

Chapter 16: MINISTRIES

Our corporate identity is based on ministry, activities Holy Redeemer can do for the good of the Church and her members. The kinds of things the monastery, and now Agape House, has been involved with are ever-changing as new opportunities present themselves. Some of the following are past experiences, and others are current.

Chapter 12 mentioned **hospitality** as a regular offering of the Mothers and Carol. This involves both meals and accommodations. They have welcomed EOC clergy and many other faithful from around the globe as well as guests from outside their own communion of churches. In the 4th Century St. John Chrysostom said in his Homily 20 on Ephesians, "If you should be able to find any poor saint able to bless your house, able only by just setting foot in it to bring in the whole blessing of God, invite him!"

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR TIME AT THE MONASTERY

- Attire should be modest and conservative to reflect your expectation of meeting with the Lord. Please refrain from shorts, revealing tops, and shirts with logos or slogans.
- Please refrain from loud talk and shouting. Help to nurture the silence and peace of the monastery by controlling your tone of voice. Restrict all conversations to outside of the chapel.
- Children are to be accompanied by an adult at all times.
- A Great Pyrenees guard dog is on duty with the sheep flock at all times. Please do not approach him or talk to him. Fencing is electrified. Observe all signs.
- Please leave your pets at home.
- Prayer is the focus of monastery life. Your presence in the chapel and participation in prayers are expected if you are on the monastery grounds at the hours of Vespers and Matins.

THE MONASTERY IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC ON MONDAYS.

WORSHIP SERVICES in the monastery chapel

GREAT VESPERS 8:00 PM Sat.
RESURRECTION MATINS 8:00 AM Sun.

Summer Schedule beginning on the 2nd Monday following Easter:

Vespers 8:00 PM
Matins 6:00 AM

Winter Schedule beginning at the Nativity Fast Nov. 15:

Vespers 5:00 PM
Matins 8:00 AM

Holy Week & Special Feasts
Contact the nuns for exact time.

RETREATS

Individual, daytime, non-conducted retreats open to anyone.

Overnight retreats for women (one guest at a time).

One-day, conducted retreats for women, limited to 6 retreatants.

Dates and topics to be announced.

ARRANGE BY PHONING THE NUNS.

STUDY SESSIONS FOR WOMEN

Periodic 4-6 part studies on aspects of spirituality throughout the year, limited to 6 participants.

Dates and topics to be announced.

HOLY REDEEMER MONASTERY



Iron Mountain Road
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Bloomfield, IN 47424

7/10 mi. south of the corner of
175S & 150E
Greene County, IN

812-384-1261

A monastic community for women within the Evangelic Orthodox communion of churches.

An extension of hospitality is providing a space for **retreats**. From the very first desire to found the monastery there was the intention to have space for retreatants. The Mothers had seen from their visitations to other monasteries the value of providing an opportunity for those involved in "the cares of the world" to get away for some time of quiet reflection. From spare rooms in each

of the houses to the dedicated separate little house in Bloomfield (Shepherd's House), such a place was made available for those who needed to stay overnight. Many came just for the day. The farm settings of the earlier years were ideal for quiet, walks in nature, and, for many years, interaction with our sheep flocks. Everyone on retreat participated in chapel prayers. For those staying more than a day, some aspect of manual labor was a part of every retreat, but it was up to each retreatant to structure the rest of the time. Men, women, children, and entire families have come on retreat. There was never a fee.

In Chapter 16 we mention the role Holy Redeemer has played in **intercessory prayer** for others. We have a specific ministry in this area to pray for the clerics and parishes of the Evangelical Orthodox Church as well as persecuted Christians around the world.

Sometimes ministry has been involvement in the **international ministries** of other Christian groups such as Prison Fellowship, Compassion International, Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs, Christian Children's Fund (now Child Fund International), and Samaritan's Purse. The women have also participated in a local church child-sponsorship program in Rwanda.

Study of the Scriptures has always been important, both to do it and encourage it. There has been a bi-weekly study at Agape House for retirees and others free in the afternoons. The Mothers have also been involved in Scriptural-based teachings on the nature of Church, icons, being versus doing, contentment, and illness and suffering. A special challenge were sessions on chastity with EOC teens and young adults.

As they have aged, the Mothers and Carol have participated regularly in a **women's group** who tackle (among other things) topics having to do with aging, sometimes hosting the discussion group at Agape House.

The EOC communion of churches has a financial fund held in common by all her churches which supports the needs of episcopal work and parish development. The **EOC Fund** was begun by Holy Redeemer in 2001 and has been administered by them since, providing banking and accounting services.

Since moving to Greenwood, involvement in the **local parish** has included liturgical Scripture reading and chanting, hymnal upgrade and maintenance, training for catechumens, special choral music, Altar Guild, travel to encourage new mission congregations, work with children, and membership on the Parish Council. Agape House currently handles the Treasurer's role for the Indianapolis parish with Mother Paula's doing the accounting and Mother Pilar and Carol handling the banking needs.

The Mothers have also been involved in what the Church calls **spiritual direction**. This is one-on-one intentional time spent with a woman (within or outside the EOC) who wants some guidance and/or support in her spiritual journey. Some of these relationships were for a few months. Some lasted for years.

The Mothers participated in additions to the **website** for the Evangelical Orthodox Church. Following is an excerpt from a feature included for some time called "Mother's Page". Others have now taken over the development and maintenance of the website. When we sold books online, they were highlighted in a feature called "The Bookcorner".

From the Desk of Mother Paula

Posted on July 31, 2011 by editor



As promised, this month I want to look at **reading Scripture**. I found this by an unknown author, and it has sound advice.

“After making a choice of a text, we should enter upon the reading with a quiet effort to recollect ourselves, to gather ourselves together, preparing to approach it with the attention of our whole soul. The idea here is that of reading in order to read – not what we usually do, which is to read in order to have finished reading.

The portion of Scripture chosen for reading should be brief as compared with the length of time we are planning to devote to it. The idea is not to launch into a swift voyage of discovery, but to trace and retrace our path, to explore thoroughly, to make truly our own some part of the country hitherto known superficially.

In the early centuries, of those privileged enough to be able to read at all, people read aloud. The proper sense of the Latin *meditari*, from which our word “mediate” is derived, is vocal rumination. This is much better adapted to the purpose of impregnating us with what we read than our current kind of non-verbal reading with the mere rapid running of the eyes across the printed page.

The concentration, the special quality of attentiveness for Scripture reading must take on a sacred motivation. What is said to us is the Word of God. In fact, it is God who speaks to us, Who never ceases to speak to us in these words. Even though Scripture wording has been fixed for thousands of years, He who makes us hear those words today already had us in mind when He inspired them of old, and He is always present to address Himself to us through them as if they were at this instant pronounced for the first time.

Our reading should be pursued and ceaselessly renewed as an act of faith in this God who speaks to us, faith in His actual presence, faith in the present reality of what He says to us and the way in which He says it. Together with this faith we give our own presence, the presence of our whole selves before Him. If we believe that the Word is a continuing reality, we must also believe that it takes into account everything we are, with all our problems, needs, deficiencies, joys, everything that oppresses or gladdens us, everything we do or fail to do. This perspective, and not merely intellectual understanding, should be present in our reading.

The Word we read is not made to remain in the head, but to descend into the heart (in the Biblical sense not the emotions only, but also the core of our whole personality at its deepest, that intimate sanctuary in which our salvation is at stake because here is where our ultimate decisions are woven and taken). We are to assimilate each word, each thought of the text, going over them unceasingly until they open out and the current of the Spirit flows freely into us.

It might be well to ask ourselves: What does He promise? What grace does this text offer me? What prescription does it lay down for me? Every divine word summons us beyond both commandments and promises. What matters most is God’s opening His own heart to us in it, and it is by this that our heart should be touched, changed from top to bottom.”

Edited from SPIRITUAL LIFE AND THE WORD OF GOD

Mother Pilar first went to Rwanda, **East Africa**, in 2008 to investigate the possibility of doing missionary work there. Instead of her original expectation, she ended up being the EOC ambassador there, introducing our communion of churches to the local pastor, who later drew in fellow clerics. This resulted in EOC parishes in Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mother Pilar, as well as others of our Board members, have made trips back to Rwanda to encourage the saints there. Our African brothers and sisters are hosted by Holy Redeemer when any of them are able to come to Indiana. One entire summer two Rwandan teens spent their time at Agape House before emigrating to Canada.

Besides sharing this history with you, Holy Redeemer has ventured before into print. We have already quoted some from our self-**published** book. **ICONS: THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF ORTHODOXY**. That book was conceived in the very early years to teach the children of the local EOC parish, but it has been used for many adults over the years as an introduction to this rich traditional art. In 1996, the Mothers were honored to be asked to write an article for the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate's **CALENDARUL SOLIA**, the theme of which that year was "Monasticism: A Call to a Life of Repentance". This is their published article:

MONASTICISM: AN AMERICAN CHOICE

As nuns born and raised in America, we are very thankful for the freedom we have here to worship God. However, we find the American culture all too easily promotes the gods of ambition, success, and material wealth – a life fraught with stress, worry, and unhappiness. Monasticism is necessary to this nation as a constant reminder that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that our fulfillment is in the life to come.

The Gospels speak to us about priorities. "A certain woman named Martha welcomed Jesus into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Jesus and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister Mary has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'" (Luke 10:38b-42)

At our small Orthodox monastery for women in southern Indiana, we are establishing a community for women with Mary's heart. Our goal is to sit at His feet. Although we enjoy serving in whatever ways hospitality opens up for us, and our life is filled with manual labor, the focus of our lives is **BEING** rather than **DOING** – being His worshippers, being His daughters, being members of His Body, being a part of His creation.

St. Paul asks, "Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4) We have chosen the monastic life because it nurtures in us the contemplation of God and our constant repentance. It teaches us that who we are is defined by our being in God, not by what we do or produce. The simplicity of this life constantly leads us to depend on God's riches, kindness, and patience, stripping from us the illusion of security in other things. We have found that the monastic tools of silence, solitude, liturgical prayer, chastity, obedience, poverty, manual labor, and simplicity bring a richness to our lives that the material world cannot.

To live the monastic life in America presents a constant challenge to choose those things which aid in our journey. Affluence, technology, mobility, and numerous freedoms provide opportunities that can either help us or hinder us. We must constantly pray for discernment and the mind of Christ in choosing or discarding any of these things, so that we might, like Mary, be found to choose the good part ... that which leads us and others to Christ Himself.