

# Monastic Musings

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

January 2012

## *From the Idle keyboard*

*by: schema-Archimandrite Barb*

A new calendar year is finally starting. What will 2012 bring to each of us individually, our Church, our Religious Communities, our ministries and parishes? Here at the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community we continue to look for ways to share and help people grow in their spiritual walk with God. In the process we are doing lots of reading/studying and sharing with others! We continue to keep things very simple in our lives and within the Community as much as possible. As we start the New Year out, I would like to ask all of you to pledge to grow in your spirituality and take an active role within your ministries/missions/parishes. Remember, the ministries/missions/parishes do not exist if you are not there and active in their activities! The ministries/missions/parishes are the people and not a building!



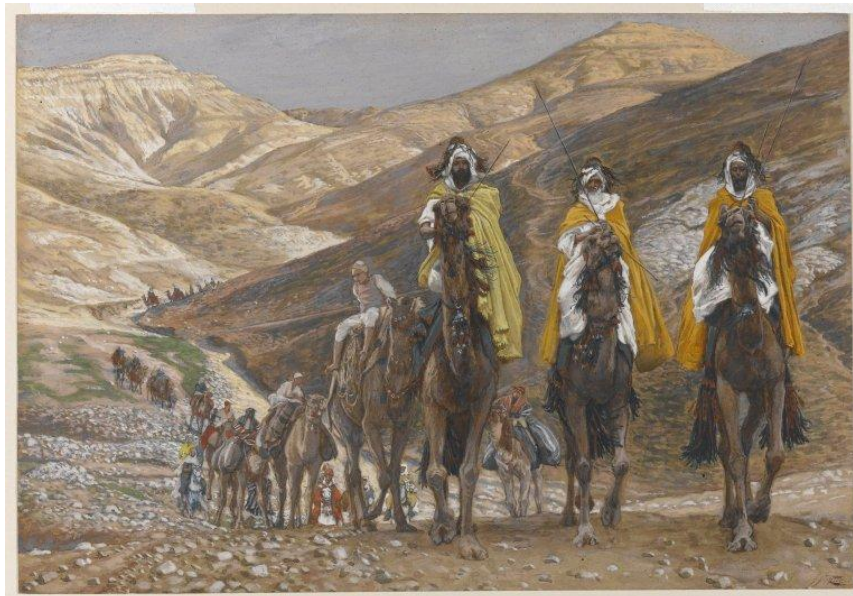
I celebrated my Episcopal Anniversary last month. I must say that it has been a very challenging year of learning what it means to be a bishop and how to handle the many different situations that have happened. But I am learning just how to do things in the “proper way” so that everything is documented and the church as a whole is protected! Documentation is something that is often forgotten in the independent church movement. I have to admit that my Archbishop is a stickler when it comes to documentation and following the rules, and for that, I am very supportive and thankful. I am gathering quite a collection of “how to do” documents to have for myself in case of need. It has been both a joyous year and at times a sad year as I see people come and people go. However, I have to remember that the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church is a church home for people for however long they want it to be. We cannot be all things for all people as much as we clergy would like to think we can do so. I have watched/participated as the Archbishop and the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church Board laid out a sound foundation for the Church as a whole. It is a slow but very positive movement forward, one brick at a time, and it will support the Church’s growth through the future. I am looking forward to this year’s Board Meetings and to continuing to help build the foundation!

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### ***The First Journey to Discipleship: The Journey of the Magi***

*by: Mother Myrella LeClair*

When I began writing the Journey to Discipleship series in early 2011, I never gave a thought to what was truly the first journey to Discipleship. There is no question that our journey to Discipleship is a spiritual journey, but what if we had to make a physical journey (pilgrimage) based on Faith and Prophecy? Would we still make that journey not knowing what hazards might befall us or without knowing how long and arduous that journey might be? Those were the questions facing the Magi (Wise Men) as they set out on what could be called the first pilgrimage associated with the Christian faith.



If the Greek historian Herodotus is correct, then the Magi were a sect of Medeans, living in Persia, who were scientists, priests, astronomers and astrologers. The Magi believed that the stars could be used to predict the birth of great rulers. Their interpretations led them to believe

that the next great ruler was about to be born: the "king of the Jews." The Magi also were familiar with the prophecies of the Hebrew prophet Daniel who spent his life in captivity in service to the Babylonian and Persian monarchs. Daniel's prophecy about the Messiah (Christ) was probably studied intensively by these Magi and influenced them in their decision to pay homage to this remarkable king whose birth was signified by a radiant star. (That's what the popular belief is, but I believe that it was the Breath of God that stirred the Magi's souls, awakening their longing for God.)

If the Magi followed the main trade route from Persia, they would have traveled through rocky and mountainous terrains, the Syrian Desert, and the Jordan Valley before they reached Jerusalem – not an easy journey. Yet, the Magi set out on their journey hoping to be able to pay homage to God. After a journey of over a thousand miles into a foreign country, the Magi finally found their way to Jesus and knelt down to "worship" him. Although they were of a different race and religion, the Magi recognized Jesus as the Christ and were the first Gentiles (non-Jews) to both recognize and venerate him.

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, Christians celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ. Western Christians also commemorate the manifestation of Christ to the Magi and thus His physical manifestation to the Gentiles. The Magi believed the message in the prophecy and the star – and the stirring of their souls. Their faith was strong enough to compel them to undertake an arduous journey towards their objective...to find the Christ! Would we have the Faith that the Magi had in the prophecy about a "coming star that will signify the birth of God in human form" and make that journey? Would we let our souls awaken to our longing for God?

Because of others many centuries before us who made that physical journey to recognize and worship Jesus as the Messiah, we are blessed that we do not have to make an actual journey to find Christ. He abides in the hearts and minds of each one of us.

**"It is God's desire to become manifest to us, but...God wills to take created forms for this manifestation—forms of persons, events circumstances, which call for faith if we are to recognize the Divine presence, a faith that can discern through and in the human. For each one of us, the star is shining in the heaven of our souls pointing out to us the place where we shall find Jesus. It is the star of grace contained in the will of God of every moment, that Will which leads us to God."**

Mother Aloysius Rogers, OCD, *Fragrance from Alabaster*, p. 28

As we start a New Year and continue our journey along the Way, Lord Jesus, give us the wisdom to follow you and to lead others to walk in your light. Amen!

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## **Gifts of the Magi**

*by: schema-Archimandrite Barb*

The Magi came to honor Jesus directly and his parents indirectly. The scriptures tell us that they came bearing three gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh. And if you remember, it is a short scripture in only one of the Gospels (Gospel of Matthew) that tells of the visit of the Magi! Now why would these be the gifts these wise men would bring to Jesus? There are so many "stories" concerning the Magi and their gifts. But there is a "solid" basis given for the gifts.

Gold represents Jesus' immortality, purity, divinity and kingship as Christ and his titles of the Light of the World, the Morning Star, and the Dayspring. Gold is a gift that is usually reserved for royalty and thus the Magi were signifying Jesus' royalty. It is also thought that the gold was used to finance the Holy Family's escape into Egypt since they were a poor family.

Frankincense represents Jesus' divine nature, his sacrifice for mankind and his titles of High Priest and Son of God. It was used as the scent in perfumes (Song 3:6; 4:6) and as the incense in the Temple (Ex 30:9, 34-38; Lev 2:1-12; 6:14-28; 24:7). Incense as used in prayer/worship represents our prayers rising toward Heaven on the smoke of the incense.

Myrrh represents Jesus' mortality and his role in his life as the Suffering Savior and the Great Physician. It was often used in expensive perfume and incense (Ps 45:8; Prov. 7:17; Esth 2:12; Ex 30:23). It had medicinal uses – to strengthen a child and to get rid of worms. Jesus was offered wine that had myrrh mixed in at his crucifixion although he refused the wine since he did not want the pain removed. Myrrh is also used in preparing the body for burial in many traditions (Jn 19:39-40; Mk 15:23).

No one knows for sure what became of the gifts of the Magi. What is forgotten or put aside, however, is the fact that the Magi presented their gifts and fell prostrate in front of Jesus. Their long and hard trip, their divine gifts, and their humility must not be forgotten by us. Their desire to see Jesus and worship him is a model for all of us. We are to give our best to Him no matter how long and difficult the journey is throughout our lives.

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### ***Prayer Requests***

Mom LeClair  
Br. Yossi and Jim  
Linda and Wayne  
Fr. David and family  
Fr. Rick Hobbs  
Our Archbishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

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