

Monastic Musings

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

May 2011

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

May has arrived! I hope that everyone is finding their spirits have lifted now that the weather has brightened. I know I have been enjoying the flowers as they slowly poke their heads through the soil and show their wonderful colors. And yes, it means I have to think about mowing the grass



again! Oh well, just a slight inconvenience to be able to enjoy the wonderful things of nature after the “bleak” winter we had. Next month Mother Myrella and I can start thinking about what plants we will want to have around the house in the flower beds that are empty. We frequently get frost until the end of May; so, it is too early to start planting even though the stores are selling them. Both of us really enjoy having plants around to care for and for their wonderful beauty they provide. Tending flower gardens is such a wonderfully therapeutic action for us. It is a

way to remove ourselves from the daily routine of jobs and household chores and enter into God’s world of nature.

I, along with all the Eastern Rite Monastics, want to take a moment and congratulate both Sam and Sharon as they prepare for their Ordination to the Diaconate on May 22. They are both members of the Our Lady of Peace Cathedral and will be serving the Cathedral. Axios, Axios, Axios (Worthy, Worthy, Worthy). May their ministries be blessed!

Journey to Discipleship – The Beatitudes (Part 4)

by: Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

As we continue on the Way, our journey becomes more challenging. Not only are we called to be loving, forgiving, and merciful to one another, but we must also be “pure in heart”, for Jesus instructs us that:

“Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:7)

To be pure in heart means to have a heart that is free of conflict and singularly devoted to loving God and doing His will. Who are the poor in heart? Those who have surrendered their hearts completely to Christ. They are fully devoted to loving God with every part of their lives since they understand that to love God with all of one's heart is the equivalent to loving one's neighbor because God loves us all. Their hearts reflect Christ to all whom they come into contact with, and they see God in all things.

The pure in heart have no concern for self. They act unselfishly, living their Faith in love. What Jesus is saying then in this Beatitude is blessed are those who act with love and concern for others as their true motivation. The Pure in heart are the opposite of the Pharisees, who were outwardly righteous and rigidly adherent to their laws. The Good Samaritan, who puts the needs of the victim ahead of his own needs, is pure in heart:



An expert in the Law of Moses stood up and asked Jesus a question to see what he would say "Teacher", he asked, "what must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "What is written in the Scriptures? How do you understand them?" The man replied, "The Scriptures say, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.' They also say, 'Love your neighbors as much as you love yourself.'" Jesus said, "You have given the right answer. If you do this, you will have eternal life."

But the man wanted to show that he knew what he was talking about. So he asked Jesus, "Who are my neighbors?" Jesus replied: "As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, robbers attacked him and grabbed everything he had. They beat him up and ran off, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road. But when he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. Later a temple helper came to the same place. But when he saw the man who had been beaten up, he also went by on the other side. A man from Samaria then came traveling along that road. When he saw the man, he felt sorry for him and went over to him. He treated his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put him on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next morning he gave the innkeeper two silver coins and said, 'Please take care of the man. If you spend more than this on him, I will pay you when I return.'" Then Jesus asked, "Which one of these three people was a real neighbor to the man who was beaten up by robbers?" The lawyer answered, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same!" (Luke 10:25-37)

The Good Samaritan helped the victim because he needed help. He did not do so for his own gain but because it was the right thing to do. Just like the Samaritan, we have choices to make. We too are called to be like the Good Samaritan by living our Faith in love and service to one another.

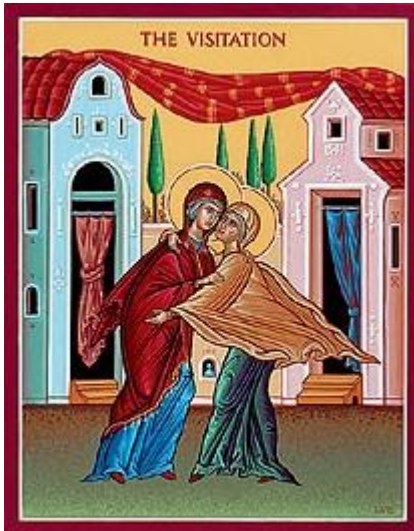
Like King David as he pleaded with God for forgiveness, we pray: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and make my spirit right again."

Peace be with you as you “go forth to serve God in friend and foe and neighbor and stranger”.

Virgin Mary’s Visit with Elizabeth

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

On May 31st we celebrate the Visitation of Mary. This feast is the celebration of Mary taking time to go visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist). The story goes that Elizabeth was without child all of her life and she and Zachariah wanted to have children. But for some reason unknown to them, they did not. God knew why Elizabeth had not become pregnant yet! But then Elizabeth became pregnant just as the Lord had promised Zachariah. An



angel visited with Mary and told her the good news of her cousin, so she decided to go visit her. Elizabeth was around her sixth month of her pregnancy at this point. Neither Mary nor Joseph had told anyone of Mary’s pregnancy. When Mary approached the house of her cousin, Elizabeth immediately knew that Mary was pregnant since her own baby jumped with joy within her and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth realized that Mary’s pregnancy was a very special one. (Luke 1:39-55) This was the first meeting of John and Jesus, and they were already aware of their “roles” in the world and their relationship! Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months helping as she could around the house.

So what can this Feast teach us? Here are several possible ideas to “chew over” in your thoughts. Can we learn to be so attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit that we can recognize the truth when it comes before us? Are we willing and ready to accept our role within life to spread the Gospel to all people? To be helpful to those in need? To spread happiness where needed? To trust God in all things just as Zachariah and Elizabeth did and as Mary and Joseph did?

Desert Wisdom

Hyperichius said, "He who teaches others by his life and not by his speech is truly wise."

The Tomb is Empty – One Year Later

by: Rev. Mother 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 just as we are. As we are learning in our study of the Beatitudes, Christ expects no less from us.

Last year around Easter, I wrote an article about my own unwillingness to forgive. Writing that article was spiritually therapeutic for me. I was able to offer my unforgiveness to the Holy Spirit, and what a tremendous difference that has made.

This part of the original article bears repeating as a reminder that Christ requires His disciples to move beyond the Tomb (unforgiveness) and proceed to the Resurrection (forgiveness):

“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.”

About four months after Alice was placed in the nursing home, a miracle happened. She had a change of mind and a change of heart about her new home. Alice finally had realized that she could choose to become involved in all of the activities and make new friends or just stay in her room and be angry with the world. Well, Alice decided that the best thing to do was get involved in everything at the nursing home! To make friends with other residents and with the staff, be a member of the Residents’ Council, and yes, even get the code to the door of the staff’s break room so she could get candy when she wanted it! When I visited her, she would introduce me to all of her friends. Through the transforming grace of God, Alice and I have crawled out of our respective tombs.

One year later, the tomb is empty....

O day of resurrection! Let us beam with God's own pride! Let everyone embrace in joy! Let us warmly greet those we meet and treat them all like brothers, even those who hate us! Let all the earth resound with this song: Christ is risen from the dead, conquering death by death, and on those in the grave bestowing life! (Orthodox Hymn)

Prayer Requests

Mom LeClair
Bill & Monica Tenney
Br. Yosi & Jim
Linda & Wayne
Danielle
Carol & Leonard
Fr. David & family
Br. Damien & 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)
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***Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community
for the
Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church***

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Mary visits Elizabeth, her cousin

