

And Ode to  
+Father Nicodemus+  
1948-2024

Father Nicodemus and I entered monastic life at about the same time in the 1980's. He joined the men's community of St. Tikhon's in South Canaan, PA, and I entered Transfiguration Monastery, at the opposite side of the state, in Ellwood City.

Over these 40 years we saw each other from time to time. We respected and appreciated one another, and one another's monastic communities.

Perhaps our modern world does not favor, or even notice, one who lives a quiet, humble life of prayer. Of what worldly value is an obedient servant of our Lord, staying put in one place for the rest of one's life and doing whatever is asked of us, attaining no particular status or rank? Yet, in the spiritual history of our Orthodox Church, these individuals are among the many who are well-pleasing to God.

This past week, the Orthodox Church in America has lost one such faithful monastic.

I did not know the details of the daily struggles of Father Nicodemus. But I've made some observations over the years and wish to offer a reflection on his monastic vocation, with the hopes that this may encourage and inspire others to join the monastic ranks. I ask forgiveness for any inaccuracies or misjudgments.

## ***Ode to my Fellow Monastic Traveler, Father Nicodemus***

*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
(Jeremiah 1:5)*

You followed our Lord, heeding His call, leaving your profession, the laboratory of science, to come to the monastery, the laboratory of souls.

You were an aide to Father Vasily, a respected spiritual elder, tending to his needs, chauffeur of his wheelchair through the monastery and in church, while learning from him silent prayer of the heart.

You were a quiet, humble, kind, dedicated servant of the Lord, tending to pilgrims, explaining Orthodoxy and the temple to those who entered your silence while you did your daily temple tasks.

It was the Lord's House that you tended. How can we count the days, and the nights, you spent laboring in that church?

Candles, covers, cleaning, choir and kliros?

Prayer lists, Prospora, problems and peculiarities? Placement of icons, everyday, day after day.

Students, children, and faithful found you at the door, their first greeting on most days. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness" Psalm 84:10.

Clergy came, served, left, and you tidied up and swept.

Serving Hierarchs? Blessings, eagle rugs, bowls, pitches, water, towels, chairs, benches, cups, candles, wax puddles, oil drops, and smoke and incense in vast quantities.

Monastery Memorial Day Pilgrimages? Prepare, polish, clean, count and carry. Details, lists, organize, sort. Scrape the wax. Clean the icons. Regroup, re-organize, re-count, return, reflect. Rest?

In your later years: sickness, weakness, hospitals and care centers. Your turn to be driven in a wheelchair through the monastery and the church.

The Lord has called you now to His glorious heavenly temple, the unending Liturgy, surrounded by singing angels. Enter, O faithful monastic servant. And receive your reward.

Remember us, please, on your permanent prayer list there before the Throne of God.

Mother Christophora, Abbess  
Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration