

## Holy Protection Monastery

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**Archimandrite Gregory (Wendt), Abbot**

Having been founded in South Florida in 1982, the monastery was received into The Orthodox Church in America in 2003 by His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman. Shortly thereafter, in the spring of 2004, Metropolitan Herman gave his blessing for the brotherhood to relocate to the mountains of rural western North Carolina, where conditions seemed beautifully suited to the monastic way of life.

### Vision

The brotherhood seeks to follow the centuries-old cenobitic tradition of the great monastic fathers, within the context of the place in which we live and the number of monks we have at present. Just as those seeking to be guided toward the Lord by a spiritual father in the earliest days of monasticism grouped together for this shared purpose, our vision of the common life views the monastery as a spiritual family, with the abbot (abba, father) guiding the brothers who have come together to live a life of obedience according to the Gospel as their surest path toward the Lord. In a simple life of prayer and work, the monk renews his baptismal commitment to a constant conversion of life to Christ, which is done for his own salvation and for the good and building up of the whole Church, Christ's Mystical Body.

### Community Life

The brotherhood is comprised of five tonsured monks, among whom are two hieromonks and one hierodeacon. The day is anchored in the Liturgical Hours, which are prayed solemnly and with as much appropriate musical beauty as is possible. The Divine Liturgy is served on Sundays and feast days according to the Typicon (Rule). In the liturgical music used, our Carpatho-Rusyn heritage can be heard as the tones and hymns of that tradition are found alongside Obikhod tones and Great Russian hymns. The monks are called to prayer by six bells, which were blessed by Metropolitan Herman when the last two bells were added. The largest and newest bell was donated in honor of our entrance into The Orthodox Church in America and is dedicated to Saint Herman of Alaska. Each monk also observes a rule of private prayer and of contemplation by means of the Prayer of the Heart (the Jesus Prayer). Of course, the periods between the services find the monks fulfilling their obediences by working, according to the abilities they have received, in horticulture, cooking, cleaning, teaching, studying, iconography, tending the bookstore, construction of new buildings, and maintenance of the grounds and existing buildings. Highlights from among the brotherhood's activities can be viewed on our web site: [www.OrthodoxMonastery.com](http://www.OrthodoxMonastery.com).

The monastery also has a representation (metokion) in Transcarpathian Ukraine, so that those from that land, so rich in monastic vocations, who may wish to join our brotherhood or another brotherhood in The Orthodox Church in America may come to learn the English language. This also allows clerical and lay supervisors to evaluate these candidates, novices, or young monks for the sincerity and stability of their monastic purpose.

### Major Projects and Activities

Since our move to the mountains, much time and energy has been needed for planning and building suitable new monastery buildings and the permanent temple. Metropolitan Herman has given the monastery his blessing to have a metokion church that is located near an Interstate highway, so that those in the proximate cities and towns may more easily come to pray with the monks on Sundays and feast days. It is the desire of the brotherhood to share the Orthodox faith with as many as possible through the above-mentioned services, and also by offering adult education in the Orthodox faith for those seeking a high-level program of studies, for potential converts, and for those simply having

## Monastic Communities

an interest in learning about Orthodoxy. Our planned book-and-religious-articles store would be an adjunct to our adult education program. The majestic beauty and quiet of the monastery property will lend itself magnificently to days of recollection or retreats as soon as accommodations can be constructed for these purposes. The brotherhood also plans to hold an annual pilgrimage for the spiritual renewal of the Orthodox faithful who may wish to travel to our monastery for this event.

It is our custom to invite those who attend Sunday Divine Liturgy to enjoy coffee or soft drinks and snacks with the brotherhood in the trapeza after church. On the first Sunday of each month, we have had a pot-luck lunch, which we think will grow to be an every-Sunday event. On the twelve great feasts, the icon of the feast is carried in solemn procession to the chanting of the festal troparion from the church to the trapeza, where it remains during the feast-day meal and, at its conclusion, is returned to the church again in procession.

Finally, since it has always been the desire of this brotherhood to be a gift and never a burden to the Church, we have been blessed by God to be able to live by the fruits of our own labors. No moneys from any diocese or any other official church institution have ever been accepted by this monastery for its development or its support. With God's continued blessing and assistance, the monastic brotherhood will always remain self-supporting; and, in addition, it is our desire to assist worthy causes within the Church and to aid the poor both near and far.