

A world apart right next door

Duchovny Dom Byzantine Catholic Men's Monastery finds peace in the Blue Mountains

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Tobias Vincent gathered a goat for milking while Gus the goose waddled across a Weston Mountain farm after him.

Vincent had just moments before blinked sleep from his eyes. But the brisk 6 a.m. air soon had him awake at Duchovny Dom Byzantine Catholic Men's Monastery.

The young man with a shock of red hair wore all black work clothes as he filled a metal pail with milk from five goats. Like he did the day before. Like he will do the day after.

The monastic candidate tipped the pail while setting it down, spilling some of the milk.

"That was close," he said.

Vincent arrived in January to this Christian enclave about 10 miles outside Weston off Highway 204 in the Blue Mountains. He said he fell in love with the place and "been here since." Come August, he will take vows to step up from a candidate to become an initiate.

Duchovny Dom is the realization of the Right Rev. Josef Stanichar, but here he goes by Father Joseph. He spent his youth in New York, he said, and the accent still slips through after years away from the Big Apple.

He was ordained in 1968 and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in the mid-1970s, where he was a chaplain and retired a full colonel after 23 years. His Air Force duties brought him to eastern Washington, he said, and Walla Walla had a small mission of about 15 families. He sought a quiet place to retire and the mission found him six acres in the Blues.

"It's a good place," he said.

Turning a small cabin into a monastery started about four years ago and the process continues.

Stanichar is the abbot and one of five monks at Duchovny Dom. In simple terms, they are members of the Greek Catholic Church that remains aligned with Rome. They greet each other and guests with "praise be Jesus." They call each other brother. Vincent is a candidate, meaning he is at the beginning of monastic levels. Another member is an initiate. One monk is absent now, away for medical treatment.

And brother Andrew Griffith is taking his solemn vows. He is Stanichar's right-hand monk.

The monks live and run the monastery from a large home. Antiques, paintings, decorative rugs and church iconography adorn the welcoming and living rooms on the main floor. Stanichar's office and residence are up the wood staircase on the second floor along with the cloister, where the monks reside.

The cloister is off limits to women. This monastery is for men, though Duchovny Dom hosts pilgrims and people on retreat of both sexes. This past Memorial Day weekend, 51 came for a work pilgrimage. Women stay in an on-site trailer. Pilgrims and retreatants join in the labor and worship.

"They live the lives of monks," Griffith said.

What started as a private retreat in the woods now spreads over 77 acres, including 40 acres of forest.

They have the five milk goats

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Father Josef Stanichar has his morning cup of tea at the Duchovny Dom Byzantine Catholic Mens Monastery before heading to worship.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Father Andrew Griffith holds one of ten puppies born at the Duchovny Dom Byzantine Catholic Mens Monastery.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Sunlight coming through a domed skylight at the Duchovny Dom Byzantine Catholic Mens Monastery creates sunbeams that illuminate scaffolding below.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Father Andrew Griffith hauls fenceposts Monday at the Duchovny Dom Byzantine monastery.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
The monastery sits on acreage on Highway 204, near Weston.