



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – January 2013

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Last month's letter about basketball players raised a fair bit of comment. One person, mulling over the general topic of sports, mentioned that, in our very individualistic culture, sports is one of the few areas in which we're still quite group-oriented. Anyone who has ever watched an avid sports fan in front of the television knows that sports fans identify very closely with 'their' teams!

Notice the interesting twist here, though. When the team wins, 'we' won. But when the team loses, it's so tempting to say 'they' lost. Even when we bring ourselves to say 'we' lost, it is often with a good bit of anger at 'our' team. Lurking under the 'we' is the 'I' that feels somehow lessened by the shortcomings of the other.

Compare our frightened and affronted 'I' and 'me' to our Lord. He - our Creator - freely took on our humanness. He was born as a babe and baptized among sinners. He had nothing to gain from being on our 'team.' He became one with us simply because He is Love, and He knew that we had everything to gain by His coming to us. Once God had taken on human flesh, once the Creator stood in His own waters and cleansed them with His own blinding purity, creation never has and never will be the same again.

As we rejoice in the Nativity of our Lord and await the cleansing of the waters in Theophany, may God grant us His love and compassion for others. And next time 'we' lose, may we be patient and kind to the other as we remember the One Who came down and conquered death and sin to give us the only 'win' that matters!

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

CHRISTMAS 2012



The Christmas Eve meal



Serious about borscht!

We had a very lovely Nativity celebration this year. Special thanks to Fr. Konstantin Gavrilkin for celebrating the services for us and for bringing his delightful family and to all who came to celebrate with us!



Singing Christmas carols



The chapel aglow with the joy of the Nativity!



*True friends –
cleaning up the shed!*

ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE

We have wonderful news! The Farah Foundation has awarded us a \$25,000 grant for the next phase of the remodel of St. Nicholas House. This grant will allow us to renovate the bathroom to make it more handicapped-accessible and purchase high quality windows and doors. We have one year to complete this project, which will require temporarily moving the office to an outbuilding. So, with the roof now at a stage where it can weather the winter rains, we are switching our focus to moving the office and starting the indoor renovations. Many thanks to the Farah Foundation for this grant and to all of you who have helped with time and resources. We are very grateful.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU !!!

Many, many thanks to all of you who responded to our Christmas appeal. We are humbled and touched by the love that you have shown us. May God richly reward you!

DECEMBER FRIENDS MEETING



Vincent Rossi

At our Sunday December 9 Friends Meeting, Vincent Rossi gave a talk entitled *Two Hesychast Reflections on the Nativity of Christ: St. Theoleptos of Philadelphia and St. Gregory Palamas*. The question he presented was: Given our utter familiarity with the themes and images of Christmas, which often makes us numb to the profound reality of this greatest of Truths being revealed by the Nativity of Christ, how did these hesychast saints, who were both monks, masters of noetic prayer, and archbishops at the time of their homilies, preach about the Nativity? Did they speak about the familiar symbols of the Nativity, or did they rather reflect upon the high theology of the Logos Incarnate, the Word made flesh.

We find that each in his own way did both. Both stressed the union of the Divine and human natures in the Person of Christ. Both pointed to the link between Christ's Incarnation and our deification, the equality of honor between heaven and earth made manifest by the birth of Christ, the ineffable kenosis or self-emptying of the Logos. And both linked this high Christology decisively with the traditional symbols of the Nativity, the cave, the manger, swaddling clothes, the star, etc. St. Gregory Palamas spoke of how Christ, by taking on human nature while remaining God, unites us in His own Person to God. In doing this, Christ abolishes both the consequences of the Fall and the very pretext of the Fall. He teaches the astonishing truth that Adam and Eve's sin was not to desire to be as God, for in fact that is what they and we are made for. Rather, their sin was turning away from God in the arrogant belief that they could do this by themselves. So, Christ, in His self-emptying, becomes Man by His birth from the Virgin and shows the only true and blameless way to become godlike - humility.

St. Theoleptos's homily, actually a letter sent to a woman's monastery under his direction, is a deep meditation on the interior dimension of the meaning of the Incarnation. He reveals the mystery of the birth of Christ as the ultimate spiritual destiny of every human being by drawing parallels between each of the traditional images of the Gospel story of the Nativity and fundamental aspects of monastic life. Examples of this are: Christ was born of a virgin mother so that we might make of ourselves virgins in body and spirit, and make of our souls the "mother of Christ"; Christ was born in a cave, and the monastery is a kind of sacred cave where we might give birth to God in our souls. So he proceeds through each of the images of the Gospel story of the birth of Christ.

The Nativity reflections of both these great hesychasts and saints teach us that to truly experience the Incarnation, Christians must be humble, prayerful, attentive, thankful, full of wonder at God's grace, and actively involved in the ascetic life with their whole being. St. Theoleptos and St. Gregory are ever alive to the fundamental theological reality that in His Incarnation, the Word of God became flesh in order to liberate our nature from bondage to sin and death. Free from these bonds, we may stand before God in purity, and become like a little child and live in Christ so that we too might be able to say with St. Paul: "It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me."



THIS AND THAT



Far Left – the results of our olive harvest!



Near Left – John, the budding young businessman, was a great help to the sisters who took the bookstore to St. Timothy Church



Right – the Napa River flooded our lower garden, which made having a picnic rather hard that day!



ZOO UPDATE

Our zoo is surviving the Calistoga winter in good form. The cats and bunnies are stylish in their winter coats. The parrots, tropical birds that they are, are thankful for space heaters. And the koi? Koi usually hibernate in the winter, but nobody told OUR koi that. So, they continue to surface (though quite sluggishly due to the cold) in search of their next meal. Since their digestive systems can't handle protein-rich food during the winter, they munch mostly on Cheerios. And they are thankful to their thoughtful friend who bought them a box of Cheerios for Christmas!



Who says there's no such thing as a free lunch!

January 2013 Schedule for **Holy Assumption Monastery** & **St. Simeon Church**

Monastery contact info – (707) 942-6244; email – sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com;

website – <http://www.holyassumptionmonastery.com>

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery) 10:00 pm New Year Molieben (at Monastery)	1 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Circumcision of Christ & Basil the Great</u>	2	3	4 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	5 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) 1:00pm Vespers & Indoor Blessing of the Waters 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery) VISITING CLERGY
6 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) & Outdoor Blessing of the Waters <u>Theophany</u> VISITING CLERGY 3:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Church)	7 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Church) Nativity (Old Style)	8	9	10	11	12 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Church)
13 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Church) 4:00pm FRIENDS MEETING (at Monastery)	14	15	16 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	17 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Anthony the Great</u>	18 3:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Church)	19 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Church) <u>Theophany (Old Style)</u> 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
20 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	21	22	23 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	24 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Venerable Xenia & Blessed Xenia</u>	25	26 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Church)
27 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Church) <u>General Church Meeting following Liturgy</u>	28	29 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	30 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Three Hierarchs</u>	31	Notes:	

Announcing
A PRE-LENTEN RETREAT
at
HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

1519 Washington St., Calistoga, CA 94515

Co-sponsored by the Monastery and the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute

Saturday February 23, 2013 – 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM

ORTHODOX LIFE
IN THE INTERNET WORLD



Presented by

Dr. John Klentos

Associate Professor of Eastern Orthodox Christian Studies

Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute/Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

January 13, 2013 – Mother Melania (Superior, Holy Assumption Monastery). *How Crazy is That?! What the Fathers have to say about mental illness, demonic possession, and the insanity of sin.*

February 10, 2013 – *still a mystery!*

March 10, 2013 – Stephen Lloyd-Moffett, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, will speak on an as yet undefined topic

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL (707) 942-6244

or EMAIL sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com