

Chapter 15: MENTORS

A history of Holy Redeemer would not be complete without mention of mentors, the monks and nuns who introduced Mother Pilar and Mother Paula to the monastic life. Through their friendship, resources, and examples these men and women influenced the way in which Holy Redeemer developed. We cherish the friendships they have extended to us.



New Skete Monastery, Cambridge, New York

When the Mothers first met them, the New Skete community was composed of the Monks of New Skete, the Nuns of New Skete, and the Companions of New Skete. New Skete is located in Cambridge, New York in the Green Mountains near the border with Vermont. Before Holy Redeemer was founded, in their novice years the Mothers began traveling there annually with their Spiritual Director. Although the monastery is not a part of the same jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church as the Evangelical Orthodox Church, the abbot and monks and nuns welcomed us as peers. Many visits were made over the years to see how monasticism was pressed out in a contemporary setting. A deep bond was formed which lasts until today. Hand-held crosses from them were part of the Mothers' final vows ceremony.



St. Emma Monastery, Greensburg, Pennsylvania

The Benedictine Sisters of Westmoreland County have a monastery and retreat center in Greensburg, Pennsylvania southeast of Pittsburgh. In 1986 the Mothers first visited these Roman Catholic nuns because of their extensive experience in working with retreatants. Without any knowledge of their background, these Sisters also welcomed the Mothers as peers and openly shared their lives with them over many years. At the time of the first meeting, their community of twelve under the direction of an 85-year-old abbess, were amazed that two women would attempt to start a community alone. So gracious has their support and friendship been that during a visit in 1997, just before Mother Pilar and Mother Paula made their professed final vows, the Sisters at St. Emma's gave them a celebration similar to what they do for their own Sisters. The current abbess said, "Because you don't have your own community, we want you to use ours on this special occasion." As a gift they provided the candles used in the Mothers' profession ceremony in Bloomfield.



Transfiguration of the Lord Monastery, Ellwood City, Pennsylvania

Another community of nuns who welcomed the Mothers was the Transfiguration of the Lord Monastery in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania northwest of Pittsburgh. It is one of four monasteries within the Romanian Orthodox Church in the U.S. They gave the Mothers their first introduction of how liturgical life and manual labor exist together in a monastery.



Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother, Rives Junction, Michigan

Soon after meeting the Sisters at Holy Transfiguration, a small group of them left Ellwood City to found an additional monastery, landing first in Terre Haute, Indiana west of where the Mothers were in Ladoga. Their permanent monastery (seen here) was eventually established in Rives Junction, Michigan near Jackson.

The Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery and its Sisters became the focus of many visits. They faced many similar challenges in starting a monastery. Their priest and Spiritual Director was a special inspiration as he had been persecuted for the Faith in Romania. Also through this monastery the Mothers came to know the Romanian Bishop, a godly man who has encouraged Mother Pilar and Mother Paula many times in their pioneering monastic work within the Evangelical Orthodox Church.



Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery, Otego, New York

Some animal husbandry mentoring came from our monastic sisters at Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery in New York. They raise Romanov and Icelandic sheep for wool as well as goats and chickens. Founded in 2007, it has been a blessing to see them establish themselves in their rural setting. We have been warmly welcomed there many times.

A special mention needs to be made of our involvement and friendship with a Franciscan nun from The Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana. We met her after she had celebrated her 25th year in the religious life and were so enriched by her encouragement. We couldn't imagine anyone's lasting that long!