

# NEW SKETE

No. 16 Winter 2010/2011



**MISSION:**

Our vocation as Eastern Orthodox monastics, united in interactive communities of monks, nuns and married couples, is to grow in the likeness of Christ through a vowed life and to embody and express Christ's love and message for all seekers in a manner responsive to contemporary needs and faithful to the prophetic spirit of the earliest Christian communities.

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## Let Everything That Breathes Praise the Lord!

At New Skete our kinship with animals serves to deepen our spiritual consciousness. Not only do we live with German Shepherd Dogs, but our monastery is situated on a mountain in Cambridge, New York, surrounded by woods that are populated with animals and birds natural to our region. It is a small bucolic corner of God's vast creation. A year ago Brothers Christopher and

Stavros were invited to give an illustrated presentation on this theme at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Brother Stavros repeated this presentation recently for various groups visiting New Skete and again last August at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Portland, Oregon. In Brother Stavros' own words:

"Our monastic life is an

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## SERVICES:

All of our church services are open to the public.

### DIVINE LITURGY

Sunday 10 AM  
preceded by Matins  
in Holy Wisdom  
Temple at the Monks

### VESPERS 5 PM

Tuesday through Saturday  
in Holy Wisdom Temple

### WEEKDAY MATINS 7:15 AM

Tuesday through Friday  
at both the Monks and  
at the Nuns

SATURDAY MATINS 8 AM  
in Holy Wisdom Temple

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Please visit our three New Skete Communities at [www.newskete.org](http://www.newskete.org)

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ongoing engagement with the mystery of creation, our place in it according to the Divine plan and our responsibility to respond with humility and openness to all it has to teach us, beginning with everything science is able to tell us about its material origins, and the awe-inspiring path of evolution that manifests God's loving providence in the vast diversity and complexity of this creation. It also teaches us of how we must be mindful of our place in the continuum of creation, not as arrogant masters, as was our attitude in the past, but as respectful co-heirs of the planet. This awareness helps us marvel at the ongoing discovery of the intelligence in our fellow creatures, revealed not just in behavioral science but often by mundane vehicles such as YouTube capturing the playful interaction between a polar bear and a sled dog.

"It is no accident that the monastic life is conceived as a way to return to the harmony of Eden, and that the fathers and mothers naturally chose a location for their dwelling in a place of geographic starkness or lush beauty, where the seasons and the elements were a foil for their daily chanting of the psalms which themselves meditate on the goodness of all creation."

*At every Matins service we chant the praises (Psalms 148–150), which are introduced by this prayer:*

*O only true and merciful God, unceasingly praised by the intelligent and bodiless powers of heaven: Accept the songs of praise we your people offer you to the best of our ability, in thanksgiving for the rich gifts of your bounteous goodness. For every knee in heaven, on earth, and in hell bends before you, and everything that lives and breathes gives praise to your resplendent glory.*

*For you deserve all glory, praise, and honor, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages, amen. ■*

Not only do we live with German Shepherd Dogs, but our monastery is situated on a mountain in Cambridge, New York, surrounded by woods that are populated with animals and birds natural to our region.

# Hera B & Me

by Susan Ware of Avon, New York

“It’s what you do that makes your soul, not the other way around,” writes Barbara Kingsolver, in her novel *Animal Dreams*. If that’s true—and I believe it is—then Hera Bear’s soul is rich and luminous, crafted from grace, loyalty, intelligence, and love.

Hera is my 11-year-old New Skete Shepherd, a retired Therapy Dog, a patient lover of children, a persistent lover of walks, and the keeper of my heart. During her career as a Therapy Dog, Hera worked with psychotic adults and adolescents, adults and children with developmental disabilities, and senior citizens. My career as a Dance/Movement Specialist has taken me into psychiatric hospitals, agencies, and schools, and for many years, Hera trotted into these varied places right beside me.

She merely tolerated the dance portions of our sessions, lying quietly at the edge of the treatment room, all the while eyeing me with classic German Shepherd reproachful brown eyes. When I finally stopped the silly human business of dancing and said “All right, girlie, go to work,” she walked happily into the welcoming arms of people with many troubles, which they set aside during their time with a remarkable dog.

One patient at the psychiatric center would greet Hera by dropping to her knees in prayer to the dog goddess. Hera would stop, watch, and listen as the prayer grew in volume and intensity. At the peak of the manic stream of words, Hera stepped forward and licked the patient’s face, breaking the spell and guiding her back to the here and now. They repeated this greeting ritual

on each visit to the ward, and Hera’s timing was flawless. Yes, I trained Hera as a Therapy Dog, as she trained me to be a more thoughtful person, but these moments and many others like them weren’t about the training. They were about Hera’s heart and deep connection to humans in trouble.

## More Snapshots

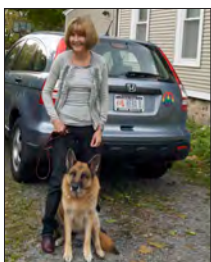
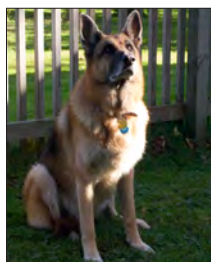
—Hera’s patient response to a young child with disabilities who curiously inserted the tip of his tiny finger into her left nostril. (She waited for him to remove it.)

—Hera’s quick action one early winter morning, when she witnessed our elderly neighbor slip and fall on his icy driveway. Hera’s frantic barking from our backyard brought immediate help.

—Hera’s obstinate refusal to obey any other handler than me during Therapy Dog class. When we practiced working with each other’s dogs, she wasn’t rude or mean; she simply kept her eyes glued to me, standing quietly, waiting for my instructions from across the room. Sometimes I could—secretly, I thought—use the hand signal for “sit” or “down,” and she would

comply. Then I noticed the teacher laughing and shaking her head.

The puppy that my family and I brought home at eight weeks was already a product of her breeding and the Monks’ inspired early socialization and training. She was ready to be a good dog. My life with Hera, filled with stories of struggle and joy, has been ultimately about loyalty and love. I will work to live these lessons as I shepherd her in her later years. It’s my turn to follow her lead. ■



*Hera, 11-year-old New Skete Shepherd, a retired Therapy Dog, and the keeper of my heart.*

# Sunday of the Exaltation of the Cross

September 14<sup>th</sup>

by Brother Christopher

Don't we have a strange religion? We have a faith that actually glories in the cross—that has set up a special Sunday to exalt the cross to all four corners of the earth, to establish it as the foundation for not only the entire liturgical year, but the very mystery of our lives. Jesus tells us plainly in this morning's Gospel that "if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." And

Paul goes even further when he says later on in the letter to the Galatians, "But far be it from me to glory in anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Put together, both of these central texts effectively acknowledge the dimension of suffering that is inescapably part of human existence. Both texts don't flinch in the face of life's rough moments; on the contrary, they face them head on.

So what, precisely, do we exalt, and why? The cross is code for more than merely the physical instrument upon which Jesus was crucified. The cross signifies the full extent of the trials and challenges, the difficulties that characterize human existence. Are we glorifying pain, suffering, and anguish as the building blocks of sanctity? Every day on TV we see images of horrifying violence and terrifying destruction. Are we today simply resigning ourselves to the inevitability of these tragedies, or suggesting

that suffering is good for the soul? Not at all. Our feast today has nothing to do with glorifying sin or violence of any kind. Rather, any human experience can be raised to the level of spirit. Following the Gospel means dedicating ourselves to overcoming any and all instances of sin, violence, and alienation. With the cross there's no sense of resignation or passivity in a truly Gospel spirituality, but energy and transforming faith.



But the reality is that there will always be disconcerting experiences of spiritual and physical dying that test our faith and resolve, which tempt us to discouragement and a simple giving up of the struggle. Sickness, emotional pain and distress, violence... we can face any one of these at any moment, spontaneously and without warning. They can leave us prey to a paralyzing cynicism and an inability to see reality as it really is. The question today's feast deals with is "How do we achieve peace no matter what the external circumstances of our lives?" The answer of this feast is unambiguous: It is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, what one of our liturgical texts calls "the unconquerable weapon, the terror of demons." How can that be?

While some may like to think that the trade-off for believing in God is that all our problems will go away because God is watching our backs, honesty forces us to

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# A Journey Through Alzheimer's

A reflection by Sister Macrina

Currently over 5.3 million persons have Alzheimer's, with an estimated 10.9 million unpaid caregivers and with a new diagnosis every 70 seconds. These are mere numbers until you and someone you love are reflected in the numbers. In any family, when one encounters the reality of



Sister  
Macrina

this form of dementia as it increases, most often one is faced with so many demands that there is little time or energy to reflect emotionally or spiritually.

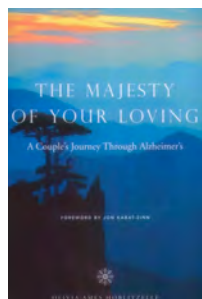
In the summer as we were experiencing another shift in our life together related to advancing changes in our sister, I grew more attentive to the shifts in me. More questions arose than clarity. Thus, I began searching for something that would help orient me in these shifting sands. I found two books, both absolutely helpful in guiding my questions, evolving them more into theological and spiritual reflections. The first was a thoroughly academic book

on dementia, papers from an international symposium: *Dementia: mind, meaning, and the person* (by Julian Hughes, Stephen Louw, Steven Sabat. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2006). The chapter on spiritual perspectives emphasized that we focus too much on the debilitating effect of brain damage on the mind rather than on its social consequences. What had been a practice of personal prayer in solitude became for our sister moments of unbearable anxiety. "Isolation is one of the greatest evils we know." The sharing of stories has always been a way of moving from isolation into a greater sense of shared communion. It is from this sense of shared communion that Olivia Hoblitzelle wrote her story and that I recommend to you her book: *The Majesty of Your Loving: A Couple's Journey Through Alzheimer's* (Green Mountain Books, Cambridge, MA, 2008).

I think one of greatest gifts of this book is the persons whose story it is. This couple, Olivia and Hob, were both teachers of meditation and had the ability to be present to self and other in their

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The sharing of stories has always been a way of moving from isolation into a greater sense of shared communion.



**The Majesty of Your Loving: A Couple's Journey Through Alzheimer's**

by Olivia Hoblitzelle  
Green Mountain Books,  
Cambridge, MA, 2008

admit that this doesn't seem to be so. Thankfully, God doesn't orchestrate our lives like a puppet master, making all our problems go away. Instead, God respects our freedom, challenging us to face whatever comes up in life with an attitude of faith and confidence, giving our best no matter what the external circumstances. Virtue is born in the furnace of trial, and happy are we if we can have confidence in life, by trusting that any experience, positive or negative, can lead to growth and wisdom. That is what the cross boldly proclaims.

But what makes all the difference in this is that God is not detached from our experience, especially our crosses. In Jesus, God knows pain, "feels" our suffering, and understands it. God enters into the experience of each of us, and so we are not alone in having to face life's pain. What is so disconcerting about any experience of suffering is how potentially isolating it can be. That is the glory of the paschal mystery: through the incarnate Lord, God has made our individual crosses part of his cross; and the communion this engenders gives us the courage, strength, and power to face any of life's adversities because we are not alone. We have not been abandoned. God "knows" the suffering of Job just as surely as he knows the anguish and loss of Barb Dooley and Phil Charle, whose son was killed recently in Afghanistan and whose funeral we had here. Make no mistake about it: God doesn't approve of such suffering—indeed, doesn't send it, either—despite what some well-meaning believers seem to presume. Rather, God overcomes the suffering by entering into it fully as a human being. Jesus knows our pain intimately and thus can be the means of consolation for each of us in facing our daily trials. With Paul, we can glory in our crosses because in them we meet the compassionate presence of Jesus, who always offers us hope, no matter what cross we have to endure. For through our perseverance, by our fidelity to the way trod by Jesus, there is nothing earthly that cannot be transfigured, no trial that cannot be raised to spirit. Such is the unfolding of the Kingdom of God. ■

experience of his dementia. Their story offers us a unique window through which to look more deeply into the experience of loss of language, loss of sense of time, loss of that shared relational connection that is the glue of relationship. In his introduction to the book, Jon Kabat-Zinn wrote: "It is all very ordinary, this living and dying, this being human and having to face the unexpected and the unwanted sooner or later. The challenge really is, can we be here for the living and the dying in ways that have integrity, and that are truly loving and nurturing..." Indeed, is this not the challenge of living in relationship, whether as monastic brothers and sisters, spouses, or parent and child? *The Majesty of Your Loving* is a deeply personal sharing of the way this couple journeyed through the years from his diagnosis until his death. While the Hoblitzelles were grounded in Buddhist teaching and practice, the book is quite easily accessible to those not familiar with Buddhist teachings. Particularly her discussion of Teilhard de Chardin's description of "the grace of diminishment" for me pointed to the Paschal mystery.

An important feature of the book is that each chapter ends with reflections, suggestions, and what the author calls "seed thoughts," which are like prayers or mantras. Entering these reflections, and using the seed thoughts, opens their story to our story and to your story. The suggestions became for me sources to draw upon in strengthening and replenishing my own inner resources as well as responding to shifting demands of the moment.

The book can be of great benefit to those who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and those who care for them. It can well enhance the majesty of your own loving! ■

# Training Tips:

by Brother Christopher

## SAFE EXIT!

Over the years that I have been training dogs, a common complaint owners repeatedly bring up to me is how their dogs bolt out of the house once the door is opened. One client recently said about his Chocolate Lab, “Jake is a wonderful dog, but the second I open the door he drags me out for his walk. The other day I almost tripped down the steps and fell. I just can’t control him.”

Obviously there is a leadership issue here, one that needs to be addressed in the context of the whole relationship to keep this owner safe. However, more narrowly, there is something this owner can do to help control Jake that comes right out of our board-and-train program. It is this: Jake has to sit and stay before he is leashed and released from his kennel. This can be easily adapted to the home environment, but it requires a bit of patience and ingenuity.

When a dog comes to New Skete for training (and after he has learned the sit-stay), one of the next things he learns is that he doesn’t get out of his kennel until he holds a sit-stay until he is leashed. We are quite deliberate about this. If it means opening and closing the gate twenty times until he holds the sit-stay, so be it. Each time he breaks the sit, we close the door before he barges out, then repeat the command, and so on. The message we wish to communicate is that he doesn’t go for his walk or training session until he sits and stays. It is remarkable how this simple control exercise teaches the dog not only who is in the position of leadership, but also a real measure of self-confidence, as well as how to be calm in a situation of potential excitement.

To adapt this exercise to your home, first make sure that your dog understands sit and stay. Next, with the dog leashed and on a training collar (either snap-around or prong collar), approach your primary exit door. Bring the dog to a sit-stay and then praise warmly if he obeys.

However, instead of reaching for the doorknob, turn back toward the house and walk briefly through one or two of the preceding rooms. Move to the exit door again. Repeat the sit-stay. In this first phase, practice making your dog stay before you reach for the doorknob. If your dog is too excited, turn back into the house and repeat the procedure until the dog calmly holds the sit-stay in front of the door. Praise softly. At this point, reach for the door handle. If the dog breaks, give a brief leash check/“No” and go back toward the interior of the house. Repeat as needed, patiently waiting for him to hold the sit-stay position. Once he holds the stay as you begin to turn the door handle, praise him softly. Open and shut the door briefly. Again, praise him softly.



The message we wish to communicate is that he doesn’t go for his walk or training session until he sits and stays.



You may also reward him initially with a treat. Eventually, as you move through the doorway, get ready to make a quick 180-degree turn and face the doorway from the outside, bringing him into a sit again. Repeat the above procedure, this time going back into your house and apartment.

There is no magic bullet to this type of practice. It takes patience and regularity. However, by faithfully working with your dog over the course of several days to a week, you’ll gain control over his tendencies to barge out of the house, at the same time reinforcing your position of leadership. ■

# Puppy Socialization: From Play to Potential

by Celia Murray

I open the kennel gate to find the newest litter of puppies. These eight were born three days ago. They look like little black furry question marks nestling against each other. Their entire world is the child's wading pool full of shredded newspaper and their mother, whom I have put into the outside kennel while I handle her pups.

She is not happy about this separation and is watching me carefully through the Plexiglas gate.

At this age they can't see or interpret what they feel. Smell is their only sense. I make sure to get a response from each puppy as I blow on its face to give it my smell. When the puppy licks its lips, I know that it has spotted a new human scent.

I can already see some personalities emerging. Each puppy has a colored ribbon around the neck that identifies it by color and gender, and my first note for "brown boy" is that he is a very sedate puppy that is likely to be easy to train. "Yellow girl" is more vocal than the others, which is still true when I do the four-week visit. Every litter seems a little different, with its own mix of personalities and characters.

The program for puppy socialization is a well-organized set of tasks that asks a little more of the puppies each week. By the end of the six- to eight-week program, these puppies will have been handled by many volunteers like

me as well as by staff and members of the New Skete community. They will have learned to stay quiet when being held and handled; to follow a person's voice outside, first in pairs and then by themselves; and to go up and down stairs as tall as their little noses. They will have had their first experiences with a

leash. Any puppies that have a tendency to nip will have started to learn not to nip.

Most will have learned to follow a person, but because the puppies get more independent as they mature, it can be more of a fitness exercise to keep them in line by six weeks

than during that first tentative time out across the grass or snow. In just two or three weeks, a puppy can change from literally sitting on your foot as you walk across the lawn to taking off on its own at a full run. At five weeks, a nice fall of fluffy snow can be a welcome relief—it slows the puppy down.

There is something perfect about my first sight of these puppies as little question marks. Each of these little guys and girls is going to be a grown dog that may be a child's best buddy, or a therapy dog, or a search and rescue dog that saves someone's life. I can guess how they may come out, but when I last handle them they are all potential. And knowing these puppies at that wonderful moment in their lives is a great experience. ■

The program for puppy socialization is a well-organized set of tasks that asks a little more of the puppies each week.

# Holiness in Our Time Pilgrimage Day 2010

by Fr. Michael Plekon



*Pilgrimage Day 2010, photos by John Fitch. Clockwise: Brother Christopher & dog training demonstration; Dr. Olga Solovieva, guest speaker; Transfiguration icon; participants take lunch break; Brother Ambrose with guest.*

This year I was graciously invited by the New Skete Communities to speak at the pilgrimage and at the retreat day on Saturday, October 16. For the past several years I have been thinking and writing about holiness in our time and holy women and men among us. In *Living Icons* I looked at a number of persons of faith in the Eastern Church who wrote eloquently about living out the Gospel in modern society. Most are not familiar names even in the Eastern churches, and only one is recognized as a saint in them—an event that occurred after the book appeared. This was St. Mother Maria Skobtsova, glorified with her son, Yuri, along with the chaplain and the treasurer of her hostel in Paris, Fr. Dmitri Klepinin and Ilya Fondaminsky. Arrested and sent to concentration camps for having sheltered targets of the Nazis, they died there and were proclaimed martyrs for their love of neighbor and God. Others in the book were extraordinary, too, for their contributions: Frs. Sergius Bulgakov, Gregory Krug, Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff, Lev Gillet, Alexander Men, and Nicolas Afanasiev, also Paul Evdokimov. Whether they wrote, taught, took pastoral care of people, renewed icon painting, or sheltered the homeless, all did ordinary things extraordinarily.

Here lies the key point: one brought out in the sequel, *Hidden Holiness*, and a volume to follow it, *Saints as They Really Are*. Holiness is

of God, a gift of God, given to all his children. Holiness transcends not only the historically specific categories created for it—apostles, prophets, spiritual mothers and fathers, teachers, martyrs. Holiness, or better, holy people are found everywhere, as a poem says. And as Evdokimov notes, in our time, since holiness would be more ordinary, everyday, part of the

fabric of our lives, it would be less noticeable—hidden—yet none the less significant. We must honor the forms and ways of holiness God has given us in our time and place. Thus, in the latter two books, I listen to quite a number of writers who talk about their search for and struggle to find God and to live holy lives.

Among them are Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, Sister Joanna Reitlinger, Paul Anderson, Olga Arsumqaq Michael,

Etty Hillesum, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton as well as some from *Living Icons*. But I also wanted to listen to some still alive and among us and thus have included quite a few of our contemporaries—Kathleen Norris, Darcey Steinke, Patricia Hampl, Rowan Williams, Peter Berger, Barbara Brown Taylor, Lauren Winner, and Nora Gallagher, to mention just a few.

Listening is good for us, for in so doing, we are forced to confront the toxicity and destructive possibilities latent in religion, but we also find courage and beauty and joy in the amazingly diverse ways in which to make God present and to assist in his healing and redemption ourselves. ■



*Fr. Michael Plekon*

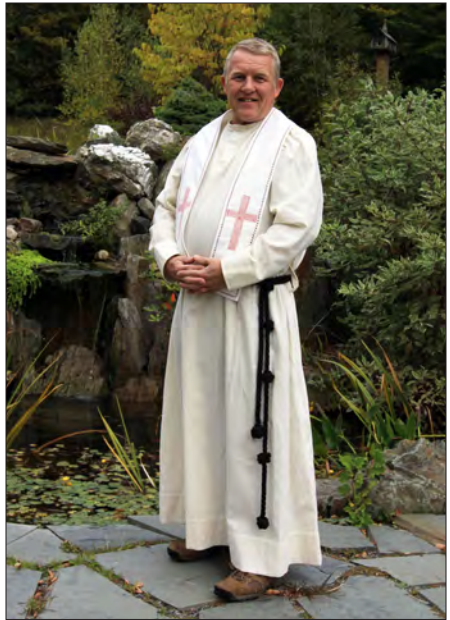
# A Quaker Monk?

by John Fitch

Some of you have seen me in the choir and are wondering who I am and why I'm here. I'm a Quaker pastor from Richmond, Indiana. I run a spiritual community for people who struggle mentally, physically, and spiritually. Poverty brought us together; our shared life of prayer and Christian community sustains us. A lot of young men who didn't have fathers to teach them work skills have lived with us to learn to do home remodeling and get some work skills so they were later able to get jobs. Others are not going to be cured from their mental illness but have formed a wonderful community and have a higher quality of life than many other people.

We named the ministry Renaissance House when we started with one house. Now we have two houses: one for men, which I live in, and St. Francis House for women and families. They are side by side, and both groups come together for meals and worship. The downstairs of Renaissance House is open 24 hours a day for people to drop in and visit. I go to bed at 9:00 pm, but people can come in and make a meal if they are hungry or sleep on the couch if they don't have a place to go for the night. This is especially important in the sub-zero winter nights.

The community members who make a commitment to follow the house rules and participate in chores and our prayer life together have rooms on the



second floor. If they have no income they work for their rent by helping me with remodeling, above the daily chore expectation everyone follows. Generally people who are too disabled to work are able to get SSI, but many people are in between, as they are ADHD or think more slowly, so they can't compete for the few jobs available for unskilled laborers. Many of them end up homeless, or they "couch surf," wandering through life day to day. I'm good at teaching them how to work with their hands and follow instructions.

I try to limit my time away from the ministry to 10 hours of paid work a week. The rest of the time I work at the house or at unpaid neighborhood ministry duties. The Quakers have given me the title "Chaplain to the Poor" because for our community and neighbors I do some traditional ministry works such as weddings, and I visit them when they are



in jail or at the hospital. But more often, ministry for me is fixing a poor family's kitchen sink drain when they can't afford a plumber or delivering a couch to their house from the Salvation Army. I also help people fill out stupid forms at the welfare office, which are intimidating if you can't read and keep people from getting the care they need.

At the house we have a liturgical style Morning Prayer followed by breakfast for all; then we share in morning chores. We do dog training as part of our prayer life, as the dog training is a discipline that helps with structure and grounding. The best part is that dogs know how to love unconditionally, and that has been a tremendous gift for all of us. Every Wednesday we have a meal to which our neighbors are invited, and several people from other churches join us for prayers at the table before the meal and a lively hymn sing afterward. We attend Evening Prayer with the Episcopalians on Thursdays, and on Sunday we go to the Quaker Meeting for Worship in the morning and attend the Episcopal service in the afternoon. We attend a lot of pot lucks.

I'm working on a Doctorate of Ministry at Southern Methodist University, Perkins School of Theology. The program is an access program designed for working ministers, so I do most of my studies and writing before and after the two-week intensive classes that meet twice a year. I'm studying Neo-monasticism, and I thought that before I try to understand the new monasticism I ought to see what traditional monasticism is like. The Monks of New Skete invited me to live and work with them for one year as a sabbatical. I am a "Participant Observer," which means I do lots of cleaning up after dogs, training, praying, and reflecting in between. I plan to take home what I learn here, and be a Quaker Monk living in Richmond, Indiana. People say, "I didn't know Quakers had monks." To which I say, "They do now." ■

Item: Coffee cups get bigger at the monastery, as the price goes down.



By BROTHER AMBROSE



# Thank You to New Skete

by Mary Muncil

Several weeks ago, a very special funeral was held at New Skete monastery. The day was clear and beautiful, and the one-mile road that leads up the mountain to the monastery was lined with trees just starting to turn into their fall colors. The bells were ringing. Inside and all around, there was a family, a community, and many others, sitting in the deepest grief imaginable, feeling shock and a crushing sense of loss.

Corporal Philip G. Charte was the son of Barb and Phil Charte. Barb has worked for the Nuns of New Skete for many years, and over those years, they have grown close as co-workers and as friends. Even though Barb and Phil are not Orthodox, they have a love of God and Spirit that they express through their actions and care of those around them. I have been friends with them for several

years and am always amazed at how they are “right there for you” when you are in need—a quality that their son also had.

But at this time, after they had gotten the unimaginable news about Philip, they needed to find a place for the service that felt right to them.

Barb called me early one morning and asked if I thought that New Skete would allow the funeral to take place there. Since the monks were on retreat, there was only one way to find out. I picked her up, and we drove up to the monastery in hopes of finding the prior, Brother Luke.

As we made our way up to New Skete, Barb was wondering what she would say to Brother Luke: how to ask this huge question, pondering what would happen if he said “No, we are so sorry, but we are Orthodox and cannot hold non-Orthodox services here.”

Where would we go? Who would take us in and allow us to celebrate Philip's life in the way that his family chose: deeply spiritual, but not religious. Philip was a Marine killed in action in Afghanistan, and people from all over our state, and even New England, wanted to be involved: to support the family and to pay tribute to this amazing young man, who was doing what he felt called to do for our country. So many people wanted and needed to be present that day. It was not a small gathering, not a private funeral service.

We entered the monastery and immediately ran into Brother Luke. Barb had not slept for many nights. With shaking voice she asked, "Brother Luke, I have a big favor to ask. Can we have Philip's funeral service here?" I cannot remember the exact words exchanged at that moment, but the answer was "Yes, of course. What do you need us to do?" These words were like a heavenly balm: so gracious and loving. As the monks and nuns embraced Barb and offered the biggest gift of all, the love of friends, I felt as if a huge weight had been taken off my shoulders.

You see, I had never organized a funeral before, had never thought I'd be asked. I still did not know how I was going to do this, but Barb and Phil had asked me, and I knew that I was called to step up higher. The idea of saying no never crossed my mind, but I too needed the love of friends and companions, and New Skete had filled that role for me many times over the past six years...just never in this way.

Truly, the New Skete community was a living example of Christ's message, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." At the start of the service, the bells rang, the New Skete community chanted, and a holy air surrounded us all. No mere words can express the gratitude we all feel for the gifts that were given to us that day. ■

Two years ago Sister Katrina died. At that time her homily on "Liminal Space" appeared on Bishop Seraphim Sigris's livejournal, and a poetic response came from a man named Keith from California. A collection of Sister Katrina's reflections is now available from New Skete. Visit [newskete.org](http://newskete.org) for details.

## Sister Katrina: Faithful Star

A most impressive, faithful star  
 Who burned so bright and shining  
 She taught of seeing where we are  
 And paths to our Divining  
 She spoke the precious now of life  
 And shared her very soul  
 And, rolling past the end of strife  
 She's on a finer scroll  
 If by her star we set our course  
 And treasure Time's brief ration  
 We might arrive where she, before us,  
 Had reached her Limation.

# On Nourishing a Monastic Vocation

By Brother Christopher

Any time a monastic community welcomes a new candidate it is a sign of hope and encouragement; it speaks to the perennial nature of the monastic vocation and the conviction that the contemplative life has a future. Especially at a time when monasticism has been increasingly marginalized and out of step with what is currently in fashion, monastics recognize that it takes courage and great faith for a candidate to embrace the challenge of a monastic vocation. Yet throughout the history of the church, there have always been such individuals who have experienced a deep yearning for what the monastic vocation represents, and who sincerely believe that the only way they can truly become themselves is in communion with believers who feel a similar tug, whose lives are devoted to searching for God in this way. From the perspective of history, there is nothing really that unusual about an attraction to this way of life.

That said, the monastic vocation doesn't just "happen" in such brave explorers of the Spirit. Rather, it is a dynamic process that the candidate must enter into wholeheartedly and which demands the active cooperation of the entire monastic community. For each monastic there is a process of formation that occurs in which the candidate becomes a new person in Christ by means of this specific monastic life, and where the community has a principal role in that transformation. Indeed, the community has a responsibility to acknowledge its role in nurturing each vocation,

providing the necessary means by which newcomer and professed alike can grow ever more deeply toward their ultimate destiny in Christ. The scope of such a project demands an intentional program of formation geared to leading each member toward the fullness of his or her vocation.

We feel passionate that the monastic life we are living here is worth passing on, and has the possibility of leading those who join us to a full life in Christ. Aside from initiating two annual "Come and See" weeks for prospective candidates to experience monastic life firsthand, over the past year we have completely restructured our program of formation in a way that provides candidates and novices the knowledge and support to help them persevere in this way of life.

As a part of this program, we have started an "orientation week" for newcomers, which provides them with a rich experience of introductory material that is meant to ground them from their very first days in the life they are embarking on. We then will follow this up with a series of weekly conferences and classes on monastic and spiritual topics that will extend

for the next two and a half years. Regular spiritual direction will also play an important role in this process. Coupled with the deep relational life that has always characterized our life together, we believe that such a program will feed the hopes and dreams of those who feel moved to join us in our monastic life. It gives us confidence in passing on "this pearl of great price" that has been entrusted to us in Christ. ■



Brother  
Christopher

*"Our real journey in life is interior; it is a matter of growth, deepening, and an ever greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts."*

Thomas Merton

# Sister Rebecca: Listening with Her Whole Being

by Mary Muncil

One of the most striking features of Sister Rebecca is her ability to listen with her whole being. I first recognized this several years ago when I was personally going through a difficult time and ran into her. She said, “How are you?” and looked me right in the eyes while taking my hand in hers. It impressed me so much that she asked me this question—one that seems to be almost as casual for most people as saying, “Hi, have a nice day”—and was actually waiting for my answer!

It was apparent that she was interested in opening up a dialogue; that she wanted to help. I knew that I was in the presence of someone who practiced her spirituality, and I not only wanted to share with her what was going on in my life, but wanted to know, “Who is this amazing person?!” Over the years we have gotten to know each other better, but I had never really understood what led her to being a Spiritual Director, so I was delighted when she agreed to be interviewed, for the newsletter, on this part of her life.

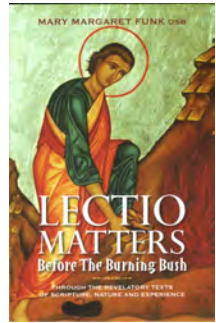
## What drew you to the ministry as a Spiritual Director?

Well, it goes back many years. Early in my religious life, when I was teaching in a secondary school in Hong Kong, I sensed an emptiness in my life; a loss of meaning of why I was a religious, questioning how was I really living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and so on. When the opportunity presented itself, I participated in an eight-day silent directed retreat with Fr. Anthony de Mello, S.J. This retreat sparked a reawakening of my innermost heart. I encountered the loving presence of God, and I began to understand that my life would have meaning only inasmuch as my life, my thoughts, and my actions were guided and directed by the Spirit of Christ. I thirsted for the wellsprings of the Spirit and longed to be nourished by the Word of God. A while later, some of my students started to notice a change in me, and they asked what had happened. I mentioned the experience of a silent retreat with spiritual accompaniment. Their reaction: “I want this, too!” and so, by word of mouth, a small group came together for five days.

As I listened, one on one, to my students (Christian and non-Christian) during the retreat, I was amazed and stunned at what each person described. Their experiences echoed what I experienced: they were discovering the “pearl of great price” within their innermost hearts and were becoming avid listeners and enthusiastic responders to prayer and to how to live their lives in harmony with

*Please see Sister Rebecca/Page 16*

**Lectio Matters: Before The Burning Bush: Through the Revelatory Texts of Scripture, Nature, and Experience**



Icon of Moses at the Burning Bush (painted by Sister Rebecca, commissioned by Pam Farris)



**Sister Rebecca**

the Spirit of God. As these initial students shared their experiences with others, more and more people started asking for these silent retreats.

I then realized that this work was what I felt called to do: to accompany, and to somehow facilitate, this encounter with the Holy One to those seeking God, and with what was awakening within them spiritually, at a very deep level. This was one of the main drives that brought me to monastic life in France and then here to New Skete, for I realized that only if my soul, mind, and heart were fed, could I spiritually companion another.

**Question:**

**How does this happen for you here at New Skete?**

Retreatants with whom I meet for spiritual direction may be seeing a counselor, and this has helped, but they are at a point where they feel that there is more to life, something deeper. The core issue is not at a psychological level, even though the effects reverberate on this level as well as sometimes physically. Through silence, prayer, communal worship, meditation, the daily rhythms of regular meals, exercise, connection with nature, shared meals with the community, and rest, along with spiritual companionship, the person may come to deeper awareness of the spiritual yearnings that are emerging into consciousness and how these deep desires have been, up until now, unheeded or dismissed. This deep desire, more often than not, is connected to their life of faith, trust in God (whom they now no longer just “believe in” but experience as the Spirit of God within their very core), and an inner conviction that “I am loved as who I am and unconditionally.” And from this new awareness, this connection with the heart, flows a sense of direction in their lives, concretely speaking.

**Question:**

**What particular aspect of your monastic life spiritually feeds you?**

Well, the whole of my monastic life here at New Skete does that (which would be too long to go into now), but one important aspect that comes to mind is iconography. My painting of icons, praying with icons, studying and reflecting on them with others in the light of Scripture, worship, and my personal life in God has been, for over 30 years, a source of growth, direction, and vision—and, in all of this, of deepening my relationship with God. ■

## New Skete Communities: **DID YOU KNOW?**

Each day we, as New Skete Communities, earn our daily bread by the work of our hands—caring for all of God’s creation.

Our deep spiritual connection with animals and creation expands as we:

- ☉ Tend the flowers and running waters in our Meditation and Sanctuary Gardens,
- ☉ Devotedly whelp our German Shepherd puppies,
- ☉ Share our monastic values while training dogs in our care,
- ☉ Meticulously design and paint religious icons, and
- ☉ Lovingly create handmade cheesecakes that will grace the tables of families around the country.

We offer our collective efforts so that the beauty of creation and the Lord will be revealed.

As you seek God in your life, may you continue to hunger for and come to know God through the glories of creation.

**For more information,  
visit [www.newskete.org](http://www.newskete.org)**

# NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITIES

## TRAVELS

On August 18<sup>th</sup> **Brother Stavros** flew to the Northwest to visit **Henry and Mary Ann James**, long-time friends, benefactors, and proud New Skete Shepherd owners at their home on the Wenatchee River outside Leavenworth in the awesome Cascades Mountains of central Washington.



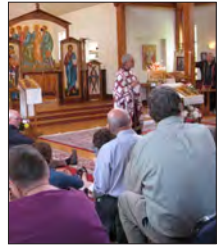
From there he took a train down to Portland, stopping just north of the Columbia River to visit **Cindy Flood** to see how her young New Skete Shepherd was faring: very

well and thriving on a farm with various livestock. She took her three dogs and her monk guest for a vigorous cycling excursion on Long Beach along the Pacific surf.

In Portland he met with the **St. Nicholas Synaxis** (SNS), a fellowship cultivated several years ago consisting of "individuals expressing a common desire to incorporate monastic values in a lay setting...The common goal of both the Synaxis group and the Communities of New Skete is to encourage one another in 'fleshing out' the call of the Gospel of Christ as a way of life." (SNS Charter) He assisted at the induction of three new members, **Jim Thompson** and **Rod and Jodi Kilcup**, after the Saturday evening vigil.



He was also invited to give the gospel reflection at the Divine Liturgy and afterwards, during coffee hour, offered a slide presentation on "Kinship with Animals and the Deepening of our Spiritual Consciousness."



## TRANSITIONS

On September 16<sup>th</sup> with a Panychis and military funeral, the Cambridge community and New Skete paid final respects to **Corporal Philip Charte, USMC**, killed on duty in Afghanistan.

**Sisters become roommates.** In August **Sister Sarah**, after

thirty-one years at the Nuns of New Skete, began a major transition to residence in a nursing home facility in Saratoga Springs. She soon acquired, as her new roommate, fellow nun **Sister Rita**. Both are visited by their sister, **Sister Rachel**, who often leads Bible study on their floor.



*Left to right, Sister Sarah and Sister Rita*

**Michael Taylor** joined the Monks this fall as a candidate, beginning the six-month period that precedes the novitiate. The candidate lives with us as he and the community discern whether he is being called to live this life at New Skete.

**Brothers Peter and Ambrose** now have new hips after successful operations. They are enduring the necessary physical therapy and are on the road to improved mobility. Thank you to all who sent them get-well cards and messages!

The Companions are all now more mobile with their new van. Here **Sister Brigid, Brother Stephen, and Sister Melanie** are shown last summer with Gucci not long before she passed away, having lived to the ripe old age (for a German Shepherd) of 13 years.



# NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITIES

## RENOVATIONS

### **Cooking is so much more fun in a new Kitchen!**

Upon return from their August retreat, the Nuns moved into their newly renovated kitchen. Everyone remarks on the brightness of the new LED lighting and the quiet of the new appliances. Pictured here are **Sister Patricia** and **Pat Cassidy**.



**Blowin' in the wind.** Earlier this year at the Companions, over 100 large trees blew down in a storm and were cut up and removed. Two had landed on our dwelling and one on our garden shed. Fortunately, the buildings suffered no damage; the Sanctuary Gardens were less fortunate.

A donor, who desires to remain anonymous, funded a worker to help get the gardens ready for the Pilgrimage. We replanted many areas, but some of the tree stumps in the gardens remain. During the Pilgrimage, 25 pilgrims accompanied **Sister Melanie** on the Guided Meditation Walk through the Sanctuary Gardens, and many others visited the gardens on their own throughout the day.

As part of the Companions' ongoing efforts in land stewardship over the acres entrusted to us by the Monks, we continue to cut and remove fallen and dead trees to lessen the threat of fire, and to beautify the grounds.

This fall, we planted seven trees and several shrubs. Over the past 10 years, we have planted over forty trees throughout the grounds, in addition to numerous shrubs and perennials in the garden areas.

**Easy riding.** The Monks offer a big thank you to **Fred and Jan Smead** for their recent gift of a stair lift, which will be installed on the stairs that go up to our office area.

## VISITORS

**Fr. Damian Carr**, OCSO, Abbot of St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, MA, was a guest of the Monks for three days last July. We enjoyed his pleasant company and wise counsel. He joined us to watch the recently aired **CBS documentary Ministry of Animals**, which included a segment on New Skete.

During the summer and fall **Susan McDowell** and **Kevin Lawrence** visited New Skete several times. Both led choir practices and directed the choir during services. Over the



past couple of years, Kevin has also served as composer, setting some liturgical texts to music for the communities.



Our **Annual Pilgrimage**, Saturday, August 7th, was blessed once again by perfect summer weather.

Joining our monastic clergy for the Divine Liturgy were **Fr. Alvian Smirensky**; **Fr. Michael Plekon**, the guest speaker on Hidden Holiness; and from the Albany area **Fr. Peter Olsen** and **Terry Wasielewski**; and **Deacon Jeffrey Smith** from **St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church, Boston**. Fr. Michael Plekon



*Annual Pilgrimage, Photo by John Fitch*

returned on October 16th to speak at our **Annual Fall Retreat** to continue the theme of Hidden Holiness with several Monks and Nuns as co-presenters. Each year we also hold a raffle for a gift package from New Skete Farms at the Pilgrimage and this year the winner of the raffle was **Nicole Stratman**, from Manchester, VT.

We were also happy to welcome back our old friend **Carol Garklavs**, wife of **Fr. Alexander**, OCA Chancellor. Carol and her daughter were here August 15th for the **Fest of the Dormition**, and they helped to carry the

# NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITIES

shroud of the Theotokos. **Fr. Paul Monkowski** was also here that week and assisted at Divine Liturgy.

**Brother Michael Laratonda**, Marist Brothers, led a conference for the communities on September 9th on the importance of the engagement of the entire community in forming new members.



**Chris Roxbury**

In October the Nuns enjoyed hosting **Chris Roxbury**, in his extended stay with the communities. Chris, grandson of **Sister Rachel** and nephew of **Brother Marc**, had been a visitor since he was a year old. He helped out with bakery chores in the Kitchens as well as various jobs at the Monks. We wish Chris the very best as he enters the Air Force early in 2011.



October 3rd and 4th the communities celebrated the **Feast of St. Francis** and our annual **Blessing of Animals**. After the Sunday Divine Liturgy, parishioners and guests were invited to view the **CBS documentary Ministry of Animals**. On Monday, participants in the Blessing of Animals included dogs; cats; resident fish, frogs, and birds; and their human friends and companions. After the Animal Blessing, guests and monastics gathered



for seasonal apples, apple cider, and Nuns of New Skete cheesecake. The canine crowd were treated to New Skete dog biscuits.

Then at 5:30 on October 4th New Skete hosted **Jim Forest**, a writer and Orthodox peace activist. Our classroom was filled to capacity for his lecture: "O Heavenly King: reflections on purity of heart," which you can read by visiting his website: <http://www.jimandnancyforest.com/2010/10/20/o-heavenly-king-reflections-on-purity-of-heart/>.



**Jim Forest**



Other youth groups visiting New Skete included a group from the **Church Communities International (Bruderhof)** of

Platte Clove, New York, on October 27th and students from **Green Mountain College**, Poultney, Vermont, on October 28th.

**Brother Stavros** gave both groups a tour of the monastery and presented an illustrated talk on monastic life at New Skete.



*Zoe & pups*

## COMINGS AND GOINGS IN THE KENNELS

We welcomed new litters this fall from **Xenia, Zoe, Basta,** and **Bella**, and are anticipating a litter from **Petra** due early December.



*Xenia & pups*

To replace the Moo-tel that was destroyed last March in a wind storm, we are constructing a new pole barn to house the dogs' exercise pens. The new structure is expected to withstand any storms and will give protection to the dogs during rainy and snowy weather.



*New pole barn construction*

## NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITIES

### Special Events

At the annual August gathering of the Hosannah group led by **Bishop Seraphim Sigris**, **Sister Macrina** led an evening reflection on the "Grace of Diminishment." In words and images she explored with the group some of the spiritual practices that sustain us during times of loss and diminishment in ourselves or in those for whom we care.

On October 2nd **Brother Stavros** represented the Communities of New Skete at **St. Vladimir's Seminary Education Day**.

**Dr. Paul Meyendorff**, Alexander Schmemmann Professor of Liturgical Theology at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, brought his class on "The Sanctification of Time" for an overnight visit to the monastery so they could participate in the monastic round of services. Following vespers and dinner with the Monks on Friday evening, October 8, **Brother Stavros** gave them a slide presentation on the monastic offices as taken at New Skete along with the history and sources of our liturgical typicon. A relaxed discussion with the group ensued, joined by some of the Monks. Following Matins on Saturday morning, the group had breakfast at the Nuns' monastery before heading back to the seminary. Over the years Professor Meyendorff has brought his students for similar field trips, and we hope they can continue the tradition.



### RECIPE

## Meatless Stuffed Peppers

BY BROTHER ELIAS

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 large green or red pepper per person
- For 12 peppers:
  - 3 cups brown rice
  - ½ pullman loaf (Arnold's white bread, 10 slices) for bread crumbs
  - 12 ounces cashew nuts, chopped
  - 2 large onions, chopped and sautéed in butter
  - 1 pound grated sharp cheddar
  - tomato sauce



### PROCEDURE

- Halve peppers lengthwise. Remove seeds and stems.
- Steam peppers in basket over water 10 minutes until softened. Set aside to cool.
- Prepare rice according to instructions but using tomato juice or vegetable broth seasoned with spices and a little sesame oil.
- Mix cooked rice, breadcrumbs, chopped cashews, sautéed onion, and cheddar.
- Mound the mixture into pepper halves, and place them in an oiled baking pan. Top with tomato sauce and additional cheddar.
- Bake in 325-degree oven for ½ hour or until easily pierced with a fork.

# Surprise!

by Kevin Lawrence

Over the Christmas vacation of 1979, while home from college visiting my folks in North Carolina, I read an intriguing article in the *Charlotte Observer* about New Skete, a Byzantine Catholic monastery somewhere in upstate New York. This place was apparently far enough from urban life that silence could be absolute. The liturgy there was served very much as it had been in the 10th century. When I came across a directory of Eastern Catholic institutions at a bookstore a few months later, I thought I'd check to see if the monastery was listed. Seeing that the area code was the same as that of my new summer teaching position, I wrote the phone number down and called to ask if they ever had people come for retreats. I was happy to hear that this happened all the time, and arranged to spend four days there on the way to my summer job just after college graduation. I wasn't taking a car to the summer job, so to get to New Skete I had to be picked up at the Bennington bus station. The monk who brought me from Bennington to the monastery asked casually as we drove, "You know we're Orthodox, right?" I said, "You're Byzantine Catholic, right?" To my amazement—and horror—he explained that New Skete had been received into the Orthodox Church the previous year. Surprise!

I'd had the kind of Catholic upbringing that divided the world into Catholicism and outer darkness. If I had come by car, or if I had another place to wait out the time till the summer job began, my conscience would have impelled me to flee the place. As it was, there was nothing to do but trudge up to the beautiful little church and hear people sing a weekday vespers of such fervor that I wondered if this wasn't perhaps Holy Week. Surprise!

As a kid I'd read everything I could find by Thomas Merton, and I thought I knew what to expect from a monastery. This would be a place of quiet reflection, where I could spend a few days free of distraction, practicing the prayer of Jesus as my

confessor had been teaching me. But people seemed talkative at New Skete. There was no way to avoid explaining myself, to escape addressing my shock at their recent ecclesiastical realignment, to hide from questions about who I was and what I might be doing there. Surprise!

It didn't take me long to realize that there was something for me to learn from New Skete. Over these past 30 years I've kept coming back, always expecting to be surprised by something or other, and continuing to learn much. On my first visit, I learned how important it can be to talk. Small talk, sometimes undervalued by the pious, can be a courteous beginning to real engagement with others. And what a refreshing experience to be in an environment where talk about big issues is not avoided! Later, watching people enter the New Skete communities and watching some leave by death or by decision, I've learned that not even the most committed monastic community can shield anyone from the insecurities that underlie all human existence. At the same time I've seen how God's watchful care can sustain us even when our lives seem impossibly difficult. I've learned what a delight community prayer can be, and also how much it can cost us to persevere in this discipline with full attention and presence. I've learned openness to the unexpected as a Christian path honoring divine providence, rather different from simply relying on soothing religious routine. I've also learned a heck of a lot about the public prayer of the Orthodox Church, which I myself entered at New Skete 25 years ago this August. Perhaps most importantly, I've learned what Christian fidelity, hospitality, humility, obedience, and maturity look like, from monastics who have been willing to share of themselves freely with visitors like me.

I can only hope to live up to these lessons, which have shaped my whole adult life. I will always be grateful to those surprising people from whom I've learned them. ■

# Shaping Our Monastic Path through the Discipline of Change

**W**e have an informal custom in our monastery...

At least once during a beginner's novitiate, all of the Monks, Nuns, and Companions gather for an evening to watch community slides of the early days to help root these seekers in the soil of our community. With each slide, the older community members describe—often in uproarious detail—the ups and downs of those pivotal first years. Images of building projects, community gatherings, and liturgical celebrations vividly imprint in the novice's mind the reality that our history is now his or her history.

Over the summer months and into the fall, our community has been working diligently together to blaze a new path through the discipline of change. Many of you have journeyed with us, prayed for us, and financially supported us as we continue to walk steadfastly through the Strategic Planning Implementation process.

Many foothills have been climbed and many vistas await us as we are guided in and follow our monastic path through the following initiatives:

- *Mission, Core Values, and Vision:* We assessed the integration of our mission, core values, and vision with marketing and development. Our community has evolved; therefore, an ad hoc Mission/Vision Writing Team was established to review and revise our New Skete mission and vision statements.
- *Financial Stewardship:* We completed an internal review of human resource records, policies, and procedures. Additional software

was also purchased to assist New Skete Farms with more accurate and predictive financial information for business projections.

- *Advancement and Stewardship:* We continue to raise funds through direct mail, special events, and face-to-face initiatives while expanding our database and donor stewardship efforts. Our annual plan calendar provides a clear direction for our development efforts while incorporating communications and marketing directives.
- *Marketing and Communications:* The New Skete Kitchens market feasibility study has been completed and will provide a new direction to expand the Nuns' cheesecake distribution and sales. Our 2010–2011 Gift Catalog and newly enhanced online store and website ([www.newskete.com](http://www.newskete.com)) will also provide a plethora of opportunities for others to learn about New Skete in a variety of ways and to purchase our products.
- *Formation/Vocations:* We led a review of our current formation/vocations program and began creating a plan for our future members—a key initiative for the health and sustainability of our community.

As we enter into the Christmas season, we express our heartfelt thanks to you for your unwavering belief in our way of life and in our work. Please know that we hold you and your family in our daily prayers. We ask that you please keep us in your prayers as we continue to center our lives on work and prayer.

If you would like additional information on our Strategic Plan or about our monasteries, please contact Brother Luke at [brluke@newskete.org](mailto:brluke@newskete.org) or (518) 677-3928.

Your Sisters and Brothers of New Skete

EXPERIENCE NEW SKETE

**NEW SKETE  
LAUNCHES  
NEW WEBSITE**

In the first week of October, we launched our new website, [www.newskete.org](http://www.newskete.org), the collective work of many individuals over several years. Our new internet presence is more reflective of the interdependence and collaboration of our three communities—the Monks, Nuns, and Companions of New Skete.

The site features Gospel reflections given by community members and also information about visiting or making retreats at New Skete, vocation discernment, and our German Shepherd breeding and dog training programs.

In addition, the newly designed and expanded online store ([www.newskete.com](http://www.newskete.com)) has been greatly enhanced by the creative teamwork of the Nuns, Monks, and Zielinski consultants. Now you can purchase products from both New Skete Farms and New Skete Kitchens either from our catalog or from our online store.

We envision our website as an evolving entity and welcome your feedback. Please contact Sister Cecelia at [srcharvey9@gmail.com](mailto:srcharvey9@gmail.com) to share your thoughts.

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25**  
**Thanksgiving Liturgy**

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 27 –  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 2**  
**Experience monastic life**

An opportunity for seekers to experience life at New Skete

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 6**  
**Feast of Theophany**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 30 –  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19**  
**Communities winter retreat**

During this retreat New Skete is closed to the public

**FRIDAY, MARCH 25**  
**Annunciation Liturgy**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 26**  
**Lenten Retreat**

**MONDAY, MAY 9 –  
SATURDAY, MAY 14**  
**Communities spring retreat**

During this retreat New Skete is closed to the public

**MONDAY, MAY 30 –  
SUNDAY, JUNE 5**  
**Experience monastic life**

An opportunity for seekers to experience life at New Skete

**SATURDAY, JUNE 4**  
**New Skete Open House**

We join in Cambridge's Annual Festival; our Open House includes exhibits, tours, dog training demonstration

**SUNDAY, JUNE 12**  
**Feast of Pentecost**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 6**  
**Feast of the Transfiguration**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 13**  
**Annual Pilgrimage: Guest  
Speaker: Fr. George Gray, St.  
Nicholas Church, Portland,  
Oregon**

Post-festive Matins, Liturgy, & Vespers; Healing Service, food court, tours, hikes, dog training demonstration, exhibits, gift shops

**MONDAY, AUGUST 15**  
**Dormition of the Most Holy  
Theotokos**

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 16 –  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13**  
**Communities summer retreat**

During this retreat New Skete is closed to the public

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11**  
**Nativity of the Theotokos**  
(observed)

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14**  
**Feast of the Exaltation of the  
Cross**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4**  
**Feast of St. Francis – Blessing  
of Animals**



**The Communities of New Skete**

c/o The Monks of New Skete

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Cambridge, NY 12816



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