means returning good for evil:

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. (Luke 6:27-28)

Jesus does not give us any wiggle room on being merciful and accepts no excuses for our lack of showing mercy. We may have been wronged, hurt, insulted or worse, but we are expected to be merciful. Jesus forgave his torturers and expects no less from us. Knowing our weakness, Jesus did not leave us helpless but gave us a Comforter and Friend – the Holy Spirit – to help us gain the strength and wisdom to overcome our feelings and the Faith to do God’s will. If we surrender our hurts, hatred, and judgments to the Holy Spirit, He can heal us – if we are willing to be healed.

For the majority of us (myself included), we are not ready or willing to offer mercy to those we perceive as evil. Our feelings about “those people” have not caught up with our utmost desire to do God’s Will. We would much rather seek what we think is justice than to offer mercy. So, let us take small steps on this path to Mercy.

Let us pray for one another rather than condemn one another. Rather than curse one another and hold grudges, let us offer a blessing to one another. Think of how many opportunities you will have in one day to offer blessings. Remember that what you give out is what you will get back. We obtain mercy when we are merciful.

Let us learn to be truly self-giving and not self-seeking. Stop expressing your needs and wants, and listen to what others are saying. Be willing to reach out and help. Be the one who serves rather than manipulates. Remember that Jesus was the one who washed His apostles’ feet. His Divinity did not stop Him from being humble. Learn to serve others instead of being the one served.

Show kindness and compassion. Be tolerant and respectful of one another. That does not mean that we condone violence, abuse, or torture. Jesus forgave but admonished sinners: *“Neither do I condemn you; go and **sin no more.**”* (John 8:11 – NKJV) If we cannot find it in our hearts to be merciful, then let us at the very least refrain from being judgmental.

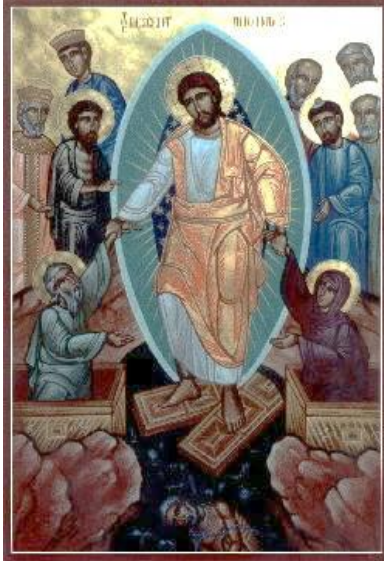
As Christians, we are called to be merciful not only to the suffering but to those who cause the suffering. There can be no limits to our love and mercy for we are *“sons of the Most High. [And] He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”* (Luke 6:35) In his book *Cry Joy*, Dr. Jerry Mercer writes: *“Mercy cannot automatically cancel out the consequences of vicious acts. But mercy does dictate our attitude toward such miserable people. The spirit of mercy is not vengeful. We can live free of hatred towards others.”*

We are in the Lenten period, and there is no more fitting thank you to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for our salvation than to put the Gospel into action. Practice daily acts of forgiveness. Be merciful in mind and heart, and you will know the joy of receiving mercy. May the Peace of God be with you on your journey.

Easter (Pascha)

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Easter is the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus from the Tomb. Generally the icons of the Resurrection show Jesus standing on broken doors/wood and taking the hands of Adam and



Eve and “pulling them out of Hades”. This action represents death being overcome by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. All who have faith in God will be joined in Heaven with God, even those who died prior to the time of Jesus. Often there is a wonderfully brightly colored halo drawn all the way around Jesus - just as you see in this icon the blue halo behind Jesus. The people portrayed in the icon are the past and present faithful of God who are gathering around Jesus (First Corinthians 15:19-20).

The “songs/hymns” used within the Orthodox Church during the Easter Liturgy are very joyous and teach that Jesus has trampled down death so that the faithful may be received into eternal life/salvation.

The Paschal Hymn from the Orthodox Church which is sung just before the Church doors are opened for the first time on Easter:

*Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee from before his face!
As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish; as wax melts before the fire,
So the sinners will perish before the face of God; but let the righteous be glad.
This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!
Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death,
and on those in the grave bestowing life.*

Much is the same within the Western Churches when it comes to the songs/hymns. They are always very joyous and teach of salvation that has been given to us.

The churches are decorated with lots of flowers, usually white in color, and lilies, which represent purity, are the favorite flower. The white of the flowers along with the green of the leaves show us the rebirth of humankind through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The icon to the right is unique since it shows Jesus leading the faithful out of Hades. These faithful include people such as King Solomon, John the Baptist, King David, Adam and Eve, Abel (first son of Adam), and so many more. This icon is found in a Russian Orthodox Monastery. It was written by a monk there in the 17th century. The icon portrays the teaching found in First Corinthians 15:20: *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*



The faithful also sometimes exchange a red-dyed hardboiled egg. The egg symbolizes our transformed life received through the Blood of Christ. It also represents Jesus within the tomb. In some churches, the faithful greet one another with the “smashing” of the hardboiled eggs as they say: Christ is Risen; He is Risen indeed! And yes, the floor gets messy since the egg shells do break and fall all over! But this breaking represents the breaking of the doors to Hades to bring forth the faithful of God and to our transformed lives – the Resurrection!

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Br. Yosi and Jim
Linda and Wayne
Carol and Leonard
Fr. David and family
William Tenney
Br. Damien and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Our Archbishop -- +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-Archimandrite)

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

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To Make a Palm Cross

You will need a palm strip/frond. This project is in two major steps: 1.) make a knot in the middle of the palm strip; 2.) and making the cross

To Make the Knot in the middle

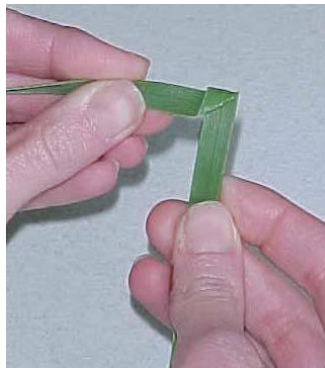
1. Hold the palm horizontally.



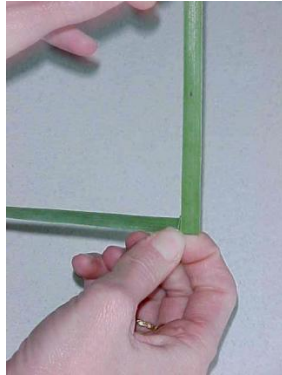
2. At about the half waypoint fold the palm up towards the ceiling to create a ninety-degree angle.



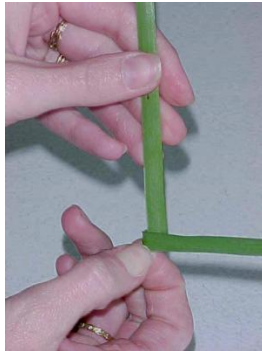
3. Take this piece and fold it tightly down towards the floor. (Do not try to make the cross. At this point you are making the square in the middle).



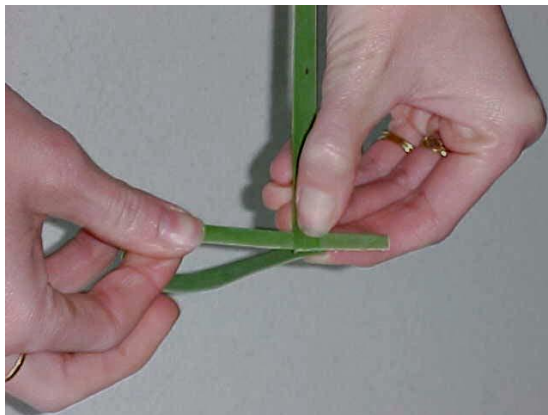
4. Still using the same piece of palm, fold it back up toward the ceiling.



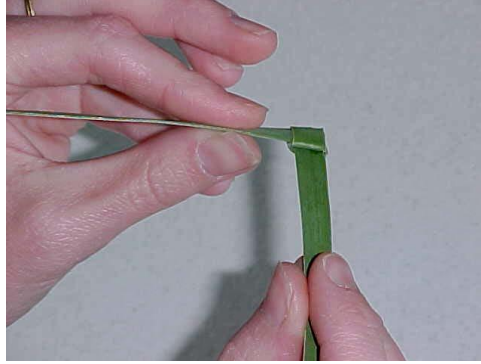
5. Take the other piece of the palm and fold it across the square you have been creating.



6. You will now take this same piece of palm and thread it through the small square you have created. This square is at the back of the cross and you will see the right angle you originally created in this square – thread the palm under this right angle piece.

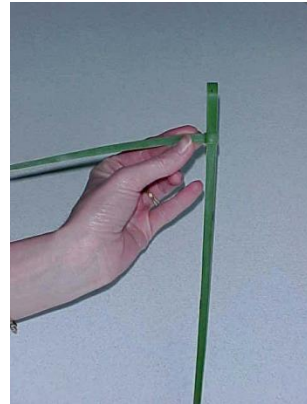
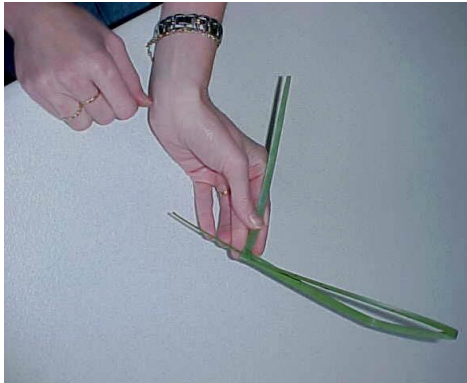


7. Pull tightly and you should have a completed knot that does not need to be held.

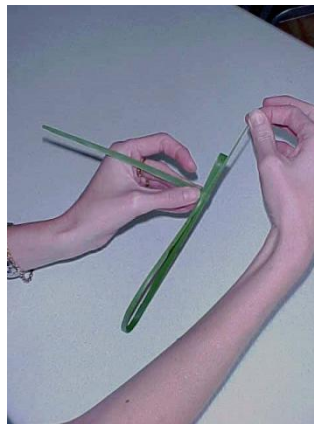


To Form the Cross

1. Take the palm that points towards the ceiling and fold it down toward the floor and thread it through the square you have created at the front of the cross. This will be the top of your cross.

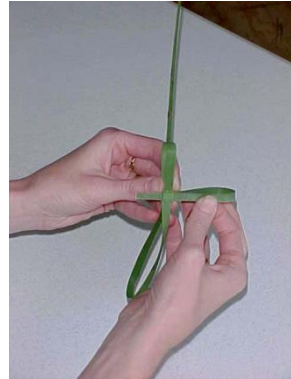
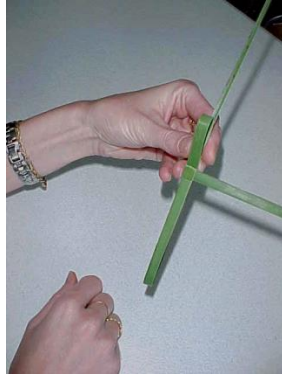


2. Still using the same piece of palm thread up back up through the same square you used in the previous step to create the bottom of the cross.

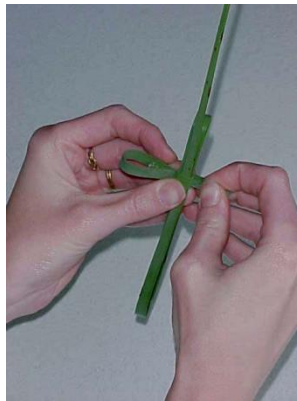


3. Turn the half made cross around so that the remaining horizontal piece of palm is to the right. You should have a vertical square in front of you and a horizontal piece of palm to

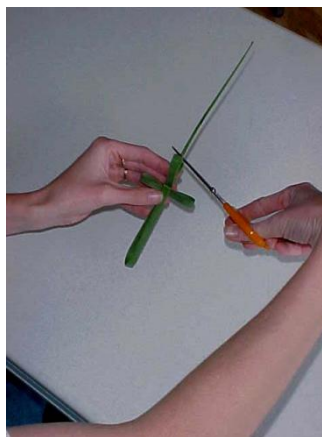
your right. Take the unwoven piece of palm and thread it through this square to create one side of the cross.



4. Take the same piece of palm and thread it through the same square you used in the previous step making certain to thread it behind where you had previously threaded. You should have a cross that still has some palm pieces hanging out either on top and sometimes in the sides of the cross.

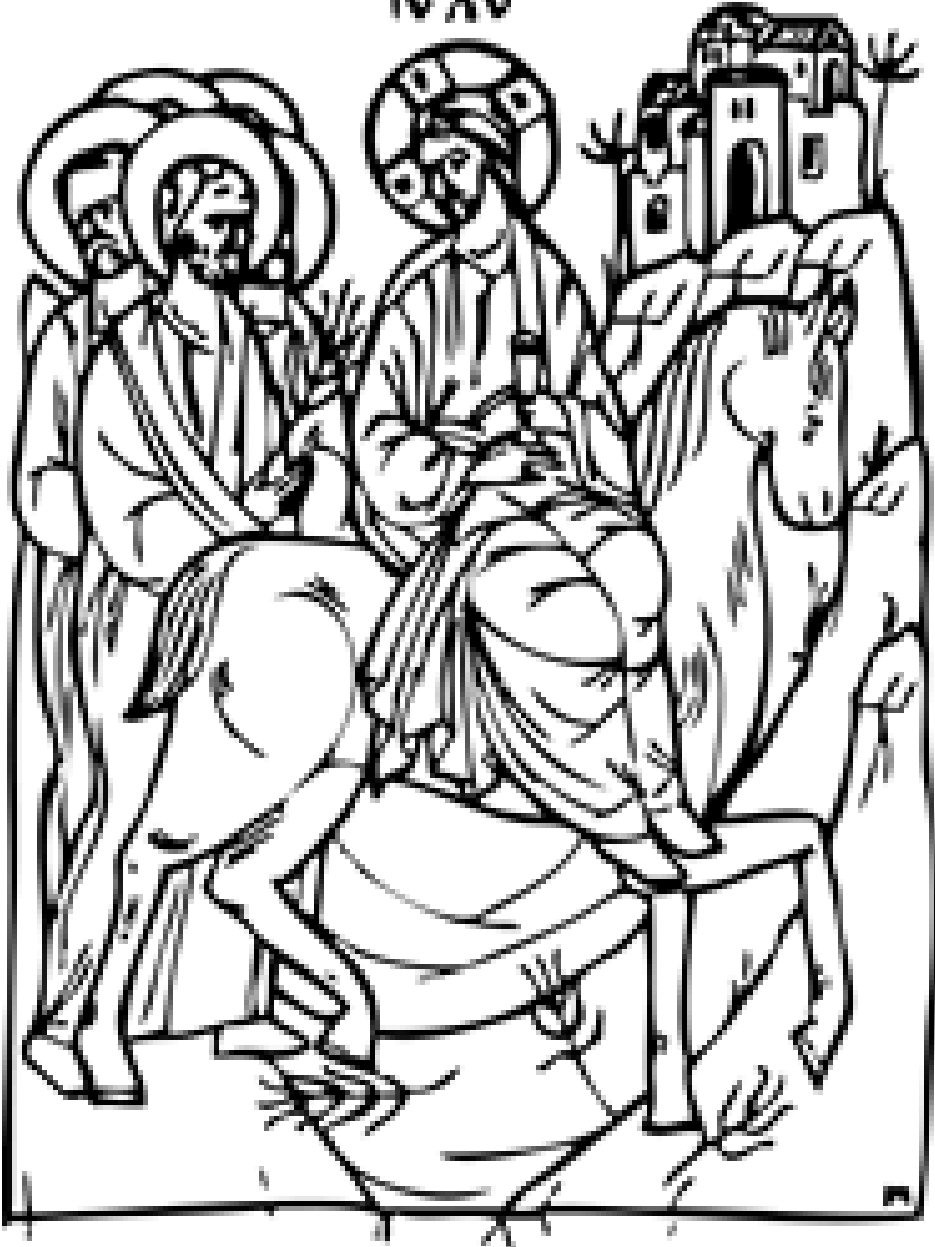


5. Cut the strands that do not belong in your cross at the top.



Entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

·ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM·
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The Resurrection (Easter Sunday)

