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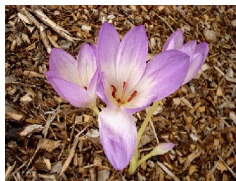
Contemporary Monasticism  
within the  
Orthodox-Catholic Church of America  
as practiced by the  
Monastics of the Skete at Crosswood Centre

Spring Quarter 2008

## ***From the keyboard of hieroschemamonk Barb:***

Welcome to the second issue of the newsletter. I personally want to say thank you for the kind comments I received concerning the last issue. Also thanks to all of you who have offered writings for this edition. You are wonderful!

I am trying out a new layout for this Quarter's Newsletter. Let me know if you like this one that is only one column or prefer the two column layout. I want to make the newsletter easy to read for everyone. You will notice that this newsletter is rather long as there was so much to share this time. Actually it is great to have so much information. Keep it coming and I will keep adding it! This is really a project that you all write. I just collect and lay it out for all of you to enjoy. So keep the information flowing and I will keep doing the layouts! You will also notice that I am trying to "personalize" the newsletter. With this I am hoping that others will share many different types of articles. Not everything has to be "theological" but can be just some nice personal writings to share with everyone.



Spring has finally arrived. I suspect that there are several others in our community that are just as happy as I am that winter is finally gone. It is great to have the warmth of the sun again! And to see all the beauty of the plants coming alive once more.

Easter has been officially celebrated throughout the world. But we as monastics celebrate Easter in our hearts on a daily basis. We have died to the world and have been resurrected in our new life in Christ. May we walk in his steps all the days of our lives!

The membership is growing and that is really wonderful. I pray for the day that we will have within our ranks more laity called to serve God as monastics. That

will come about, I believe, as we start to really build community as monastics and as we share our monastic life with others who might be seeking. One never knows just who might have thought about being a “religious/monk” in the past and figured that as a member of the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America that would not be possible. Feel free to share the newsletters with others who you think might be interested in reading them.

And please, why not take a couple of moments to share with the rest of us a little about yourself and what ever else you want. Because we are spread out across the world, we don't have the pleasure of sitting and talking and thus learning about one another easily. With the newsletters, I hope to be able to bridge that situation so that we all get to know on another and the ministries that we are called to do where we live. Presently the clergy only gather together every four years when there is Clergy Synod for the whole jurisdiction. Not much time then to sit around and get to know one another. Suggestions are: newsy information, teachings, prayers, photos, etc.....This is your newsletter! Help make it useful for all of us as a learning tool and sharing tool. Submissions for the Summer newsletter are due by July 15, 2008. Hope to see your articles/sharings.

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### ***Roots and Legitimacy of our Various Monastic Paths*** ***by: Hieromonk Lynn, Archimandrite***

That our way of “doing” monasticism in the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America is out of the ordinary is commonly observed, and there are times that we all wonder how exactly we can connect our experience of the monastic life with its historical expression. A recently-published text by the Reverend Dr. David G. R. Keller, an Episcopal priest in California, *Oasis of Wisdom: The Worlds of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (Liturgical Press 2005) is well worth the price (US\$16.95). He makes a brief mention of a hitherto rarely discussed expression of monastic life in the earliest communities of the Egyptian Thebaid; here is a brief summary of some of what he says:

As early as the middle of the third century, certainly during the life times of Saint Antony of Egypt and of Saint Pachomius, there appeared in villages and town, those who set themselves apart from the usual norms of life and commerce in order to devote themselves more intentionally to prayer, social service, and church service. Some were anonymous, but others, as they became known, were often sought as spiritual directors and teachers. Individually, these may very well have been among the first to have been called *monachos* -- that is, a single-minded person pursuing a goal, or one with a disciplined religious life. As a group, they were known as *apotaktikoi*, or those who stand apart from the established order. These men and women chose to live a

disciplined ascetic life, within or near local society and church, such that they influenced both by their lives and prayers. They could own property and some remained involved in the daily life of their cities or villages.

The *apotaktikoi* were not hermits, nor were they living in community under a rule and a monastic superior, though certainly they lived according to a monastic rule or ascetic discipline. Like monastics in the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America, they were sometimes called "city monks," living an independent life in an urban setting. Some did not consider them authentic monks; St Jerome of Bethlehem (a brilliant theologian, and a renowned curmudgeon), and others less well known, held them in low esteem. Jerome referred to them as "*remnuoth*," or solitaries -- those who were "on their own," as if that were inferior. Still, the integrity and humility of these *apotaktikoi* is attested in various ancient texts, as for example the anonymous text, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

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### **Announcements:**

Fr. Bill Payne, OSB (our clergy brother in Mexico) has joined the monastics of the Skete at Crosswood Centre. He is perpetually professed Benedictine in an ecumenical Benedictine group located in Canada. Welcome Bill+ to our little monastic family.

Fr. Richard Parker, OFM has informed me that he has retired from active ministry. He will continue as a "hermit monk" within OCCA. He is living in Bakersfield, CA.

Brother Michael William Barkhorn, OSF has joined the monastics of the Skete at Crosswood Centre. He is a professed Franciscan in an ecumenical Franciscan group. Br. Michael will be ordained a deacon on May 31<sup>st</sup>. He is a seminarian studying under Lynn+ and a part of the Vicariate of the North Atlantic. Welcome Br. Michael William to our family.

And a big welcome to our newest monastic in OCCA – Mother Maria VanValkenburg. She was professed as a Riasaphor monastic on March 3rd....Axios! Axios! Axios!

And more big welcomes our newest members, Fr. Michael Bonnett, OSM, Br. Michael Obasa, OSM and Br. Mat Davis, OSM all from the new *Order of St. Michael* in Chicago, IL.

Br. Damien Simmons has decided to leave OCCA. We send him our blessings.

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***Hello and Greetings  
by: hieromonk Basil***

Hello and greetings to you from San Diego. My name is Fr. Basil. I am one of the newest monastic in our growing family. I have been a monk now for only a few months, so I am still at the "honeymoon stage." I have been with the OCCA -- on and off -- for several years now. Those times when I have left, I believed that "the grass was greener on the other side." In some instances it was, but not for long, and not for the same reasons I left. We all have the need and desire to be a part of the whole and that "whole" for me meant "large." Since my ordination into the Byelorussian Autocephalic Orthodox Church several years ago, I have been rejected by the mainstream Orthodox churches as non-canonical and non-licit. I was the Prodigal Son, if you will, and the OCCA is the Father. Each time I left, I was welcomed back HOME by our Metropolitan. It is only recently that I fully realized that the grass that I seek is right here with the OCCA. You are my family. You have accepted me with all of my strengths and faults, many of which are obvious. Yes, I am now a monk -- a monk of the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America. I am proud of that. I do not need approval from SCOBA. What I do need is the approval and acceptance from God and my family in the OCCA. I am home. I am home.

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***New Dependency of the Skete  
by: hieroschemamonk Barb***

A new monastic movement is taking form in Chicago, IL. Fr. Michael Bonnett is working with several people (laity and clergy) to develop what is presently being called the *Order of St. Michael*. They will be a dependency of the Skete at Crosswood Centre. The Order is in its infancy phase of development at the moment, but making great progress from the information I have seen from Mike+. Mike+ tells me that they will be Western in tradition and they will not be developing a physical monastery to live in. They will come together for prayer, liturgy, spiritual support, etc. while each member will continue to live their lives as they presently do for work, housing, finances, etc. The Order will be open to both men and women within the Chicago, IL area.

Let us all welcome this new dependency to our larger monastic family. May we support them in prayer as they develop their Order and live their lives as monastics in this world. For more information concerning the *Order of St. Michael*, please feel free to contact Fr. Michael Bonnett at: [mikeocca@yahoo.com](mailto:mikeocca@yahoo.com).

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## **Overview of Who Are We: A Comparison of Western and Eastern Traditions**

**by: hieroschemamonk Barb**

This is the second/final part of “Overview of Who We Are” that I started in the last newsletter. The information given here is a culmination of research, many months of discussions and then putting it into an easy to understand format for all of us to have. I have not gone into any variations that can take place within the Western tradition or the Eastern Tradition. Instead, I have taken the liberty to make a “summary” of the information in a way that one can compare the Western and the Eastern. Hopefully, this information is useful as we move forward in our development of monasticism within the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America in general and within the Skete at Crosswood Centre in particular.

### **Western Professed Monastic Formation**

Basically there are 4 “ranks” within the Western monastic tradition -- *Postulant*, *Novitiate*, *Temporary Profession/Vows*, and *Perpetual/Final Profession*. Each of the first three ranks has a “timetable” and “training/learning required” set for moving forward to the next level. You are always striving to reach the rank of *Perpetual/Final Profession* which is usually somewhere around 9 years after starting the monastic formation process.

Most Western monastic traditions provide for some sort of a monastic habit of the order/community, religious name and title once one reaches their second rank (Novitiate). It is also at this time that the monastic is allowed to carry the initials of their order/community they follow after their last name.

### **Eastern Professed Monastic Formation**

Basically there are 3 “ranks” within the Eastern monastic tradition – *Riasaphor*, *Stavrophor*, and *Great Schema (Angelic Schema)*. But within the Eastern monastic tradition, there is not a “timetable” or even “training/learning” set for moving up the ranks. Actually, that happens only when the monastic asks it of their elder and if the elder believes the monastic is ready for the spiritual responsibilities of the new “rank”. Most monastics live their entire lives as *Riasaphor* monastics, while there are some who are called to become *Stavrophor*. A *Great Schema* monastic is a rarity.

Within the Eastern monastic tradition, the habit is given immediately upon profession to the *Riasaphor* rank. Also, the title of *monk/nun (brother/sister)* is given to laity and *hierodeacon (deacon)* or *hieromonk/hieronun (father/mother)* is given to clergy. *Hiero* actually tells people that the person is clergy. A religious name is given at the time of receiving the habit. Also, in the Eastern Orthodox

Church, the monastics will never cut their hair/beard. This is not the case though within the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America since most of the monastics do not live within the monastery but out in the world thus have to follow whatever requirements are set by the company one is working for. You can elect to grow your hair/beard or not.

To gain an understanding of the spirituality “required” to reach each rank, please read the Skete’s web pages ([www.sketeatcrosswood.com](http://www.sketeatcrosswood.com)) on each of the ranks. You will find lots of information located there.

One thing to know is that the word *monk* is actually gender neutral in Greek. That is why you will see some of the women using the term *monk* in their titles. They are holding to the ancient practice of neutrality in titles. Per +Skip, it is up to each of the women to decide whether they will use the term *monk* or *nun*. This is a small difference from the Eastern Orthodox Church. Eastern Orthodox Church monastic titles can really be confusing at first. Within the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America we have taken the step to simplify it. See the section “Titles of Monastics” for more information.

**Comparison of Professed “Ranks”**

<b>Western</b>	<b>Eastern</b>
<i>Postulant</i>	<i>Riasaphor</i>
<i>Novitiate</i>	
<i>Temporary Profession/Vows</i>	<i>Stavrophor</i>
<i>Perpetual/Final Profession</i>	
	<i>Great Schema</i>

**Titles of Monastics**

Please note that the titles used by our monastics may not agree with either the Western or Eastern Orthodox Church completely. We of the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America are trying to make things as easy as possible when it comes to terminology but still maintain much of the ancient terms where appropriate. The Eastern Orthodox Church monastics call the Stavrophor nuns “mother” which is not a clergy title since they do not ordain women to the priesthood. Also, the Eastern Orthodox Church monastics call the Stavrophor monks “father”.

So, to “get around that problem” of words/titles, we have elected not to have different terms depending on the monastic “rank”.

When talking with or writing to a monastic, the basic titles to use within the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America will be:

- Non Clergy – Brother/Sister
- Clergy – Deacon, Father/Mother, Vicar (Archmadrite/Archpriest), Bishop, Metropolitan.

It will be up to each Eastern tradition monastic to decide if they want to use the “Eastern Orthodox Church monastic titles” within their signatures. You will notice on the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America’s web site (clergy.pdf), I have used the “Eastern Orthodox Church monastic titles” to show that the clergy person is monastic for those following the Eastern monastic tradition. I will be adding the “Order/Community” initials to the clergy names as I receive the information for those who are following the Western tradition. Hint, Hint.....

### **Monastic Habits**

Those who are following the Western tradition will wear the correct monastic habit of the order/community they are following with their Daily Rule. Such as Franciscan, Carmelite, Benedictine, Augustinian, etc.

For those who are following the Eastern tradition, the basic Eastern Orthodox Church monastic habit are worn with a little “tweaking” for our purpose. The information can be found on the Skete web site under each of the “ranks”. Thanks go out to Lynn+ in helping me put the information together for the Eastern tradition habits. In our talking/sharing together over the last few of months, we were able to pull together ideas and set in writing what we felt the habits should be for the Eastern tradition monastics. We wanted to maintain much of the Eastern Orthodox Church monastic habits but also make some things optional since they are difficult to locate individually. We are also building on the habit given at the time one becomes a Riasaphor and thus trying to keep costs to a minimum where possible.

It is also up to each monastic to decide if they want to wear a habit or not. It can be expensive to get all the necessary parts of a habit especially if you are not going to wear it every day. Remember, it is not the habit that makes the monastic. The habit should be the outward expression of your inward spirituality.

Personally, I wear my habit when participating at liturgical functions, etc. I do not wear my monastics or even clerics when attending another church unless requested to do so. Otherwise, I prefer a pair of jeans, shirt, and a hat for my

daily activities. I could also wear my monastics when invited to something formal, such as a “black tie” dinner if I so choose.

## **Conclusion**

The Orthodox-Catholic Church of America is a jurisdiction that is Orthodox in theology but western in perspective. Therefore, monasticism needs to be free to include either the Western tradition or the Eastern tradition depending on the needs/desires of the individual who is the monastic. All that is asked is that there not be a mixing of the Western and Eastern habits. Choose what it is you want to follow and follow it correctly as per the guidelines now set forth for all monastics within the Skete at Crosswood Centre and really for all of the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America. Also, the titles/ranks are now basically set in writing for us to follow. Yes, we are a group of ragamuffins, but we do not need to look that way when it comes to our monastic habits or our titles we use. We have elected not to reinvent the “wheel” but to make the “wheel” function within our jurisdiction where we could with just some “minor adjustments”.

Presently we have three monastics within the Skete at Crosswood Centre that are members of ecumenical religious orders, Fr. David Moore, OEF, Fr. Bill Payne, OSB and Br. Michael Barkhorn, OSF. If you have a desire to be a part of an ecumenical religious order, please talk with +Skip before joining them. It can be a conflict if not handled correctly.

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## ***Married Monastics?***

***by: hieromonk Lynn, Archimandrite***

In Climacus’ seventh century classic, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, ordinarily read by Orthodox monastics during Great Lent, the question is asked, “How can we who are married and living among public cares aspire to the monastic life?” This is no idle or frivolous question, particularly in the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America (OCCA), where it is not uncommon for our monastics to be in committed relationships. Chastity, as should be noted, suggests that the individual’s relationships and motives are pure and free of sin, as much as possible, and do not obstruct the path to God. One who is chaste, according to one of the desert *Ammas* (desert mothers), is one whose manner of life does not distract, one whose relationships and interests do not divert him or her from the path that is at one and the same time narrow and broad, which leads to union with God. In the OCCA, our monastics are called to chastity, but not to continence or celibacy: to be celibate is to refrain from marriage, and to be continent is to refrain from sexual relations.



Climacus' very sensible and concrete response is, "Do whatever good you may. Speak evil of no one. Rob no one. Tell no lie. Despise no one, and carry no hate. Do not separate yourself from the church assemblies. Show compassion to the needy. Do not be a cause of scandal to anyone. Stay away from the bed of another, and be satisfied with what your spouse can provide you. If you do all this, you will not be far from the kingdom of heaven." (Paulist edition, p. 78) As Climacus well knew, monastic life is marked by love, moderation, simplicity, single-mindedness, prayer, almsgiving, and self-discipline. However, it is not meant to be painful or too arduous, nor something only for the great spiritual athletes, nor only for single people; rather, it is a deepening of the vowed baptismal covenant, by which the Christian becomes more intimately aware of the reality that she or he is a beloved child of God, inseparably and eternally united to that God, whose love never fails.

The monastic life, as much as we are able, is the angelic life here on earth; it is marked by prayer, sacrificial love, and service to one another and to our families and communities. Often, it is an inner, private aspect of life, exerting enormous influence over our ways of thinking. John Climacus suggests that there are many ways that the mind of one leading the active life and immersed in "the world" might be occupied. In his extravagant way, he suggests that we might think about the love of God, the remembrance of the kingdom, the zeal of the holy martyrs, the remembrance of the presence of God as in the saying, 'I saw the Lord before me' (Ps 15:8), the remembrance of the holy spiritual powers, and the remembrance of death, judgment, punishment, and sentence." (p. 134).

Whether we live alone or in a committed relationship, we stand daily before the "dread judgment-seat," not with paralysis of fear, but with something closer to relaxed reverence. At the close of each day, we do what used to be called an "examination of conscience," and face those moments we'd rather forget, bringing them to God and offering them in recognition of our humanity. One of the old Russian theologians prayed, "O God, in my humanity I have sinned; but You, in Your Divinity, I entreat You, forgive me and heal me." In facing our human mortality, we enter daily into the recollection of death. Certainly, if we pay attention, we are acutely aware of our own shortcomings and failures, and those who live in committed relationships often find those shortcomings and failures stand out with extraordinary clarity. At the same time we dare to say "Lord have mercy," with the sure conviction that indeed God is and ever shall be merciful and loving to each one of us who return, like the prodigal, to the arms of our loving God. In living as monastics, we witness to the transforming love of God and we rejoice in the opportunity to bring that love into all the various human relationships in which we find ourselves. Let us give thanks to God for the gift of the relationships that grace our lives.

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## **The Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community's "Doorkeeper"** **by: hieroschemamonk Barb**

Since about November 2004, just after Myrella+ and I moved back to Massachusetts from California so that we could take care of Myrella's mother, a little stray kitten had been visiting around our home. Never close enough to pet but it was very obvious that she was not a feral. We saw her for about 3 months, but there came a time that we no longer saw her around. Not unusual as we have many stray cats that visit around our area. Then one day during the Spring of 2006 both Myrella+ and I were doing work out in the yard. We heard a very small voice calling to us from a little distance. We looked and saw this beautiful little black cat just sitting in the under brush against the school barn. I immediately realized that the little kitten had returned and was now an adult. She came to us when we called to her. We decided to name her Blackie the Blessing. Since we had a cat inside already, we could not bring the little one in to live with us. Besides, we had to do a little work in winning her love. Instead we decided that we would do all we could for her while she was around our house. We saw that she had a warm and dry place to sleep, food to eat, love and companionship. The relationship grew to the point that she would greet us each day at the back door waiting for her breakfast and fresh water and again in the evening for supper. And when one was outside doing anything, she had to be there supervising you!



As time went by, Blackie decided that she really trusted us and wanted to be with us whenever we were outside. She would even sit on the back porch looking in the window of the door hoping to catch a glimpse of us when we would pass by. The screen door shows the evidence of her wanting to be with us so much. Since we had lost our other cat, we decided it was time to bring her into our home permanently. So in May 2007, Blackie became our little companion in life. She has adjusted very well as you can see in her picture. She rules the house with her 8 pounds of love. She makes sure that everyone is greeted and has a chance to pet her. And if she is in the mood, she will just set herself down in your lap without your invitation. Yes, she is the hermitage's doorkeeper! Blackie constantly reminds us that we are very much Franciscan at heart and that means that we share our love with many of the creatures that we come into contact with outside of our home.

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### **Monastics and their selected tradition attached to the Skete:**

Metropolitan Skip Carsten  
Hieroschemamonk Barb (Martzall) – *Eastern*  
Hieromonk Basil (Donadio) ) – *Eastern*  
Father Bill Payne, OSB – *Western*

Hieromonk Bob (Zahrt) – *Eastern*  
Hieromonk Craig (Dunn) – *Eastern*  
Fr. David Moore, OEF – *Western*  
Fr. Donn Mielke, OSM -- *Western*  
Hieromonk Lynn (Walker) – *Eastern*  
Heiromonk Maria (VanValkenburg) ) – *Eastern*  
Br. Matt Davis, OSM – *Western*  
Br. Michael William Barkhorn, OSF – *Western*  
Fr. Michael Bonnett, OSM – *Western*  
Br. Michael Kierpiec, OSM – *Western*  
Br. Michael Obasa, OSM – *Western*  
Hieromonk Myrella (LeClair) – *Eastern*  
Br. Richard Lounsbury – *Western*  
Fr. Richard Parker, OFM – *Western*

Note: If I have missed anyone please let me know. And if I have not listed your “tradition” correctly or your Order’s initials correctly you can also let me know that! I will not get an injured ego over it!

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