



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter - September 2011

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Time flies! It seems we just got here, but we have just finished celebrating our second Dormition feast in our new home. This year's Feast was made even more special by having Bishop BENJAMIN with us for both Vigil and Divine Liturgy.

After the Liturgy, His Grace said a few words that we will always remember. He reminded us that we are both inheritors and caretakers of this beautiful monastery. This being the oldest Orthodox women's monastery in the United States, we are heirs to decades of prayers and toil of the nuns who lived and worked here, to the priests who served them, and to all those who helped support them and those who helped support Fr. Sergious in his restoration of the buildings and grounds.

But we are caretakers, too. This monastery belongs to the Theotokos and ultimately to God. We have been given the charge to care for it and to follow in the footsteps of those who toiled here before us, so that Christ may be glorified here.

Of course, the situation is basically the same for everybody – lay person or monastic. We have all inherited the fruit of the prayers and toils of the faithful, not just of decades, but of millenia. And we are given all this not just for ourselves, but so that we may pass it on and glorify God.

May God grant us to accept both inheritance and responsibility with gratitude and love, that we may be true inheritors of His Kingdom.

with love in Christ,

Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery

SO MANY HELPERS

We could never have gotten ready for the Feast without the help of many friends. In addition to friends who just came by when they could, we had two organized (well, pretty organized, anyway) work parties. The first, on July 31, was from St. Timothy Church in Fairfield. Among other things, they organized and cleaned our garage (as part of the last stage of getting our icon mounting studio up and running), cleared out cob webs, polished metalware from the chapel, and did a prodigious deal of weeding.



Silver & gold have we none, but we're good at cleaning brass!



Don't you just LOVE gardening?!



A little to the right. Now a smidgeon to the left ...



Using an ancient form of measurement – a cane's length

The second work party, held August 13, was from St. Seraphim Church in Santa Rosa. This valiant crew handled many last minute tasks – such as putting together our new benches, moving heavy furniture, putting up tables and chairs, ironing linens, and the list goes on. We thank all who helped us make the monastery beautiful in preparation for our feast.

DORMITION!!

Such a glorious feast! Bishop BENJAMIN graciously arranged to be with us for both Vigil and Liturgy. Serving with him on Sunday night were Fr. Joakim Provatakis (Calistoga), Fr. Roman Katyshev (Berkeley), Archdn. Kirill Sokolov (San Francisco), and Dn. Nicholas Carr (Santa Rosa). Also present were Fr. Alexander Leong (Vallejo) and 50 to 60 guests. We were very happy to have such a large number of pilgrims for Vigil, but were thoroughly delighted to have over 200 in attendance for Liturgy on Monday morning. We also had a great abundance of clergy, but somehow our altar expanded to fit in more clergy than we thought possible!



Standing room only!



The Royal Doors



His Grace Bishop BENJAMIN



Reader John

Serving the Divine Liturgy with Bishop BENJAMIN were Fr. Ian MacKinnon (Sacramento); Fr. Nicholas Speier (Goleta), Fr. John Schettig (Santa Rosa), Fr. Joakim Provatakis, Fr. Andrew Cuneo (Santa Rosa), Dn. John Dibs (Fairfield), Dn. Brendan Doss (San Francisco), and Dn. George Golitzin (San Anselmo), and Subdns. Johan Morse, Marc Richardson, and Seraphim Salonga. We were also blessed to have Brett Gainer tonsured a reader before Liturgy. He is now Reader John. Also present were Frs. Michael and Lawrence Margitich (Santa Rosa), Fr. Stephan Meholic (San Anselmo) and Fr. Silas Ruark (Fairfield).

Fr. Lawrence and Fr. Stephan graciously helped out with the singing as did several other friends. Special thanks go to Nicholas Custer and Genevieve Richardson, who helped us through many rough spots! Afterwards, we had a wonderful meal and time of fellowship due to the efforts of many friends far and wide. Thanks also go to Rdr. Patrick Wilkes and Adam Gedney for many of the pictures on this page.



Suffer the little children to come to Me!



The Bier of the Theotokos



The Festal Procession

After such over-the-top days, we had the rather different blessing of a very quiet Lamentations vigil Tuesday evening August 16 (in remembrance of St. Thomas' arrival three days after the repose of the Theotokos. When he asked for the tomb to be opened, he found that she had been taken bodily to heaven.) Fr. Lawrence Margitich served, while Fr. Andrew Cuneo and Nicholas Custer gave some much needed help in the clerics. The 3rd Day Liturgy on Wednesday August 17 was also very quiet, with Fr. Joakim serving and just a handful of friends in attendance. We are thankful to God and the Theotokos for all these blessings, and we look forward with joy and gratitude to many more Dormition feasts!



VISIT FROM THE LADIES OF ST. ATHANASIUS CHURCH, SACRAMENTO



Learning about the Chapel

On Saturday, August 20, we were blessed by a visit from the ladies of St. Athanasius Church in Sacramento. After a tour of the monastery (during which they were properly introduced to the bunnies, birds, fish, and cats), they listened to a talk by Mother Melania on the topic "One Christian Life, Two Ways to Live It: Marriage and Monasticism" and prepared a huge amount of plums and apples for plum preserves and apple butter. We were grateful for the help and the company and look forward to many more visits!



Multi-tasking!!