

Sts Constantine and Helen Mission Trip 2010:
Out of Love for Orthodoxy

The Philoptochos Missions Team is very excited to present to you this year's summer trip which will be **Saturday, July 24th through Saturday, July 31st** in Perrysville, Ohio (yes, Ohio!). Over the past years, we have been hoping that our parish would be able to sponsor a mission where parishioners of all ages could participate and that would be convenient for working people to attend for a day. There will be the opportunity to stay at a nearby camp where we have reserved cabins for those that want to stay for the week. Our project will be to build the outer structures of a chapel and guest/nuns' quarters for the Skete of the Entrance of the Theotokos.

What is this? What is a Skete? Why work at a Skete when there is so much poverty in the United States and so many people are in need of help? I put it to you that these times, more than ever, should lead us to seek out monastics for comfort and support, for prayer, for the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Simply put, a skete is a type of monastery. Monasteries have, historically and culturally, always been the beating heart of the Orthodox Church. Whenever monastic life is flourishing and healthy, the spiritual life of the laity is also flourishing and healthy. Monasteries exist not only for the salvation of the monks and nuns who live there, but as oases and refuges for the faithful, who can greatly benefit from escaping from the "noise" and pressures of everyday life to the solitude of a monastery or skete. Once you make a trip to one of these havens, your soul longs to return, anxiety flees and the love of Christ abounds. The prayers that the monastics offer for us, continually, comfort our hearts, bring peace to our minds and guide us toward salvation. Monastics give up all they own for the Lord, relying on Him to provide for their needs. They follow the early examples of the Prophet Elias and St John the Baptist (and many others) in this way. Monks and nuns retreat from the distractions of mainstream life to the "wilderness" as our Lord did, when he went to the desert to pray prior to beginning his preaching ministry. They pray and work in solitude.

More specifically, a skete is a small community of men or women following a monastic rule, allowing them to worship in comparative solitude. Classically, a skete has no more than 6 or 8 members. It differs from a regular monastery in that it is smaller and that the monastics in a skete have more alone time in their cells for prayer. In addition, the Skete of the Entrance is a "hesychastarion," which means that the monastics' primary purpose is to practice hesychasm--i.e., say The Jesus Prayer and achieve inner stillness.

Our Cleveland churches are blessed by being within a 2 hour drive of the St Gregory Palamas Monastery and the Entrance of the Theotokos Skete. St Gregory's is home to monks and the Skete is home to the Abbess, Schema-nun, Mother Theadelphi and Hiero-schemamonk, (priest-monk) Father Ambrose. One may expect to meet the type of nun or monk exemplified by television or books- often depicted as a stern disciplinarian. Instead, what one discovers is the acceptance and love that Jesus offers to all, regardless of our sins. The Skete is under the jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh. His Eminence, Metropolitan Maximos, has given his blessing for the construction of much needed chapel and housing space at the Skete.

The Entrance of the Theotokos Skete presently lacks the space to house women who are considering joining the order (novices). This deficiency is stagnating the growth

of the skete. There are also no rooms for guests that may come for pilgrimage, thus, the laity cannot receive full advantage of the Skete's quietude. The Skete's chapel is located on the second floor of a barn and is inaccessible in the winter when snow abounds (ie. all winter and ?some of fall and the spring). Hopefully, we can help solve these problems by helping to build a chapel and nuns'/guests' quarters.

This trip will be one where all ages can participate – we will need a construction crew, cooks, and gardeners to name a few jobs. If you would like to stay for the week, cabins that can house 5-6 people will be available. Fishing, canoeing, swimming volleyball and other outdoor activities are possible. I have reserved 7 of these cabins so space will be limited. There will also be the opportunity to come for the day. Hopefully, we can set up some type of transportation service that will leave and return to Solon each day, if you do not wish to drive on your own. This is a project in which our whole community can participate to further Orthodoxy. Please contact Maria Cashy with any questions at 440-338-3510 or mmisthos@mindspring.com. Please see the attached flyers for more information on participation and making a donation.