



Monastic Musings

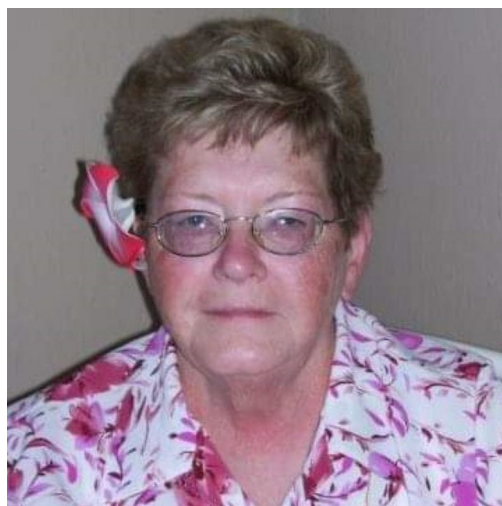
Living in and Practicing the Presence of God

Fall-Winter 2021

God Gains Another Angel!

by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

This newsletter is dedicated to Judy Dooley who became a heavenly angel August 30, 2021. She was an earthly angel for 84 years!



Thinking back to when I first met Judy, my heart always fills with such joy! I met Judy at my Consecration to the Episcopate in 2010 held at the Our Lady of Peace Cathedral. Throughout that entire weekend, she always had a smile on her face and kind words to share. She was a bright light that always showed! I again saw her at the Clergy Meeting in 2012 where she attended every meeting that was held. Once again she was the bright light shining.

But why is Judy so special? Many reasons besides her warm personality. But let me share a couple of them that affect our Jurisdiction. Well, she, along with her husband Jim, is actually one of the founding members of the Our Lady of Peace Cathedral, and the Ohio Diocese of Orthodox Catholic Church. The Diocese then broke away from the “mother church” and became what we now call the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church (an Old Catholic Church). If it had not been for Judy and a couple of other people who started Our Lady of Peace Cathedral, the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community would not have a jurisdictional home! And I would have never met this wonderful and loving person.

So Judy, you will always be remembered as one who cared about the church and the people who attended. You are now an Angel and you are always watching over us and guiding us.

I would like to share a reading that Archbishop Charles read during Judy's Funeral Mass:

"Imagine a beautiful mountain spring:

Pure and clear, full of freshness and power, it descends from the highest peaks,

Flowing down to water the floor of the valley.

So it is with the souls of those who came before us.

The beauty of their lives still flows down to their descendants.

Renewing our will, restoring our faith;

Giving us the power to act as they did;

Inspiring us to reach higher,

To grow in strength, in courage, in generosity.

And so we are taught:

Let us cherish what we've learned from beloved family, friends and teachers.

Their memory comes to us as an inheritance, an ever-flowing stream of goodness and blessing:

Let us remember.

May her memories be a blessing to us all.

Amen."



Life Can Be A Challenge
by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

Mother Myrella and I have celebrated our first year in our new hermitage. We have come full circle learning how the seasons affect our new home. Our cat companion (who is a sun lover) has decided that she is not really a fan of Summer as it means that all the windows on the south side have to stay covered or the second floor rooms can become unbearable. But I can guarantee that she will make up for the "lost time" come the rest of the year! Summer has gone at this point. It was a really short Fall weather wise as we went from the 70/80 to the 40 very quickly here in south western Massachusetts. Even our Fall leaf coloring was not normal for us. But I must admit I am glad to have the cooler weather after all the hot days we had in the Summer. I noticed that all our little animal friends stayed more hidden during the summer to keep cooler. Now they are out and about enjoying the yard again.

In late September, the Holy Theotokos of Mercy Community's website was moved over to our Jurisdictional website. After discussions with the Archbishop, we all felt it was important to keep all the parts of the Ohio Orthodox Catholic Church together on one website for maintenance purposes. We kept all our web pages in our move. Our new internet home is now found at: www.ohioocc.org/htmoc.

As I look around me, I keep wondering if we shall ever return to the "old normal" in life. So much anger and fighting is visible around me. Not something I ever thought I would see in my lifetime. I even noticed that much of the stimulus for the anger has come from religion! It is like everyone is trying to push their respective religion on everyone else. We have seemed to have forgotten that everyone has a right to pick and choose a religion or no religion at all. In some areas of the country it is even dangerous to speak publicly of your strongly held religious principles as it leads you into physical danger.

**LIFE IS NOTHING BUT
CHALLENGES THE MORE YOU
UNDERGO THE MORE YOU LEARN**

-Bhavani Tejaswi

Before I go any further with this topic, let me delve a little into American and World history to give you a basis of what I am saying. America was founded by many religious groups from Europe. These people who packed up and moved here did it basically for one reason. That reason was to get away from the religious persecution they were under in their native countries. You see, Europe was under "siege" by the religious to try and force one religion on all people. In fact many times people were told to convert or get out of their country. Now is that anyway a church should act? Well the people packed up and boarded ships to the New World where they could live their lives as they had been raised and worship as they had been taught. In this process, they made sure not to force their religious beliefs on those around them. Good example I personally can point to is the Amish, Mennonites, Brethren, Reformed, and Lutherans that came to Pennsylvania at the call from William Penn. This is the group of religious people who make up my ancestry. To say the least we all got along famously! These groups often shared worship buildings and congregations!. These groups did not push their religion on their neighbors but everyone learned to live harmoniously to the betterment of everyone. None of this my religion is better than yours. Everyone respected one another and went about life as was necessary to build families, homes and communities.

If you remember your religious teachings, Jesus constantly taught about not pushing away others because of their heritage or status. Look at the woman at the well. She was of a different religion than Jesus, but he took time to drink the water she offered him and teach her with love. He was trying hard in his teaching to bring people together for the common good of everyone. He tried to teach that unity built through love is way more stronger a foundation than unity built through fear! Isn't it about time that we learn that all religions are important and through the different religions we can come to understand one another and not fear one another. Instead of blocking someone's religion, why not take time to ask questions and really learn what it is that person believes. You will be really surprised to learn just how much their religion is really like yours. Really take a look around you for a moment...do you see the root cause of all the wars? If you dig deep you will quickly learn that religion of one sort or another holds the root of the war no matter what country or what century of the war! Instead of constantly fighting over religion, would it not be better to work together for the common good of everyone no matter who they are? Every human being on this earth is a child of God (no

matter what name you call your God by)! It seems that we are not capable of living our lives without creating hate toward others. Yes, there will always be those we call radical religious. But we have to remember they are using religion for their own purpose and not the purpose to help others!

Personally I have enjoyed every contact I have had with people of different religions. I have learned so much from them and have gained such an appreciation of how their religion is carried out within their lives. In our discussions, we have shared many teachings and in the process we have seen where each of our religions actually have common ground. When one is willing to stop and listen and learn, then one finds there is no need to fear someone else's religion. In fact it should help you better understand your own.

So for this Advent, I would ask each and everyone of you to take time to learn more about those religions around you locally. Find people who are willing to sit down and explain their religion to you and you to them. See the common grounds that you have and build upon that so that peace and love can grow within you and all those you come into contact with. Yes, many religions can be very strange, but in their strangeness we still have common ground. And that common ground should never be fear. If each of us start doing this, then the world as a whole will do it and thus we shall live in a better world where all are cherished. Let us get away from the idea that my religion is better than yours and you must change to mine or I will not have anything to do with you. That is NOT what Jesus has taught and that is not what our Creator teaches!

May you have a blessed Advent awaiting for the coming of the Birth of Jesus!

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All Saints

by: Archbishop Charles Smith, OSF

November is a holy month. Not that all the months are not holy, but for me, November has very special meanings.



In our tradition here, we celebrate the feast of "All Saints" on the first Sunday of November. While traditionally in the Western church, All Saints is celebrated on the 1st of November we moved it to the first Sunday. Since we do not have "Holy Days of Obligation" as in other catholic traditions, we feel that the celebration of the saints is important enough that we want everyone to share in the celebration. We also celebrate Veteran's Day on the 11th of November, which happened to be my mother's birthday and on Thanksgiving Day, and my fraternal grandfather's passing over 40 years ago.

This past year has been a difficult one here for us as we have buried over 3 persons from Our Lady of Peace Cathedral. One of these passing's, Judy Dooley, was a founding member of our cathedral parish. Judy was a loving person and professionally worked as an R.N. for over 20 years Judy and her husband, Jim, have been faithful members. Judy's smiling face, will truly be missed. Tragically, three

days after Judy's death, her grandson Jeffrey enter his eternal rest. Jeffrey was kindhearted and would always take time out to help someone who need his help.

Earlier this year, a good friend, Peggy, lost her battle and entered her eternal rest. Peggy and Rick (her husband) were present when I was ordained as a priest, consecrated as a bishop and when I was elevated to Archbishop, but that's not why I'll remember Peggy. Peggy's favorite color was red, and Peggy and her husband where great dancers. Chris DeBurgh's "Lady In Red" describes Peggy and Rick, they made the perfect couple. I can still see them dancing when I close my eyes.

Danny, entered his eternal rest in a tragic incident where he was trying to help someone, doing something good and was fatally wounded. While I never met Danny, he has brought to Our Lady of Peace Cathedral four members of his family who now regularly attend.

Each year on All Saints, we raise the top of the altar and all the names of those have entered their eternal rest have their names permanently sealed in the altar. All are remembered in all of our liturgies prayers here at our cathedral parish. You do not have to be a member, Orthodox Catholic nor do you have to be a Christian to have your name inscribed within the altar.

The early Christians would gather at the tomb of martyrs for their liturgies and prayers. In a symbolic way, this is why we place the names of our loved ones who have entered their eternal rest. In our Eucharistic Prayer I we say: *"God of the living and the dead, awakened to the undying light of pardon and peace those fallen asleep in faith, especially those who have died alone, unloved and unmourned."*

Besides being the Archbishop I am an associate member of a Reformed Synagogue and a Spiritual Assistant to a Native American group as well as a Franciscan and Irish. My spiritual journey has been greatly enhanced by each of these spiritual paths. Each of these spiritual paths have awakened me to the importance of honoring the memory of those who have gone before us. Although my father was not a 'religious man' he taught me one of the strongholds of my faith. In scouting whenever we would go camping, my father would make sure that we policed the campsite to make sure that it was cleaner than we found it. We would post a sign, "Troop 619 was here, when we left, we left it better than we found it. We hope you will do the same." Each of my spiritual paths, have expanded on the lesson that my father drilled into us so long ago. In Judaism, we have a phrase, זכרונו לברכה Heb. zichrono livrachah (fem. זכרונה לברכה, זכרון לברכה) 'Zichrono livrachah or Zichronah livrachah These Hebrew phrases translate to "May his memory be a blessing" and "May her memory be a blessing," respectively.

Mitákuye Oyás'iy (All Are Related) is a phrase from the Lakota language. It reflects the world view of interconnectedness held by the Lakota people of North America. This concept and phrase is expressed in many Yankton Sioux prayers, as well as by ceremonial people in other Lakota communities. This phrase is now used among many tribal communities as well. The phrase translates in English as "all my relatives," "we are all related," or "all my relations." It is a prayer of oneness and harmony with all forms of life: other people, animals, birds, insects, trees and plants, and even rocks, rivers, mountains and valleys. We respectfully address those who have passed as our grandfather's or grandmother's.

So what makes a saint? I believe it's our integrity to the covenant of Christ. Our relationship to the Creator. Saints are ordinary people just like you and me... Their love for the Divine compels them to

live extraordinary lives. Those who have gone before us, interpret God's love any unique way of their own to inspire us. Francis of Assisi said,

"I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours."

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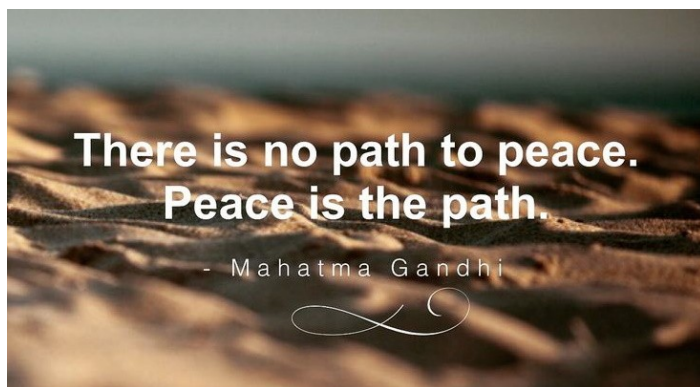
The Way of Christ by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair

These are strange times, my friends! Do you sense the collective discontent and anger still welling up in so many fellow citizens? It appears to have become even more widespread over the past several months. We have always had disagreements over politics and what politicians and political parties to support. But what I sensed this time actually frightened me! That feeling came to light when I saw the uprising on January 6th. Since when do people who purport to believe in "one nation under God" attempt a coup and set about injuring fellow citizens? There was nothing godly about that!. The only path to peace is through Christ.

We used to be a country in which people of all faiths, colors, and creeds were welcomed and had the freedom to worship the God of their beliefs in the manner they chose to do so. In many of our Churches, we welcomed others to attend our services and join with us in prayer – no matter what their beliefs were, what country they came from, what color their skin was, or what their sexual orientation was. We attempted to see one another as God sees each one of us – as His children no matter what our faith may be.

For many of us, we worshiped together with people of differing faiths and our discussions with one another after the service brought us closer together. We respected one another's beliefs *even if we did not agree with each other's beliefs* as well as with one another. Unfortunately, that sense of unity we had with one another was fragile and fell apart. We could no longer see one another as God sees us since our eyes had now become clouded with judgment of the other.

If we ever want to return to seeing one another through the eyes of Christ, we must first make peace with ourselves. Then, that peace can radiate through us to others around us. It is up to each one of us to choose which path to follow. Search your mind and heart and ask yourself: Am I choosing the Way of Christ – the Peaceful Way or am I choosing to follow the demons into the depths of Hell? There is no in-between.



Jesus is waiting for you to turn to Him and ask for forgiveness so that any hatred within you be healed and so that you can see all of His creatures with His eyes! Do not hesitate a moment longer to set aside your differences and see the reflection of God in each one of God's creatures. Choose Peace and Love as your Life Path.

Peace Be With You!

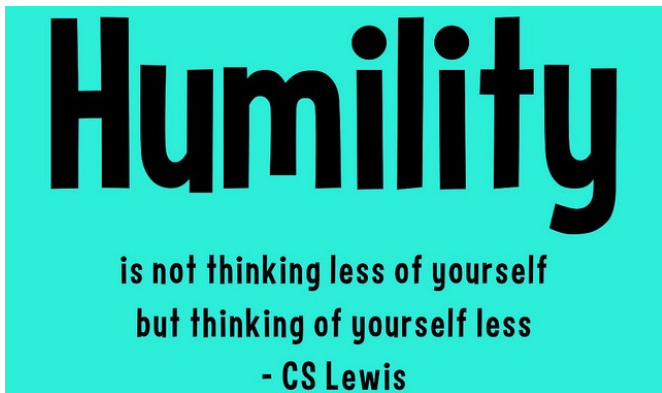


Just A Little Bit
by: Fr. Ron Lathi

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood. (Mark 12:41-44 NKJV)

This story is the one where congregations usually groan and roll their eyes when they hear it read. They know a sermon about giving money to the church is sure to follow. I also skipped over this story recently when it was the assigned reading one Sunday. I thought I knew about the widow giving away her two cents and being praised by Jesus because she gave all she had when so many gave a bit from their wealth. But then the Holy Spirit gave me one of those "hold everything" moments and I read it again. This time my heart opened when I realized the story of the poor widow could mean so much more than how many checks we write for church and charity.

Let's look at the facts which can be so obvious we don't fully appreciate them. The woman in the story is a widow. This means she has experienced hardship and pain as she has lost her husband. No mention is made of other family members, so we assume she is alone in the world. She is struggling to just "keep her head above water" as the saying goes. But yet she responds to an inner urging to do something for G-d. Even though she knows it is not even close to the amount others have, she gives what she can from her scarcity. This is a woman who has been beaten up by life. Yet, her faith compelled her give even when it hurts.



I realized this story has meaning far beyond a parable of giving money. I saw in this poor widow an image of many of us; of me. Life has beaten us up. We have known loss, and pain and struggle. Our "treasury" of faith is empty. Yet, compelled by our inner Spirit, we are prompted to give just a bit more from our scarce faith. We bring forth that last gasp of faith – even when in pain and darkness. We come to G-d and sigh "Here I am Lord. You know I don't feel much, but yet I offer my love." Even though

we feel nothing but lethargy, or even resistance, we still complete our daily prayer rule – sometimes through gritted teeth. That prayer is dearer to G-d than all the faith-filled wondrous prayers and works of people who are filled to the brim with faith and assurance. Jesus Himself said this cry of love in the

midst of challenges and pain means more because of the poverty of spirit from which it comes. This is another example of our wondrous G-d of paradox. God honors the humble and poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3), but shuns those who are filled with themselves (James 4:6).

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