



# STAVROS<sup>©</sup>



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

Winter Quarter 2009

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

I hope that each of you had a very blessed Christmas. I now welcome each of you to the new year of 2009! What shall this year bring to each of us as monastics and as a group? I hope that each of us has taken the time to look at what we have accomplished within our monastic lives and see where we need to improve/grow. We have started a new year, and already there have been many changes within the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America resulting from the Bishop's Synod in October 2008. We have three new bishops from within the ranks of the clergy and one more bishop elect, Lynn+ Walker, will be consecrated on May 2, 2009. We also have a new bishop that came to us from another jurisdiction. We are growing as a church. With all of the new bishops, that means there has been a shift in leadership for many of us. With this shift, it should mean each of us will have a "closer relationship" with our leaders. Still that means that we as monastics need to continue to strive forward in our monastic lives so as to show not only to ourselves that we are monastic, but also that we live our lives in a way so as to set an example to the world as monastics. Our worldly lives should always show our true selves. Our lives should represent exactly our spirituality and our love of God. Let our lives gently profess our monasticism to those with whom we come into contact. May those around us see our love for God and our striving toward our theosis.

I have asked Bishop Doug if he would like to be included within the monastic newsletter since he is monastic and has a small monastery. He has accepted the offer. Presently Bishop Doug is the only monastic living at the Holy Apostles Orthodox Monastery although both Myrella+ and I are attached to the monastery. The newsletter will now include information concerning the Skete at Crosswood Centre and also the Holy Apostles Orthodox Monastery. Bishop Doug has been invited to contribute to the newsletter.



The picture to the left was taken in the winter of 2008. It is of the construction of the Bishop Doug Wright's cathedral. It is a wonderful winter picture! Those of us in the northern section of the Midwest and Northeast are getting our taste of winter this year. Winter started early for some as some of us got snow in early November!

The lake effect storms that occur every year also started early this year. It made the skiers very happy though as they could hit the slopes early. Much of the country has received more than the usual snow and frigid cold to this point already. What does the rest of the winter hold for us, I wonder. I can only hope that the "worst" is over at this point, but then I know that February and March can be really nasty months for snow, sleet and ice.

The main purpose of the newsletter will continue to be a tool to share information of what is happening with each of us and with the monasteries that we are attached to. The newsletter will also continue to be a teaching tool. I am hoping that with the start of the new year, that some of you will do some sharing/writing that can be used within this newsletter....

---

### ***Good News to Report: SAGA Ministry Endeavor*** ***By: hieroschemamonk Barb***

Br. Michael C. Oboza, Founder of the SAGA Ministry, has been recognized for his timeless effort to continue surrendering his life for God. For it is through Br. Michael C. Oboza's dedication with his Straight and Gay Alliance ministry, the Love Foundation, Inc has found his ministry work noteworthy. Congratulations Br. Michael for this award. May your ministry continue to be blessed!

---

### ***Major Request*** ***By: hieroschemamonk Barb***

Bishop Peter (Bob Zahrt) has made a request for which I will need help from each of you. He wants to feature each of the monastics within the OCCA Jurisdictional Newsletter. As he put it, "Not only do our OCCA membership need to know what our version of monasticism is, so do our monastics."

Here is what I need from you:

1. Why have you chosen to be monastic?
2. Why have you chosen the Eastern or Western tradition?
3. A very brief word sketch of yourself

4. If you are attached to an “outside” Ecumenical Monastic Group, then why are you a member of them?

Please send the information via email or US mail to me so that I can put something together for Bishop Peter. I will also share the information within our Monastic Newsletter. I would like to have your writings by the end of February so that I can get something to Bishop Peter in March. Bishop Peter has been charged by the Synod of Bishops to be the “Communications Bishop” and has a very small communications committee (Bishop Peter, Cliff+ and myself). He has been charged to publish a Jurisdictional newsletter. He is trying to gather newsy information from around the Jurisdiction to include in it. The Newsletter is to be a communications tool for the entire clergy, and it is also to be shared with all the parishes/parishioners. Let us do what we can to make Bishop Peter’s task as easy as possible. It is wonderful that Bishop Peter wants to include all of us within the Newsletter! So here is your chance to tell everyone about yourself!

---

### ***Some Thoughts on Materialism*** ***By: hieroschemamonk Barb***

Since 1993, I have been reading and re-reading *The Philokalia*. It is my “daily rule” within my monastic life. Since I have read from cover to cover all four volumes, I often just open the book to some “unknown” place to read. I have no particular topic in mind when I open one of the volumes. Often times it opens up to a section that appears to be very appropriate at the moment. When I look at the section, I realize it often reflects something I was thinking about over the last 24 hours.

Today was one of those days. I was contemplating how the economy has been affecting our lives, especially my personal life. Yes, I am blessed since I have a roof over my head and no mortgage to pay. No, there is not any rent to pay either. I have no worries about a landlord going bankrupt and losing my place to live. I count myself very blessed in that respect. However, I do have to worry about the cost of things necessary to live. I have come to realize over the last few months just how much I can really let go and not even find myself feeling as though I am missing or lacking anything. In some ways I feel richer than before since I have learned to shop wisely for only those things I actually need. Actually this was not something that happened overnight for me. It started several years ago when Myrella+ and I still lived in California. We made a conscious effort to shop smartly. Yes, at that time we did allow ourselves at times things we desired. Then we moved to Massachusetts to take care of Myrella’s mother. With jobs being sparse and pay much lower than we had been getting, we quickly had to adjust to a new way of living. In August we learned that our jobs were in jeopardy but did not know exactly when we would be out of work but were told it would be in the next few months (by the holidays). Oh well, when one door closes, God opens another door. We had already made some major changes in how we

spend money; so, we are somewhat prepared for whatever the future holds for us.

When I was in Florida taking care of my Mother's belongings after she died in August, I came to the full realization of just how much my thinking had changed about possessions, needs, and wants within this world. I was talking with the couple (old friends of the family) who had rented a room to my mother over the past ten years. We were trying to decide what to do with all of my mother's possessions. I looked around me knowing that the furniture in the bedroom, living room and dining room belonged to my mother. I found it so easy at that moment to look at all of the "stuff" and say to the couple, "if you want all the furniture, you can have it. I have no need of it." The relief on their faces was gratifying. Now they did not have to go out and replace everything immediately. I fulfilled a need they had and even took away a fear of lack in their mind. Never before had I felt such joy in saying, "I am monastic and I have no need for these things. I am living a simple life with the basics to get me by. You, my friends, have had this furniture here for ten years and have enjoyed it. Please take it with my thanks for all you have done for my mother." Every time they would point out something somewhere in the house that belonged to my mother, it was always the same answer, "Keep it if you want or give it to someone in need." Together we decided that all of Mother's clothing should be given to a non-profit organization that provides clothing to women looking for jobs but who don't have the necessary clothing. There was a lot of clothing to be given away – some that never had been worn! Even when my brother came to Florida, it was very easy to say to him, "Take from Mother's bedroom those little things you want to have as a remembrance of Mother and to give to your children". And yes, he put together a small box of things that we felt should remain within the family.

In the process of working with Mother's estate, I have come to realize just how much we as humans get caught up in "having things". Many of us seem to think that it is the material things (objects and money) that will get us through life. Well, I hate to be the bearer of sad news, but that is not the truth. We only have to look back at the Gospels to learn the truth. Jesus told his apostles to be free of material things as they ministered to mankind and to look to God as their provider just as Jesus did throughout his three years of ministry. Jesus taught the need for inner (spiritual) stability that would then guide each person through life. Yes, some material things are necessary in order to live in this world and especially since we do not live within a monastic community. But we must be very alert that the material possessions we have and our manner of living are not hurting our spiritual life. We must walk the talk in our lives!

St. Neilos the Ascetic puts it very bluntly:

*Though we are crucified to the world, though we have renounced this transitory lie and our purely human limitations, aspiring to the state of the angels by sharing their dispassion, yet we have relapsed and fallen back. Because of our material concerns and*

*shameful acquisitiveness, we have blunted the edge of true asceticism/ and by our negligence we discredit even those who through their genuine sanctity truly deserve to be honoured. Wearing the monastic habit, we have 'put our hand to the plough'; yet we look back, forgetting and even strongly rejecting our duties, and so do not become 'fit for the kingdom of heaven' (cf. Luke 9:62)*

*So we no longer pursue plainness and simplicity of life. We no longer value stillness, which helps to free us from past defilement, but prefer a whole host of things which distract us uselessly from our true goal. Rivalry over material possessions has made us forget the counsel of the Lord, who urged us to take no thought for earthly things, but to seek only the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt 6:33). Deliberately doing the opposite, we have disregarded the Lord's commandment, trusting in ourselves and not in His protection. For He says: 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them' (Matt 6:26); and again: 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not toil or spin' (Matt 6:28) When He sent the apostles out to declare the good news to their fellow men, He even forbade them to carry wallet, purse or staff, and told them be content with His promise; 'The workman is worthy of his food' (Matt 10:10). This promise is to be trusted far more than our own resources.*

*Despite all this we go on accumulating as much as we can. We also select the crafts which give the highest return, even though they absorb all our attention and leave no time for the remembrance of God. It is as if we accused God of being incapable of providing for us, or ourselves of being unable to fulfill the commitments of our calling. Even if we do not admit this openly, our actions condemn us; for we show approval of the ways of worldly men by engaging in the same pursuits, and perhaps working at them even harder than they do.*

*As a result, instead of being respected, we are regarded as a useless crowd, involved in buy and selling just as much as the man on the street. Nothing marks us out as it should from others, and we distinguish ourselves merely by the habit that we wear, not by our way of life.*

When I read these words, it was like having a sword shoved into my heart. Here we are calling ourselves monastics but are we really living our lives as monastics? Have we been able to remove ourselves from the world to a point that our spiritual lives are important to us? Have we been able to find a way to incorporate our spiritual selves into what we are doing for jobs? Or, have we learned to live a "double life" – one of the world of work and one as a monastic

only when it suits us or when it fits our schedule? Those are some questions each of us have to answer. If we are going to live as true monastics, then our spiritual life has to take the primary place in our lives. We have to be willing to make it the foundation for everything we do in our lives. Doing so is not necessarily easy to do and it may mean changes to be made in your life, but it is essential to protect who we are as people seeking *theosis*. It takes a lot of time and patience to be able to bring all aspects of one's life into a monastic balance. Here in our house, our favorite saying is: "If it is the will of God or the Holy Spirit, then it will be." We live by that in our lives daily although it is not always easy to do; in the long run, we are richer in so many ways. Suddenly that which you feared is no longer a fear. Life becomes a joy even with the challenges it presents. For as long as I have called myself a monastic (and that is well over 30 years), I am just finally realizing this new joy in my life. It took a death, rebuilding of family, and loss of jobs to bring me to this joy in my life. I am monastic and I will do all I can to walk the talk even when others want to make rude comments towards me! I am a child of God and in every person I strive to see Christ.

May we all be able to walk together as monastics sharing God's message of love to all with whom we come into contact. May we never feel that we are lacking, knowing that God is our provider of all things in this world. God provides when and what we need in His time -- never in ours. Our lives are richer in so many ways that we may not have ever realized until we look! Take the time to talk with God (and to listen to Him) and God will guide you and support you in your life in a way you will always feel joyful!

---

**Monastics and their selected tradition:**

Metropolitan Skip Carsten

**Skete at Crosswood Centre:**

<b><u>Western</u></b>	<b><u>Eastern</u></b>
Fr. Bill Payne, OSB	Fr. Basil Donadio
Fr. David Moore, OEF	Bishop Peter (Bob Zahrt)
Fr. Donn Mielke	Fr. Craig Dunn
Fr. Francis Fontenot, OFMO	Mother Lynn Walker
Br. Matt Davis, MSSM	Mother MariaAlene VanValkenburg
Fr. Michael William Barkhorn, OSF	Br. Michael C. Oboza
Br. Michael Kierpiec	
Br. Richard Lounsbury	
Fr. Richard Parker, OFM	

**Holy Apostles Orthodox Monastery:**

<b><u>Western</u></b>	<b><u>Eastern</u></b>
Bishop Doug Wright	Mother Barb Martzall
	Mother Myrella LeClair II

**Copyrighted by:**

*The Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community  
for  
The Orthodox-Catholic Church of America*