

# Holy Transfiguration Skete

Jacob's Falls  
February 26, 2011  
First Saturday of the Dead

Dear Friend, Patron, Benefactor:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

We devoted four hours to this morning's celebration of Matins, Divine Liturgy, and Panakhyda in observance of the first All Souls Saturday of the year. This recollection of mortality – of our own, as well as of those who have gone before us – attains a powerfully personal intensity as we read from our Book of Everlasting Memory the names of our relatives, friends, and benefactors who have passed from this life. To the eighty-five names already in the Book we added this year those of several newly departed long time friends, as well as that of the mother of one of the monastery's major benefactors. Through all generations of monks in this holy monastery we will continue to remember them each by name and invoke upon them the Lord's mercy. God grant them blessed repose and eternal memory.

Mindful of those who have gone before us and grateful for their love and generosity that helped make this monastery what it is today, we turn to you and beg your continued help in making this monastery what it is yet to become.

It has been our custom in recent years to make this annual appeal near the beginning of Lent, not only because the Great Fast is a time when the Church has traditionally called for almsgiving, but also because during the winter months – when we have little or no earned income – we often sharply feel the year's financial shortfall. Certainly such was the case last year when we lacked the funds for the quarterly mortgage payment which was due at Easter. Praise God! The generosity of some three hundred good people allowed us to meet that commitment and to move into spring and the return of **Jampot** income. We thank the Lord for them and for all those who have made possible the entering of this winter in happier circumstances. We thank Him especially for having opened the way to the future.

For the past several years we have been embroiled in a not always friendly dispute with Eagle Harbor Township. Beginning with the denial of a zoning permit for construction of a small storage building at the **Jampot** in April of 2007, the disagreement broadened as the monastery acquired more than five hundred acres of additional land later that year. After a second application for the storage building was denied and an appeal returned without action, the monastery filed suit against the Township in Federal Court in the fall of 2008, citing the Federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act and the Michigan Right to Farm Act. In December of 2009 the Township issued a citation, which hailed the monastery into Michigan District Court for an alleged violation of their Zoning Ordinance.

Praise God! After many months of inconclusive negotiations among the respective attorneys and several delays and stays of the projected hearings in local and Federal court, the Eagle Harbor Township Board of Trustees, at a special meeting on December 7, 2010, unanimously approved an agreement we deemed acceptable. On December 13, 2010, the Federal Judge codified the Agreement as “a final Order, a final adjudication on the merits,” resolving all claims in our Federal suit and closing the case, with the Federal Court retaining jurisdiction to enforce the stipulations of the Order. The Keweenaw County Clerk registered the Court Order with the deeds to the monastery’s property on December 16, 2010; as stipulated by the Order, the local judge, by mutual consent of the parties, dismissed the Township’s action against the monastery in Michigan District Court, on January 6, 2011; and on January 24, 2011, in compliance with the Court Order, the Township Zoning Administrator reversed his decision of some thirty months earlier and granted the permit for the **Jampot** storage building.

In addition to resolving the litigated issues, the Agreement recognizes this monastery as a religious organization – which was not the case as far as the Township was concerned when we began this process almost four years ago. It allows all the structures and uses necessary for the life of the monastery and the reception of its guests, it provides for the economic activities and support structures that make its life possible, and it leaves open the possibility of further expansion at the **Jampot**. Permits will have to be obtained and the required bureaucratic hoops jumped through at the time of each development, but the Agreement guarantees that our applications will not be met with arbitrary denial. The long-term development described in the Autumn 2010 issue of **Magnificat** now becomes a real possibility, and the way to the future is made clear.

This blessing has not come without cost, of course. Since the Agreement resolves our claims ‘without costs or attorney fees to any party”, we are not able to recover the \$75,000.00 or so we have expended on litigation. We count it as money well spent. The relief of having this behind us is immense, and we are grateful to be able to devote toward development the income, which in recent years has been consumed by legal fees.

In gratitude to our Lord for the agreement reached, we will hold a special singing of the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God during the Paschal Season. At the beginning of this struggle we commended our monastery and our cause to her Holy Protection. We credit its happy outcome to her Son’s mercy and to her constant support and intercession. With thanksgiving and joy we look to the future.

**And we move on from here.**

In some ways, we have already begun. Through the generosity of the many good people who responded to the appeal in our Autumn newsletter, we were able, before the onset of winter, to replace and insulate the roof of the **Jampot** salesroom and to make the structural repairs necessitated by years of water damage. Two weeks ago we emptied the room of its furnishings, and next week we will begin refurbishing its interior with insulation, new drywall, and other improvements.

This work is made possible by gifts received during the fall, at Christmas, and during the first two months of this year. We thank God for this generosity and we invoke His blessing upon those who participated in His loving Providence. It is gratifying to see once more a tangible result of their love and concern.

**But bigger challenges lie ahead.**

Having at last secured zoning approval, we must now proceed with the **Jampot** storage building as proposed some four years ago. It is not projected to be overly large, but its location against the escarpment will require careful excavation and substantial construction. We do not yet have an estimate on costs, but we know it will be fairly expensive relative to its modest size. In any case, the funds for its construction are not currently available and will have to be found in the near future.

Additionally, the **Jampot's** production has long outgrown its infrastructure; its gray water system is in particular need of attention. We will be consulting a civil engineer in the spring to determine what can be done in the short term and to develop some long range plans to provide for future growth.

Preliminary planning is also underway for a major expansion of the monastery complex and for a badly needed guest facility. But before these can come to fruition we must retire the existing mortgage on our new land.

To that end, with this appeal we enter into a **capital gifts campaign** for debt retirement and development planning. We have set an initial goal of \$1,000,000.00. This will permit us to pay off the balance on the land, cover the cost of the storage building, and engage the professional expertise needed to plan for future growth. This seems like a very big goal, and we do not know how long it will take to achieve.

**But, with your help, we know it is possible!**

The Lord has, in the past, made many things possible for this struggling monastery through the generosity of His holy ones. We are grateful that you have been so prominent among them. We beg you to renew your generosity now as we move into the future.

**In furthering our monastic life, you share in our prayers before God.**

Confident of your generous response to this appeal, and with the assurance of our prayers for you and for those you love throughout the coming holy season of Lent, we invoke upon you the manifold blessings of Him through whose wounds we are healed.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

*Hieromonk Nicholas*

Hieromonk Nicholas  
Hegumen

And the monks of Holy Transfiguration Skete