

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST 46TH DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 1-3, 2007
CLEVELAND, OHIO

PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY MONASTERY
MOTHER MARY ANN

By Our Lord's grace and mercy, this has been a monumental year for the Presentation of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Monastery.

We are truly grateful to you for your prayers and donations and to Judith and Sarah Bennett for the extraordinary gift on land on which to build near the Springfield/Branson area of Missouri. With the blessing and unwavering encouragement of His Eminence Archbishop Job and the work of Fr. Andrew Moore and parishioners of St. Thomas parish, we were able to fulfill the goal of being moved on site before the first storms of winter.

We are unceasingly thankful to Our Holy Lady the Blessed Theotokos to whom the monastery is dedicated. It was on the Feast of Annunciation that His Eminence gave his blessing to accept the gift of land. It was on the Feast of the Nativity to the Theotokos that we were able to purchase a very large manufactured home for our monastic residence. And it was on our Feast Day (the Presentation of the Theotokos at the Temple) that we were able to enter our new residence as we joyously sang the Festal Troparion.

Many challenges followed from ice storms that caused extensive tree damage and lengthy power outages throughout the state. Nevertheless, we were able to continue offering the daily services and praying for those whose names are entrusted to us for prayer.

Because fund raising yielded enough to purchase the house but not enough to build the independent log chapel, we had the house placed on a high, raised foundation, creating two floors and doubling available square footage to 4,002 square feet.

To create a traditional Orthodox chapel large enough to accommodate the needs of the clergy and provide ample room for visitors to attend services, Fr. Andrew offered the inspired idea of using half the first floor for the chapel and adding an extension to the east for the altar area.

We were especially blessed that Our Lord sent Don Kensinger (a master carpenter experienced in multiple aspects of construction), who would become our contractor. As our only paid employee, Don is working at a greatly reduced hourly wage to build the chapel in thankfulness to Our Lord who has shown great mercy to his life.

Although he had never seen an Orthodox church before working with us, he quickly learned of the features essential to Orthodox worship and is incorporating traditional rustic wooden features into the chapel design.

Plans have also been developed to build guest rooms and a reception area in the remainder of the first floor when funds are available.

With current world economic factors, construction is very difficult on a tight budget. To keep costs down and make funds stretch as far as possible, Sr. Alexandra and I shop at contractors' outlets and help with construction tasks while yet maintaining a full monastic cycle of services.

After morning services, we go to the construction site where we have learned to install insulation, plane wood from the sawmill, sand boards to finished grade, transport materials, and, of course, do maintenance.

We are very grateful for volunteers who have helped with numerous tasks. Clearing trees felled by the severe winter ice storm and working on walking trails (soon to have icons along the paths), they are helping the monastery develop to God's Glory both inside and out.

During Paschaltide, we had the joyous honor of welcoming His Eminence Archbishop Job on his first visit to the monastery.

News that there is a monastery in this region of the country has begun spreading rapidly. From Wisconsin, Kansas, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas, we have welcomed visits from clergy, families, young adults, and inquiries from individuals about entering the monastic life.

Working the schedule that we do, there is little time for correspondence and fund raising, but it is our hope that Our Lord will inspire donors to help us. We especially need funds to be able to pay Don's wages to complete the chapel.

We invite you to see pictures of the monastery at our display at the Diocesan Assembly and ask that you would keep BOTH of our Diocesan Monasteries in your holy prayers.

In Christ Our Lord,

Mother Mary Ann