

Monastic Communities

Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery

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Vision

The rhythm of the liturgical year is the constant for our monastery, and like all monastics, we find in the daily services in our chapel and in our times for quiet prayer and reading not only the balance for the rest of our lives, but the source of our ability to live the whole of our lives in the presence of God.

Community Life

Friends, family, and neighbors continue to be among the greatest assets God has given us. We are especially grateful for our relationship with St. Innocent's Mission in nearby Oneonta, NY. We continue to attend most Sunday Liturgies there, helping out with the choir, and they join us for midweek services, Holy Week, Pascha, and Myrrhbearers. It was a joy to have the Rev. Timothy Holowatch receive eight new members of the mission into the Church in our chapel before the vesperal Divine Liturgy of Holy Saturday.

We are also grateful for the individuals and parishes who have helped out with extra work. We would especially like to give thanks for St. Philip's Antiochian Church in Sounderton, PA, which continues to send up a large work group for a full weekend every spring to help out with various projects as well as with our gardens and grounds. We are also grateful for our neighbors, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, who volunteer their services to us on a regular basis, doing all kinds of jobs, from bookkeeping to cleaning animal pens and trimming hedges.

A few years ago, a friend helped us put in a trail leading from our guest house, along the impressive ravine carved by our stream, to the old Baptist Church we inherited awhile ago. Last summer, Dan Stark, a member of St. Innocent's Mission, took on the ambitious project of adding several new trails, which open up the wetlands as well as our woods for walking and hiking. Dan persuaded two of our neighbor girls to help him with the clearing, bridge-building, rock-hauling, etc. Other friends are planning themes that will be placed on the trails at appropriate points for meditation by next year. A trail map is available, giving approximate hiking times - especially for the more aerobic hikes - and this has greatly added to the experience of the pilgrims and guests who visit us. Some hardy souls have even tackled one of the trails on cross-country skis in the snow.

This past winter especially was a time of activity and accomplishment for us. First and foremost, we are pleased to announce that again with the help of our friend, Dan Stark, we successfully submitted an application for ISBN listing for the monastery. This means that our new *Kathisma Psalter with the Nine Canticles, Revised According to the Septuagint* has been published with an ISBN number and will be available through all sources listing books in print. We are now assigning numbers to our previous "Manual" publications as well as to *The Royal Hours of the Orthodox Church*, which came out last year. Copies of the manuals will have their number placed on the cover with stickers until they can be reprinted. This publishing of prayer manuals and liturgical texts is the fastest-growing part of our work, and we are grateful for the requests and support that are making it possible.

We also took a number of steps this winter to reorganize our work so we can get more done with less effort. While we know this is a continuing process, we trust that already results may be visible. We survived a computer crash during the

Monastic Communities

busiest part of the pre-Christmas season, yet we managed to keep up and running. Under the circumstances, we are truly grateful for the patience of those whose orders did not manage to get out as quickly as we would have liked!

All of this organization is to create space for a life of prayer. With your help and your prayers, we support this life, farming as good stewards of the land we are blessed to live on, and publishing cards and books to share the liturgical and artistic riches we have been given.

In answer to specific requests for help, we are grateful to report that we are being given a complete, new computer system, more than capable of handling the kinds of work we need to do here. In addition, we have the pledge of a small buck barn that is being dismantled and will be brought here to be reassembled. We are also being given help in finding ways to sell a number of our “unique” items without needing to be away on a regular basis from the monastery and its services.

Major Projects and activities

A “behind-the-scenes” event that took place last year is making an enormous impact on the monastery. Over the years our Board of Trustees has helped make possible the external framework of our monastery, offering us critical advice, financial donations, and hours of time and labor. We were amazed by the steps they have taken, coming to meet with us and with Deacon Peter Danilchick for a two-day retreat - to pray and share our hopes and dreams for the monastery, and to ask what we want the Lord to do for us. We are not changing the direction and goals of our monastery. Rather, together with the trustees, we can be more focused on those goals. Deacon Peter is preparing a report of the responses to the questionnaire we sent out to a number of our friends. We are truly grateful for the overwhelmingly positive support reflected in these responses, and we are also grateful for those who are not able to support what they see of our monastic life. They keep us humble! While we are aware that we will never be everything that everyone wants us to be, we are grateful for whatever helps us see new ways to work toward our own continued growth and change.

We were also blessed this past year by the tonsuring and clothing of a new sister to the riassa. Sadly, during this same time, two of our members also made the decision to leave due to medical concerns. While we cannot rejoice in such a loss, we do see the Lord’s hand in it and are taking this time to pray, take stock, and, as it is put in contemporary terms, “work on our own issues,” so that we learn from this experience and use it as the basis for future growth. We look forward to the scheduled visits of a number of women who have been in touch with us throughout this period and who are continuing to discern the possibility of their own monastic vocations at our monastery.

We ask you to join us in our prayers that God will give more men and women enough trust and courage to give up their lives to Him in the monastic way, both in our monastery and throughout the Church. The “job description” for our monastery includes a love for the services of the Church, a willingness to spend a lifetime in repentance and change, a desire to intercede for others and for the world, and then almost any other talents God has given, including (but not limited to) musical ability, computer skills, cooking and “homemaking,” marketing experience, construction, maintenance, and farming. We pray that as our parishes continue to grow in their own spiritual lives, it will seem more normal to encourage a healthy and even well-educated, successful person to consider serving the Lord in this way.

Finally, we ask for your prayers for all of us here, that we may grow only as God wills.