

Monastic Musings

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

July 2011

From the Idle keyboard

by: schema-Archimandrite Barb

Summer has fully arrived but not without the continued cleaning up from the nasty weather in the Spring! Mother Nature can really be cruel to say the least! As many of you know, Mother Myrella and I live in Massachusetts. In fact we live in the area that was hit by the tornadoes on June 1st. Fortunately, the town we live in was spared, but the towns surrounding us were severely damaged. It is one day we will never forget. Slowly, the people affected are cleaning up and rebuilding the best that they can. But from all of this, at least in the towns of Monson and Brimfield (both which border our town), we are seeing community members pulling together and helping one another. The Churches not only continue to offer worship services but also have become the focal point for coordinating volunteers, accepting and distributing donations, and feeding and sheltering the many workers performing utility repair, tree removal, and debris removal. The Churches are really putting their faith teachings into practice!

Archbishop Charles informed me that the Friary, which is located in the basement of the Our Lady of Peace Cathedral, is slowly coming back to normal. The flooding that Cincinnati had this Spring really took its toll on the Friary, which ended up with water and mud throughout. Archbishop Charles had almost completed all of the renovations to the Friary when the flooding occurred. When I visited in December, the Friary was looking wonderful with the new kitchen, etc. I had told Mother Myrella that one would never know you were living in a basement, given the way Archbishop Charles was renovating it to make it a warm and functional Friary. We will continue to hold Archbishop Charles in our prayers as he continues to clean up the mess that was made of his living quarters.

This month we celebrate the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala (Magdalene) on July 22. The Eastern Orthodox Church has called her the Equal of the Apostles or the Apostle to the Apostles!



Who really was Mary? We know very little officially of Mary other than what we learn from the Gospels. Some of the Gospels try to make her the woman who had demons cast out, but in reality, we are not sure that is Mary Magdala. We do know that Mary followed Jesus everywhere, learning from His teachings and serving him from her own possessions. She was always faithful to Jesus no matter what was happening.

If we read the writings of the Nag Hammadi, we learn that Mary was a very important disciple of Jesus. Remember, at that time the 12 male followers of Jesus were known as Disciples of Jesus; so, that means Mary was part of the “inner group”. In fact the disciples often complained that Mary was the “beloved disciple” of Jesus:

“And the companion of the savior was Mary Magdalene. Christ loved Mary more than all the disciples, and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, Why do you love her more than all of us? The Savior answered and said to them, Why do I not love you like her?” (Gospel of Phillip)

“Peter said to Mary, “Sister we know that the Savior loved you more than the rest of women. Tell us the Words of the Savior which you remember – which you know but we do not, nor have we heard them. Mary answered and said, What is hidden from you I will proclaim to you.” (Gospel of Mary)

“Peter questioned them about the Savior: Did he really speak with a woman without our knowledge and not openly? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us? Then Mary wept and said to Peter, My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior? Levi answered and said to Peter, Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her. Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us.” (Gospel of Mary)

Mary was usually able to grasp what it was Jesus was teaching, and when she was not, she questioned Jesus for further clarification until she understood. It was Peter and John who realized that Mary better understood what Jesus was teaching than they did, even if that did not make them very comfortable with her. It was this faithfulness that Jesus “rewarded” by appearing to Mary first at his resurrection before he appeared to the Apostles. She was given the task to proclaim his resurrection!

Mary learned well the teaching of Jesus, and after his death, she traveled throughout the known world spreading the Gospel and bringing many people to God. In her last days, she settled back in Ephesus to be with Mother Mary and John, whom she dearly loved. There she ended her earthly life and was buried.

Tradition relates that while in Italy Mary Magdalene visited Emperor Tiberius and proclaimed to him Christ's Resurrection. The emperor replied that Christ can no more rise again than the egg he was holding could turn red. At that point the egg in his hand turned blood red. She then continued to preach Christ's resurrection to the stunned emperor. Thus started the tradition of dying Easter eggs red in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Desert Wisdom

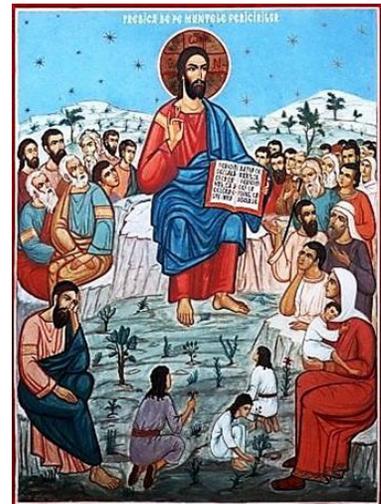
We mustn't despair when we struggle and continuously see nothing but the slightest progress. We all do nearly nothing, some a little more, some a little less. When Christ sees our little effort He gives us an analogous token, and so our nearly nothing becomes valuable and we can see a little progress. For this reason we mustn't despair, but hope in God. -- Elder Paisios the Athonite

Journey to Discipleship – The Beatitudes (Part 6)

by: Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (MT 5:10 NKJV)

This last Beatitude is rather unsettling. Since this is the final instruction, one might question if to be a disciple of Christ one has to undergo persecution for His sake to reach the Kingdom of Heaven. Did the translators understand what Jesus said or did they mistranslate this instruction? The Gospel of Matthew was Hebrew in origin, and Hebrew, like most other languages, has idioms which are peculiar to it. Perhaps, the translators were ignorant of those idioms and therefore misinterpreted or misunderstood what Jesus said. While reading various articles about Matthew 5:10, I came upon one article which was thought provoking and enlightening. The author (Ken Lundeen) hypothesized that “the words of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel ... have traditionally been misunderstood” because the translators misunderstood the use of idioms which are peculiar to the Hebrew language.



“The Greek word *diuku*, as well as the Hebrew word *radaf*, can both be translated either with *persecute* or *pursue*, the latter being far more common for the Hebrew word, and the first for the Greek word. The Bible translator chose to translate *diuku* with *persecute* because of the following two verses that deal with persecution. The word *righteousness* in Hebrew, *tsedeq* is a synonym for *salvation*, which would be a more accurate translation in this verse.”

Taking these two mistranslations into account, Matthew 5:10 would read similar to “*Blessed are those who pursue salvation*” instead of “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake*”. That translation would appear to be a natural conclusion to the Beatitudes: by putting Christ’s instructions into practice, we pursue and attain Salvation, which is the kingdom of heaven.

Combining both translations yields: Blessed are those who are persecuted for pursuing Salvation. While being persecuted for following the Way is not essential to receive Salvation, those following the Way will more than likely be at the very least harassed for living a life imitating Christ. By devoting their lives to Christ and being led in all things by Christ, disciples are inevitably going to challenge systems built on the values of power, greed, oppression, and the exploitation of others. As a disciple challenges those systems by living God’s values, they may be subjected to some form of persecution by those who have created and perpetuated

those evil systems. Although we are most aware of the physical forms of persecution, there are also more subtle forms: slander, threats, ostracism and insults.

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
(MT 5:11-12 NKJV)

It is not easy to imitate Christ by being the Light that dispels the darkness of the world. As Christ's disciples, we are called to respond to our persecutors in the way that Christ has taught us in the Beatitudes – with loving-kindness – that is, with mercy, forgiveness, and love to our tormentors. There was and is no cruelty in Christ, and so there must be no cruelty in us. “The generous and loving forgiveness of the persecuted for the persecutors is an essential condition of the spiritual life.” (The Orthodox Faith - Spirituality - The Beatitudes)

In the Beatitudes, Christ teaches us that we must first become aware of our need for God and recognize our dependence on Him. We must then become like Christ – living examples of radical love, living a God-centered life. Following the Way of Christ leads us to true Peace and to eternal life.

Prayer Requests

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

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**Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community
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Contact: archimandritebarb@ohioocc.org

JESUS PREACHING

