

*Invitation to Consider*

## **The Myrrhbearing Lay Sisters of St. John the Beloved**

*at Holy Annunciation Monastery*

Are you looking for more?

- Do you want to serve God in a more structured and meaningful way?
- Would you like to grow in your prayer life with others who feel the same way you do?

### **Consider Joining Us!**

We are women from ages and all states of life who want to live more monastically while we carry out our individual vocations in the world as wives, mothers, or single businesswomen.

As a newly organized community, we desire to study together and pray together at monthly inspirational gatherings and are spiritually attached to Holy Annunciation Byzantine (women's) Monastery in Sugarloaf, PA, all while we carry out our individual obediences at home.

While we are free to enter and exit this association at will, we strive to dedicate ourselves to the best of our ability to the service of the Monastery and the Church.

This is not a club but a sincere vocation.

## **Who We Are**

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## **Mission**

This will be a dynamic and evolving group of prayerful women, and our mission will reflect that. We strive to become modern myrrhbearers, seeking to anoint the Body of Christ with the myrrh of our prayer and obediences in hopeful anticipation of its eventual rising from the dead.

## **Prayer Rule**

### **Work as Prayer**

When speaking with Mother Marija on the subject of reciting the hours at home, she asked me to remind you that your primary obligation is to offer your vocation as wives, mothers, businesswomen, whatever your particular case may be, as the first and most important prayer offering to God. Performing your daily tasks peacefully and with your full attention is your duty, and all other forms of prayer are secondary.

- Hours (simplified but based upon the typicon of the Nuns so that we may pray along with them as a true part of the community)
- Devotion to the Jesus Prayer....in order to pray without ceasing
- Divine Liturgy ...the study of and celebration of, in order to promote attentive, communal worship in the individual parishes
- Akathist: as an optional, private, daily prayer or, at the very least, as a study of the Myrrhbearing women. (I found this and loved it...<https://akathisthymns.wordpress.com/myrrhbearers/> )
- A constant study of the Gospel and other writings of St. John the Beloved.
- Morning Prayer
- Intercessory Prayer
- Evening Prayer

That said, you may find that you have time and energy to devote more than this, and you may begin by offering to “pray without ceasing” and recite the Jesus Prayer as you go about your daily work. After your aspirancy, you will be given a chotki bracelet, made with actual beads of aromatic myrrh to remind you of your calling to become a Myrrhbearer in our community and anoint the Body of Christ with your spiritual gifts. You can use this (or not) to pray the Jesus Prayer as you go about tasks like vacuuming, driving, walking, folding laundry, washing dishes, weeding the garden, sweeping sidewalks, etc., at pertinent intervals throughout your day. You will find that you are able to pray “on the go” and thereby sanctify your work. Your work will actually begin to improve in quality, and you will develop calmness of soul, insights, and clarity as you more perfectly perform each task.

## Meetings

These are held in person and on zoom for remote members. Monthly, on a Sunday, to

- worship together at the Divine Liturgy with the nuns
- Study together (usually selected texts, book-club style)
- Work on and share about individual obediences
- Socialize and grow in community

Yearly: An option to attend an overnight/weekend retreat at the monastery on the weekend of the Sunday of the Myrrhbearing Women, our patrons, to gather and

- refine our mission and evaluate the progress of the group as a whole
- evaluate our progress as individuals

Retreats for our community are scheduled for us at the monastery each year, and you may sign up to attend as it is convenient for you. There will only be six of us permitted to attend at one time to provide not only accommodations at the monastery but so that Mother and the nuns can get to know you better individually. These are not mandatory but are rather an opportunity given to us by the nuns.

## Habit

- Daily Habit: to be worn constantly  
Chotki bracelet with central bead being several grains of actual myrrh so that you will always be a true Myrrhbearer. The scent should remind you of your calling to bring healing to the body of Christ, which is His Church.  
This habit should remind you of your calling as a Myrrhbearing Lay Sister to carry your myrrh to the Body of Christ daily and should be a reminder to pray the Jesus Prayer constantly.
- Formal Habit: only after at least one full year of wearing the daily habit, praying, and living as a member of the community, you may make the request to receive the ceremonial habit of the Myrrhbearing Lay Sisters, grey aprons, to signify full dedication to the community; these are not daily uniforms but are to be worn *only* at specially designated gatherings or liturgical events.

At this time, you may also request to take a patron saint and be called by their name within our community (only!) as a sign of your dedication to this new way of life.

- After a full year of living as a Myrrhbearing Lay Sister, one may request to make a formal promise of lifelong dedication to the Lay Sisterhood and to the monastery and receive a veil to be worn in addition to the apron at ceremonial occasions.

## Obediences

Patterning ourselves after the Sisters of Mercy at St. Elisabeth Convent in Minsk, we will dedicate ourselves to performing an obedience as a sign of our commitment to bringing myrrh to anoint the Body of Christ. Your obedience should not only be something that appeals to you and makes use of your God-given skills and talents, but it should be a task that you feel God is calling you to in order to serve your church community.

Here is a partial list of examples of Obediences to be used as suggestions:

- Teaching ECF
- Making vestments and altar cloths
- Tying chotki, making sacramentals, or crafting other cultural items.
- Writing spiritual material
- Caring for the sick
- Caring for the poor
- Singing or directing a choir
- Cleaning the church or keeping parish grounds
- Making/teaching how to make prosphora
- Speaking on behalf of the group and helping to organize new chapters
- Iconography or spiritual art of any kind

## Devotion

I have provided a link to a video from a talk I gave on the subject of Becoming a Modern Myrrhbearer. It gives a basic idea of the mission of the group and may be helpful to those considering whether or not they would be interested in this group.

[https://fb.watch/e4sOLIsH\\_5/](https://fb.watch/e4sOLIsH_5/)

Our ministry is also loosely based upon the very impressive Sisters of Mercy at St Elisabeth Convent in Minsk, Belarus. Here is a link to their Youtube video, which details their mission. I think you'll see why they are so very impressive.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVcMT2NQmU4>

And another link from the Sisters of Mercy, with questions and answers to FAQ:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUs3FCe-Epg&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2gvczvN6QQZiuQwI2fN0sELIGdDMcnVsD\\_iML9Y4YC1gGzUgG-GkgZcryg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUs3FCe-Epg&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2gvczvN6QQZiuQwI2fN0sELIGdDMcnVsD_iML9Y4YC1gGzUgG-GkgZcryg)

**Divine Liturgy** ...the study of and celebration of, in order to promote attentive, communal worship in the individual parishes.

It is the wish of Mother Marija that we become more acquainted with everything about the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom so that we may participate more fully, provide an answer for any questions or participate in any conversations concerning liturgical prayer and thereby we can become ambassadors for Christ within our home parishes.

She has a book in mind for us to use as our first group study!

[https://svspress.com/the-divine-liturgy-a-commentary-in-the-light-of-the-fathers/?setCurrencyId=1&gclid=CjwKCAjww0-WBhAMFiwAV4dybcQzq0WHL-xWoXb6GoJJFnQyivB1vb47HipwM7966H\\_KDsMkg7dA5hoCMlcQAvD\\_BwE](https://svspress.com/the-divine-liturgy-a-commentary-in-the-light-of-the-fathers/?setCurrencyId=1&gclid=CjwKCAjww0-WBhAMFiwAV4dybcQzq0WHL-xWoXb6GoJJFnQyivB1vb47HipwM7966H_KDsMkg7dA5hoCMlcQAvD_BwE)

We can discuss examples of other ways in which we can become examples of liturgical participation in our home parishes, both individually and as a community.

**Akathist:** as an optional, private, daily prayer or, at the very least, as a study of the Myrrhbearing women. (I found this and loved it...<https://akathisthymns.wordpress.com/myrrhbearers/> )

A constant study of the Gospel and other writings of St. John the Beloved

### **Hours**

We are asked to keep the Little Hours of the day to the best of our ability. These are first hour (upon rising), third hour (approximately 9 am), sixth hour (approximately noon); and ninth hour (approximately 3 pm). These have been provided to us by the nuns and may be found in the Myrrhbearers Prayer Book. We find it helpful to set alarms on our phones for these hours to remind us to step away from our tasks at our earliest convenience to pray. In this way, we unite our prayers with each other and with the nuns at the monastery regularly during the day and call ourselves back to the community and lift our hearts and prayers to God to sanctify our day.

### **Feast Days:**

Our Patronal Feast: Sunday of the Myrrhbearers (2nd Sunday after Pascha)

Other Feast Days:

May 8: The Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian

June 4: Righteous Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus

June 27: Saint Joanna, the Myrrhbearer

July 22: St Mary Magdalene, Equal to the Apostles

September 26: Repose of St. John the Beloved

The feast of our individual patron

Please contact me if this sounds like something God is placing on your heart.

Let's talk about it!

Lynne Wardach, Lay Sisters Coordinator

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