

Monastic Musings

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

July 2010

From the Idle keyboard

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

Well, here we are and it is July already. Where has all the time gone? Maybe it is that as we get older, time seems to fly by quicker. I don't know. I do know it seems that I just don't have all of the time I want to be able to do the things I think of. Constantly squeezing everything in each day has seemed to become the "norm" for us around here. I have learned, though, that time seems to "appear" as needed to be able to accomplish all that needs to be done! God is truly good to us.

Mother Myrella and I have completed our first 6 months as members of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church. It has been a wonderful 6 months for both of us. We look forward to more wonderful months/years with the Church! Much has been happening for us, and we are so happy – and blessed – to have such a loving and supportive Church home!

Over the past 3 months, we have been working on the Eastern Rite monastic policies and guidelines with the help and guidance of +Charles. The document has now been presented to +Charles so that he can present it to the Board of Directors of the Church for review and hopefully acceptance. This Community, the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community, has been publishing a newsletter to teach, share information, and to keep all of the clergy and monastics (Eastern and Western) in the "loop" as to what is happening. The Community serves as the spiritual mother house for the Eastern Rite monastics. The newsletter also serves as the "formal document" as to what is happening within the Eastern Rite Monastics – documentation which is necessary within the Church's corporation status. The newsletter is also published on the Community's web site so that anyone who wants to read it can do so.

Both +Charles and I have been in communications with a seeker, Denise, in Texas who is interested in becoming a monastic within the Church. In our conversations, it appears that presently she will be electing to be a Western Rite monastic. I will also be working with Denise to help her understand Eastern Orthodox Theology. She contacted us through the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community's web site; so, that shows the importance of actively updated web sites being available to the general public. All monastic seekers are required to go through

the same application process as any clergy seeking admission as clergy within the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church.

Both the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church's web site and the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community's web site are receiving prayer requests. People are reaching out to us asking us to pray for them or a loved one for many reasons. I will be starting to do what +Charles does with the requests and will be forwarding them to the monastics and clergy so that they can add the prayer requests to their daily prayer lists. You never know whose life you will touch through a simple prayer request.

I take this time to remind the Eastern Rite monastics that they have a responsibility to stay in contact with me at least once a month. Communications with me is part of your Daily Rule. As your monastic superior, I cannot make an informed decision as to how you are progressing spiritually without hearing from you. It is through your communications with me that I can decide if you are ready for an increase in your daily rule or even ready for elevation to the next monastic rank. Please take a few minutes to send me a note and catch me up with what is going on with you in your life. I am working on a "report format" for each of you to use to help you communicate with me. It is very easy to get caught up in the day to day activities and forget to keep me apprised as to what is happening with you. No monastic should walk the monastic pathway without a spiritual elder guiding and directing! Even I have my spiritual advisor to walk with and talk with. I too am learning every day even though I have been on the spiritual pathway for over 40 years now. It is a pathway of constant learning and experiencing! If it is not, then there is something not right with my daily rule at the moment and it needs to be "fixed/adjusted".

Desert Wisdom

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

Hyperichius said, "The monk's service is obedience. He who has this shall have his prayers answered, and shall stand by the Crucified in confident faith. For that was how the Lord went to his cross, being made obedient even unto death (cf. Philippians 2:8)"

What is Monasticism?

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

What is Monasticism? That is a good question! Monasticism is a way of life that a person elects to follow. It is a way of life that is completely God-centered in everything that they do - whether it be working at some job, cooking their food, cleaning their home, talking with someone, praying, walking out in nature, etc. A monastic's life is always the example of Jesus in action. Is this an easy way to live? Well, there are two basic answers to this question. One answer is if you are living within a physical monastery, it is easier to live a life completely God centered as everyone else around you is focused on the very same thing. The second answer, No, it is not an easy way to live especially when you are not living within a monastery or with another monastic.

Let us take a look at the second answer more closely since that is the way the Eastern Rite Monastics of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church live. We do not have the “pleasure” of living in a religious monastery. Our lives are comprised of our spiritual walk as monastics, working within the world to maintain our lives and maintaining our living space. In the process, we have to learn how to “make space” throughout the day for our prayers, spiritual readings, and listening to God talk with us. We have to learn not to put God into a small box that is opened only at certain times a day – when it is “convenient” to be with God. Our lives have to become the example of what it means to live with God at all times. Easy, no, as we have to do this living in a way that does not appear to be “preachy” or “in your face” to others. We have to find the gentle and loving way to teach others of God through our actions.

Let me be very clear at this moment: wearing a religious habit does not make you a monastic! It is your life as a whole that makes you a monastic and the habit is just the symbol to the world that you have elected to walk your life entirely with God. So what that means is that habits are not necessary for being a monastic. The way you live your life is what is important. The habit becomes the reminder to you that you have elected a way of life that is not of the norm within this world. You have dedicated your life to a “higher calling”, if you will – a calling that means that you share God’s love with everyone around you in a manner that touches their spirit to show them that they are truly innocent children of God.

How then do you integrate your monastic life with the rest of your life? Let me give you this example to help explain the process. Know that not all monastics live their lives in this manner depending on their spiritual level and what they do in their work life.

Monk A awakens in the morning and first thanks God for keeping her safe through the night. She then arises and showers (and during the shower listens to God) and prepares herself to go to her job. After getting dressed and having breakfast, she takes a few moments to read some short spiritual reading and then asks for God’s blessing on her day ahead of her. Throughout the day, she will take a moment to thank God for the blessings/challenges within her job. She will ask for God’s guidance as needed while at work. On her lunch break she will take a 20 minute walk to “commune with God” before she returns to eat her lunch. She ends her work day with thanks to God and drives home. She then prepares and eats supper keeping God’s love within her mind. She shares the happenings of the day with her partner and visa versa. After dishes are done, meals are planned for the next day, and she has taken time to play with the cat, she will then withdraw to a quiet area to spend time with God – to read and study spiritual and scriptural writings and let God talk with her concerning what she reads/studies, the days happenings, etc. The rest of the evening is spent as she wants – watching TV, working on an article, talking with her partner, talking with family members and friends. At bedtime, before closing her eyes for sleep, she will thank God again for all he has done for her and with her during the day, and ask for protection through the night.

Throughout all of Monk A’s day, she constantly keeps God in mind and tries to show his love and compassion to others around her. In her heart she is saying the Jesus Prayer throughout the entire day. She is not preaching to those around her but through her actions and words, she is showing them God’s love and compassion. That is not always easy since we are human and get caught up in the negative aspect of the world if we let ourselves. We have to always be

mindful that God is love and compassion and thus that is who we must be as monastics! And yes, we do make mistakes, but we must then ask for God's forgiveness and guidance not to make that mistake again.

What is Monasticism? It is living one's life focused completely on God and showing God's love and compassion to all whom you come into contact with throughout every day of our lives. It is bringing God to the forefront of your life and not merely taking God out of the box when it suits you!

Mary Magdalene – Holy Myrrhbearer and Equal to the Apostles

By Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

The mission of the Apostles and disciples was to preach the Gospel – to bring the Good News to all. However, who was the first apostle or disciple to do so? It was none other than a woman, Mary Magdalene, whose feast is commemorated on July 22nd.

Mary Magdalene was the first person to witness the Resurrection and to proclaim the good news:

Jesus said to her: "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and Your Father, and to my God and your God.' Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her." (John 17-18, New King James Version)

Because Mary Magdalene was the first to proclaim Christ's resurrection to the Apostles, she is referred to as the "Apostle to the Apostles. Because she was the first messenger sent by Christ himself to announce his resurrection, she was also given the title of "Equal to the Apostles"). Perhaps, the only title that Mary Magdalene would accept as of any importance is "Disciple". She was both a true believer in and a devoted follower of Christ and His teachings since the canonical gospels name her as the only person to witness Jesus' crucifixion, his burial, and the empty tomb:

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." (John 19:25, New King James Version)

"And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre." (Matt. 27:59-61, New King James Version)

Holy Scripture says no more about Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection of Christ. However, St. Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles that all the apostles stayed in prayer, with certain women and Mary the mother of Jesus and His brothers.

“A daring woman, whose heart was full of the joy of the resurrection, she went beyond her native borders and went to preach in pagan Rome. Everywhere she proclaimed to people about Christ and His teaching. When many did not believe that Christ is risen, she repeated to them what she had said to the apostles on the radiant morning of the Resurrection: ‘I have seen the Lord!’” (Writing from St. Silouan Orthodox Monastery)



As a Jewish woman in the early first century AD, Mary Magdalene would appear to be an unlikely first messenger of Christ’s Resurrection. Yet, Mary Magdalene’s faith and discipleship never wavered. She demonstrates what it means to be a true believer and a devoted follower.

We are all *chosen* to proclaim the Good News – just as Mary Magdalene was. May God bless you and guide you as you continue on the path to true discipleship.

Two Orthodox Hymns for July 22 - Feast of the Myrrhbearer and Equal to the Apostles Mary Magdalene

When God, who is transcendent in essence,
Came with flesh into the world, O Myrrhbearer,
He received you as a true disciple, for you turned all your love toward Him;
Henceforth you would yourself work many healings.
Now that you have passed into heaven, never cease to intercede for the world!

Standing before the Cross of the Savior,
Suffering with the Mother of the Lord,
The most glorious Mary Magdalene offered praise with tears.
She cried out: What is this strange wonder?
He who holds the whole creation in His hand chooses to suffer:
Glory, O Lord to Your power!

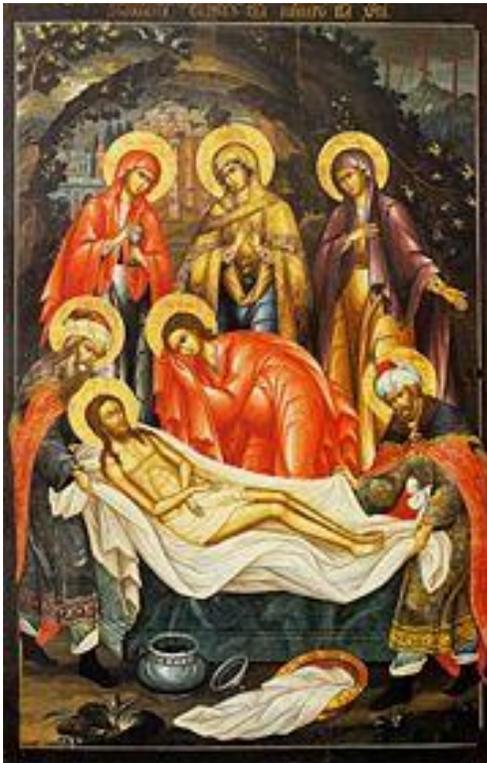
St. Joseph of Arimathea

by: hieroschemamonk Barb

So little is really written about this wonderful Saint, and often what is written is not really the truth. The truth is hidden within many “fictional writings”. It takes a lot of sorting through to learn the truth. What we know the most about Joseph is that he was the one who took Jesus’ body down from the cross and placed Jesus in the tomb that Joseph had prepared for his own personal death. Joseph was a “secret” disciple of Jesus. He was also a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin although he was not involved in the “trial and death” of Jesus. There are several references within the New Testament concerning Joseph but they do not provide much detail.

According to the Talmud, Joseph of Arimathea was the uncle of the mother of Jesus. Joseph was involved in tin trading as a tin merchant with a large fleet of ships. He traveled widely throughout the “known world”. At times in his travels, he would take the child Jesus with him. He was known to have traveled to England frequently in his work as a tin trader/merchant. Joseph, as an uncle of Jesus, became Jesus’ guardian after the death of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Because of what Joseph did upon Jesus’ death – asking Pilate for Jesus’ body so that he could



bury Jesus -- he became a “marked man”. The Jews along with the Romans were not pleased with him. Joseph was arrested by the Jews just after he buried Jesus and he was placed into jail. On Easter Sunday, supposedly Jesus visited him in jail and freed him. Upon his freedom, Joseph realized that he was not safe in Jerusalem any longer. So with Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus, Salome, and others disciples, they started to travel to Marseilles in Gaul (from documents held by the Vatican). The list of disciples accompanying Joseph reads almost like a list of Who’s Who! While in Marseilles, Joseph had a dream that told him to travel to England and to preach the Gospel to all who would listen. So, a group traveled with Joseph to England. In many of his trips to England, Joseph had made friends with the British royalty. They gave Joseph and his companions several acres of land, tax-free, in the area of what is now known as Glastonbury. Here Joseph, with his companions, was able to build churches, “seminaries”, etc to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Joseph of Arimathea died at Glastonbury on July 27th, A.D. 82, and on his tombstone was written, in Latin, *“After I had buried the Christ, I came to the Isles of the West; I taught; I entered into my rest.”* Joseph of Arimathea was born in Israel and died in England. He helped raise Jesus, buried Jesus, and went on to preach Jesus’ message far from home in England. During Jesus’ life, Joseph may have been a secret disciple but upon the death of Jesus, Joseph became a very vocal disciple and taught openly.

“Joseph of Arimathea took Thee, the Life of all, down from the Tree as one dead,
and wrapped Thee in clean linen and spices.
He yearned to embrace and kiss Thy pure Body with heart and lips
yet he restrained himself with fear.
He cried to Thee rejoicing:
Glory to Thy condescension, O Lover of Mankind.”
(Kontakion Tone 2)

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
Br. Damien and family
Fr. Rick Hobbs
Sam, Teresa and Cloe
Our Bishop -- +Charles Smith, OSF

Eastern Rite Monastics within Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church

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