



St. Michael's Skete

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St. Michael's Skete

ST. MICHAEL'S SKETE

2007 - 2008

Annual Report

Orthodox Church in America DIOCESE OF THE SOUTH

Under the Omophorion of His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri

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Daily Life

At St. Michael's Skete we strive to live the fullness of the Orthodox Monastic life according to the canons and traditions of the Orthodox Church. Thus, our day is comprised of prayer, labor, and hospitality. We encourage all seekers and guests to participate in our daily cycle.

A recent role shift has taken place at St. Michael's that we have been adjusting to and living into. On October 22, 2007, Fr. Andrew requested retirement from Archbishop Dmitri, from the position of Superior at the Skete, and was granted retirement, whereupon His Eminence appointed Hieromonk John to that same position. Since this time the community has adjusted to the role shift and continues to be ordered but with a newness of energy to the vision.

Liturgical Cycle

We strive to serve the entirety of the Orthodox liturgical cycle and currently serve all the daily services with the exception of the Midnight Office. We serve Liturgy at least three times a week, but usually serve Liturgy more like four or five times a week. We rejoice at having the fullness of the sacraments life at St. Michael's Skete.

Candle Business

Our main source of income remains our making of 100% pure hand-dipped beeswax tapers. We sell to various churches across the country, as well as to retail stores. We make at least 10,000 candles a month, and perhaps more including specialty orders that come.

We recently entered into a relationship with Cold Water Apiaries in Moore, Texas about an hour south of San Antonio. This business will now be providing us with our beeswax needs for the making of the candles. This wax is available all year round and is a vibrant golden yellow.

DOXA

St. Michael's Skete continues to publish DOXA, our quarterly magazine. Serving the Orthodox Church we publish articles on Orthodox Spirituality, Orthodox perspectives, social and cultural commentary, as well as book, and at times movie reviews. We always have a column giving our readers and supporters an update of the recent happenings at our community.

The donations we receive through DOXA pay for the magazine itself, and provide for a second source of support for the monastery.

Calendar

Every August we begin publishing our annual calendar. We gather all the photos we have collected from the year, taken by ourselves as well as by our guests, and put

them into the calendar, showing life at the monastery and its local environs. This publication provides for a third source of income.

Guest House

As always, we provide a quest house for those pilgrims who come to the monastery. It is a modest facility, providing a double room with an attached bath, and two single rooms, that have access to an external bathroom. We ask guests to call in advance, and as always, never allow unaccompanied minors to remain on the grounds. Guest are welcome at any time during the year. We have approximately 80-100 guests a years, that stay for varying periods of time.

Miscellaneous Tasks and Labors

In addition to the above labors, we tend an annual garden. We are being taught and are thus beginning to paint icons, and illumined manuscripts. We have various building projects in line (see below), which we have been in the design phase and will begin laboring to build in the not-too-distant future.

Building Projects

One of the new directions at St. Michael's Skete is been a renewed focus on construction and building. Since we have had a Priest and the fullness of the sacramental life we have had 10 – 20 inquiries about joining the Skete each year, beginning in 2006. Sadly, and realistically, we do not have the facilities to house any more than three monks at the Skete. Our current trapeza (our main house) is unable to serve this many if they were to come and remain. We see that we must begin building cells, and a new trapeza building in order to fulfill our mission which is to provide a monastic habitation for men. This January we inaugurated our new building fund. This fund will contribute to the building of the following:

1. **Holy Resurrection Cemetery:** *The cemetery will be divided into two sections, one for the monastic brethren, and one for laymen who desire to be buried at the monastery.*
2. **Monastic Cells:** *We desire to build an additional 3 of our 12 x 12 monastic cells, by 2010. And another three by 2012. This will depend on the success of our fundraising efforts.*
3. **Monastery Trapeza:** *By 2012 our goal is to have a separate and new building functioning as our trapeza. It will include a full service kitchen, the actual trapeza for the dining of the brethren and guests, a dedicated room for our library, and a meeting room. In addition, it will provide two bathrooms, a laundry room, and a shower.*
4. **Landscaping & Design:** *We will then continue begin to beautify the grounds via landscaping and design. This will include building a wall at the entrance of the monastery, installing a carved sign, and a real monastery gate.*

Toward Self-Sustained Living

With the above building projects is included construction that will move us toward self-sustained living. By 2010 we have set a goal to have two 14' x 19' green houses,

with the intent to grow our own produce 365 days a year. We hope to install several large solar panel units.

Our goal is to raise \$370,000 – \$400,000 towards these buildings. Currently we have raised \$10,000 for the construction of the cemetery. We will be sending our fundraising materials in addition to DOXA several times a year.

Growth

COMMUNITY GROWTH

Monastics

St. Michael's Skete has two tonsured monastics in residence, and one novice "on assignment" in San Diego California, taking care of his mother with Alzheimers.

Seekers

So far this year we have had seven or eight inquiries into becoming monks at St. Michael's Skete. Currently, we have one seeker in residence, who arrived last September, and one long term resident. Another of these men arrived last week and is there for his second discussion visit, which ideally will lead to his selling all that he has, giving it to the poor, and moving in at the monastery. We ask your prayers. This is promising time.

Laymen

As you know we live two miles away from the village of Cañones. One woman from the village has converted to Orthodoxy, and attends services at the Skete every Sunday if not more frequently during the week. We foresee having an "official" open house for the village so that all may "come and see." Also, an Orthodox couple recently moved into the vicinity and attends Sunday liturgy faithfully. As things stand now we have 8-10 people in attendance on Sunday. May this continue, that perhaps a mission may one day be started in Española or Abiquiu.

RECEPTION OF SEEKERS/NOVICES

Due to experience with many who have come to the monastery touting the desire to become a monk, and to unpleasant occurrences in not screening some of these candidates, we have begun putting together a program for seekers. The quote-unquote "program" will help us and the seeker discern whether one who comes is prepared to enter into the monastic way of life, capable of living in close relation with others. We desire men who come to approach out of a place of growth and an established and mature Orthodox piety and self-honesty. We desire men, have worked on mended to some degree, any wounds from the past that might hinder one from being in a relationship of brotherly love, obedience, chastity, and selflessness.

We encourage seekers who are new converts, or those who come straight to us out of these types of dysfunctional situations, to live in a parish, in honest

relationship with their Priest, healing their souls, living into the sacramental life, in all piety before coming to the monastery. So frequently, due to our lack of experience, our monastic life and peace has been severely disrupted by not having these measures in place. For this reason, among others, we have entered into dialogue with other monastic brothers for guidance in growing up a monastic habitation.

TRAINING FROM ABBOTS

Hieromonk John has received His Eminence's blessing to travel to various prospering monastic communities, in order to be with their Abbots for the purpose of being educated in the role of Superior. So far, he has been at St. John of San Francisco Monastery, in Mantion California, with Abbot Jonah, and at St. Herman of Alaska Monastery, in Platina, California, with Abbot Gerasim. These trips have been extremely beneficial and will contribute to the building of up St. Michael's Skete into a fully function monastery.

We request Your Eminence's Archpastoral prayers,
as well as the prayers of all the brethren of the Diocese of the South,
for St. Michael's Skete.
