

STAVROS®

Contemporary Monasticism
within the
Orthodox-Catholic Church of America
as practiced by the
Monastics of the Skete at Crosswood Centre

Winter Quarter 2008

Welcome to a new year and a new layout for the newsletter. The newsletter has a new editor starting with this issue. The new editor is hieroschemamonk Barb (Martzall) who has volunteered to gather the information from the rest of the monastics and to lay out and publish the newsletter.

From the keyboard of hieroschemamonk Barb:

I have chosen the color of green for borders and headings in the new layout as it is a color of nature, fertility and life. Green also means learning, growth and harmony. Green gives one balance and sense of order. Monasticism is all about growing in one's relationship with God and humanity. Thus green is a very appropriate color for monastics.

With this newsletter, I hope that all of our brother and sister monastics will feel free to offer information for the newsletter. This is a communications tool for the monastics. I will not be using my "editor's discretion" when it comes to articles. I will try to catch

spelling errors for you though, but do not expect perfection. I want the author's style of writing to come through to the reader.

With this newsletter, I am hoping that we can build a community where we are able to share with one another without any fear of condemnation and where we are willing to help each other walk on the pathway of salvation through love. No single pathway is the "perfect" pathway. As we all know, there are many different types of monastic monasteries in this world. We are unique in that we all bring to one monastery our individual spirituality. I have been personally reaching out to some of the clergy that I know are monastic but who have not "declared" themselves as such within OCCA, to see if they would like to be a part of the Skete at Crosswood and continue their monastic life. I am also learning of others who have been monastic within OCCA that we never knew about. I am now trying hard to be the little shepard reaching out to the "lost monastic sheep" that are within OCCA. We are slowly growing and that is great. As new

members come forward, I will see that everyone is kept informed. And if you know of anyone who is not listed as attached to the Skete who is monastic, please let me know.

For me, I see a new dawn rising for the monastics within OCCA. We of the Skete at Crosswood Centre are at the very center of that new dawn. Let us join together today to make that dawn a bright and shining light to those who seek to be monastics! Though we all are of different traditions, let us work together for the common good of the monastics and for God's vineyard. We are the examples to the rest of the world. Let us step up to that role and live it to its fullest. Let us show the world what it is to love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls even if we follow different traditions!!!

I was asked a question the other day that I really had to think about and I would like the rest of us to think about it also. What does it mean to be a monastic member of the Skete at Crosswood Centre?

I remember when +Skip and the Community of the Cross were looking for new property. +Skip had a dream to have a group of monastics living together in a monastery on the property. That dream is still there, though not completely functioning at the moment. Brother Richard is living at the Skete with his wife and they are doing what they can to maintain the property. At one point we had other monastics living there, but for one reason or another they have moved on.

The Skete is always open to having monastics to move in. We must

remember that we will need to hold down jobs or have some manner of a paycheck so that we can pay "rent" to the Community of the Cross to maintain the property and to pay for the utilities. Food will also need to be paid for. Each monastic will also have to be willing to help out with whatever is needed to be done on the property.

I see a day when the Skete will be full of monastics praying together, working on the property together and going off to work as necessary. Meanwhile we can always visit at the Skete for a weekend or longer for retreats, etc as +Skip reminded all of us in his Christmas mailing. It is our home. Given that, if you have some spare cash, you may want to donate them to the Community of the Cross so that the Skete can be maintained. Love offerings to the Community are always welcomed....

And if you have a desire to live at the Skete, take the time to talk with +Skip as he can give you all the necessary information.

As to what it means to be a part of the Skete, it means for me that we are all tied together through our prayers and work within our ministries. We support each other emotionally and spiritually on a daily basis. We gather together when we can, although that may only be during Clergy Synods at this point since we are so scattered across the country. But in time, who know as that could change. God moves in very mysterious ways! And lastly we do what we can for the Skete which is our home ultimately.

Announcement:

Maria VanValkenburg will be professed as a monastic on March 2, 2008. Welcome to our newest monastic!!

An Overview of Who We Are by: hieroschemamonk Barb

The monastics of the Skete at Crosswood Centre are – to put it very bluntly – a mixed bag of ragamuffin monastics who follow one of two traditions. Either they follow the Western tradition (much like that of the Roman Catholic Church) or they follow the Eastern tradition (much like that of the Eastern Orthodox Church). Each monastic makes his/her choice of which spiritual pathway to follow.

So what are the basic differences between the Western tradition and the Eastern tradition you might ask? Firstly, when you look at a monastic wearing a habit, you will see the difference very quickly. Their habits (manner of dress) are very different depending on the tradition they have selected.

The Western tradition basically follows a set written Monastic Order's Daily Rule (such as the Rule of St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Augustine, etc.).



The habit is of the “monastic order” that the monastic has selected as their Daily Rule. The Western tradition monastics habits can be of various “styles and colors”.

The Eastern tradition basically does not have a set written Daily Rule. Rather, it uses the *Philokalia*, writings of the Holy

Fathers, writings/sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the Bible, and the guidance of an Elder as their Rule.



The monastic habits are of either of the Greek or Slavic style (which really look very much alike) and are always black. The only variations frequently seen is the head covering which can be with the veil or without a veil and also a “stole” that can be worn by the Stavrophor and the Great Schema monks.

I am not going to get into the “titles” used by the monastics as that is an essay in itself! (I might get into that area in another newsletter.) Slowly you shall learn the different titles used by the different monastics. Also, in another newsletter I will discuss the “ranks” of the monastics trying to do a comparison of the East and West.

The monastics have a web site that provides more information concerning monasticism within the Skete at Crosswood Centre. The Skete at Crosswood Centre is the Mother House for all monastics that do not belong to another Chartered Religious Monastery/Community within the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America. The web site is found at: www.sketeatcrosswood.com. Many thanks go out to Fr. David for having the vision to start the website when he was in residence at the Skete. Now I am trying hard to keep the web site up to date and “full of information” for the readers and as a reference source for the monastics.

Presently most of the information on the web site leans more to the Eastern

tradition. Basically that is because most of the “active” monastics at the time the web site was being designed are of Eastern tradition. That leaning will change as fellow spiritual sojourners join the Skete at Crosswood Centre, and as they share their spiritual walk. I feel it is important that everyone is represented by the web site. I need help from all of you to make the web site really speak about us! It would really help if I am able to understand exactly which of the Western monastic traditions are being followed. At this time, I do know that we have two Franciscans in the group – Fr. Richard and Fr. David. So, what are the rest of you who are Western tradition following?

*The Attack of the Old and
Weathered Hoodie
by Fr. David Moore, OEF/p*

This is the best time of the year to look for a sale, wouldn't you say? The holidays are done and over with, right? All of the stores have overstock and are looking to sell their product – CHEAP! Isn't that modern day thinking? Everyone is looking to get rid of the old so that they may usher in the new. How does this affect our dedication to antiquity? Is this the reason why antique sales have dramatically decreased in our “new” culture? Could this be the reason why our aging citizens feel forgotten and lost in a world of ethno-newness? Somewhere out there an elderly child of God is crying...alone. Somewhere in our hustle and bustle world this same child of God heard “...get rid of the old...usher in the new.”

Age is a relative thing; we all age, but not at the same pace. Your wrinkles

may not be as pronounced as mine. My memory may be a little better than yours, but the days wear on me just as they weigh on you. We all can enjoy our Lord's blessings the same way even though we may express our devotion in differing ways and with differing fashions. I am a member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF). We are an international order of men and women, married and single, gay and straight whose mission is: “...celebrating God's presence and grace in everything, following the Poor Christ of the gospels in lives of mutual care and accountability in harmony with the faith and practice of the whole Franciscan family; we are the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We seek to grow in the knowledge and love of God and to serve Jesus Christ in faithfulness to the spirit and example of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi.”
(Source: www.franciscans.com/mission/index.html)

We are from different traditions; we sometimes see things differently. Our most current conversation has been about our habit. Imagine a Franciscan order for a moment. OK, dismiss the monastic chant for a moment and concentrate on things “visual”! What do you see? Swishing brown robes and flaying white cinctures, right? Well, not entirely. Remember...we are the ecumenical order of the Franciscan family. We do not fit the “pattern”... or do we? There are Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists and every sort of protestant you can think of. But we share our love and passion for “Frankie” (as our venerable Archbishop likes to say). St. Francis broke the mold. He stripped himself of his family clothing and put on the passion of Christ. He was laughed at but honored the occasion with blessings from God. He put that sack on his body

so that he may not perish in rich and earthly things. By his example many people followed him that follows He! Our Franciscan family has come to the conclusion that if St. Francis were around in our time, he would wear faded jeans and a brown hoodie. Not just any brown hoodie, but an old and weathered hoodie. How's that for fashion! That old and weathered brown hoodie may not have found a home. It would have been as lonely as that elderly soul that was crying dismally. It would have been forgotten. But some of us have decided to show charity and don an old and weathered brown hoodie as our uniform of peace and cloak of tranquility. Are we all able to wear that kind of spiritual attire? Do we all have that sort of selfless and fashion-less desire? No. Is our way the best way? No. But if we all stand up for the aging cause of compassion and understanding in our individual differences then we all may have a chance at being ourselves, no matter who we may be.

*“Winter” Cleaning....
by: Hieromonk Myrella*

Happy New Year! 2007 has finally come to an end but not before dropping six more inches of snow. Today is January 1st and once again, it is snowing in the “desert of western Massachusetts”. This time, it is 5 inches of heavy, wet snow – the kind that is very difficult to clean out, that causes icing problems on the roofs, and that turns the roads into a frozen, slushy, treacherous mess. I am very happy that Barb and I decided to clear the snow from the 12/31 storm and did not wait to clean it all out until after today's snow storm ended. Doing that would have

made a difficult task into almost an impossible one.

After spending three hours clearing the snow, I can warm up and relax. Although it seems as if it is a non sequitur, I began to think about my spiritual walk. Then, the proverbial light bulb comes on, and I realize that clearing the snow is a metaphor of what I need to do in my spiritual walk. If we let the snow pile and freeze over, then we are only making it more difficult to clean up, and we may just give up trying to do anything.

It's much the same with our spiritual walk. If we are not vigilant in keeping the pathway cleared of the debris piled onto our walkway, then we have allowed the pathway to become almost impassable. We stumble over the rocks and wade through the thorny brush until we give up the journey.

Giving up is not the answer. The Holy Spirit will guide us, and Christ will walk beside us, but it is up to each one of us to clean the pathways of our hearts and minds of all that blocks our way to God. So, just for today – and every subsequent day in 2008, I will clear my pathway of the muck – the anger, hate, envy, despair – that blocks the “Way” to God. Daily maintenance of my spiritual pathway – that is my only resolution for this year.

May the Holy Spirit guide you and bless you in your spiritual walk!

Did you know?

On Mt. Athos, the Holy Mount (located on the peninsula of Athos, Greece where many of the “well known”

Orthodox Monasteries are) that the only female creature allowed to walk on or even live on the grounds is a cat. And then only because the monks need the cats to control the rodents.

Some Resources offered by our Monastics:

1. Lectio Divina by the Carmelite Order (www.ocarm.org/lectio/lecteng.htm)
 2. Electronic edition of the Early Church Fathers Series (www.ccel.org/fathers.html)
 3. Practice God's Presence by Brother Lawrence (www.practicegodspresence.com)
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Future Contributions:

This is your newsletter; so, please help to keep it being published by submitting writings, etc. The writings can be very short or as long as a couple of pages. Any item about monasticism is welcomed. You can also submit questions that you want to ask and seek answers from the rest of us. I can easily post the question and then collect the answer(s) to publish in the following newsletter. I am open as to what we put into the newsletter so long as we use it as a communications tool to help one another other grow as we walk the monastic pathway in life. Please email your contributions to me at: (bmartzall@earthlink.net) and to put a note in the email (preferably in the Subject line) that it is for the monastic newsletter or send the contributions via U.S. Mail to:

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Projected Publication Schedule:

Spring Issue – end of April (articles due by April 15, 2008)

Summer Issue – end of July (articles due by July 15, 2008)

Fall Issue – end of October (articles due by October 15, 2008)

Monastics and their selected tradition attached to the Skete:

Hieroschemamonk Barb (Martzall) –
Eastern

Hieromonk Bob (Zahrt) – *Eastern*

Hieromonk Craig (Dunn) – *Eastern*

Br. Damien (Simmons) – *Western*

Fr. David (Moore) – *Western*

Fr. Donn (Mielke) -- *Western*

Hieromonk Jim (Donadio) – *Eastern*

Hieromonk Lynn (Walker) – *Eastern*

Br. Michael (Kierpiec) – *Western*

Hieromonk Myrella (LeClair) – *Eastern*

Br. Richard (Lounsbury) – *Western*

Fr. Richard (Parker) – *Western*

Metropolitan Skip (Carsten)

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