

## MONASTICISM: A BEGINNER'S ACCOUNT

By Rosalyn Sophia Roe

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. – ROMANS 8:28.*

**H**AVING been to Our Lady of Kazan Skete (Santa Rosa, California) on many pilgrimages over the past eight years, I originally thought of my recent trip as a longer pilgrimage. But this time I felt not so much a guest as I did a novice – although I was only an aspirant to the monastic life! I am thankful to God for the opportunity to spend more time under the guidance of Mother Susanna, who is my spiritual guide.

The first priority of the monastery is prayer – Morning prayer at 7:30 AM and Vespers at 4:30 PM. Any work to be done is fitted into that time period. Prayer is not worked in; everything is worked around prayer. As one priest said, “What is being done at the monastery is very important. As bad as the world is, it would be a lot worse if prayers were not being made for it.” That is most certainly true.

All the sisters and I had obediences to perform. Mine were dishwashing, making yogurt,



cutting cabbage, helping the cooks, watering the plants that I helped plant from seeds (amazing for someone whose house plants *always* die!), weeding, and keeping the guest house where I stayed tidy. Sometimes I ran errands to give my car a little exercise.

I learned a lot from the sisters who are helping me in my monastic growth. They never get upset or out of sorts when their plans or routines for the day are interrupted. The sisters are content to get as much work as they can do; and if they run out of time, they finish another day or time.

During meals the Lives of the Saints are read, or commentaries on the previous Sunday sermon. These readings are very edifying. Many of the parables of Our Lord were clarified for me.

Leaving the monastery on errands made me feel crushed by the noise, the traffic, and the people in the world. I was anxious to get back to the monastery as quickly as possible.

The priests who come to serve Liturgy at the monastery are very supportive and devoted. They gave all too brief homilies which were filled with wisdom and just the right message I found that I needed at the time. §