



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – June 2013

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

In the question and answer period after Fr. Irenei's talk, one father asked how he could constructively deal with doubts his children might express as they get older. Fr. Irenei gave a lot of very good advice, which space does not permit to be put down here. The comment that I want to focus on here, though, is that in the end, what will keep them in the Church throughout all their doubts (and they WILL have doubts) is not a perfect set of answers to questions, but the joy of a vital relationship with God. This is something they will learn not by word, but by example.

But how does one have that joy in one's own life? St. John Chrysostom, commenting on Phil. 4:4, says something that may surprise many of us – to “rejoice in the Lord always” is inseparable from grief, particularly the grief of mourning for our own sins. If we do not mourn for our sins, we will never get truly close to God and thus never have true joy. If, however, we mourn our sins with humble hope in the mercy of God, God will surely heal our hearts in His own good way and time. Knowing that, we can rejoice with the choirs of heaven in the sure knowledge that “greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world!”

with love in Christ,
*Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

PASCHA 2013

We are grateful to God for granting us another Lent and Pascha. Below are some pictures of Pascha 2013.



Candlelight procession



Christ is risen!



*Paschal homily of
St. John Chrysostom*



Paschal meal



The inimitable Ashley!

ZOO UPDATE – Goodbye to Ashley

We are very sad to report that Ashley, the doyenne of our feline community, is no longer with us. We are thankful, though, to have had her with us as long as we did. We found out in October that she had a tumor and yet she amazed us with how well she continued to do. Certainly, she never lost the ability to keep the other cats in order with a single glance. And she had a following all of her own. Not long ago, a couple came to the monastery not to see the chapel or the grounds or even the koi – just Ashley.

Mother Victoria tells a story about Fr. Alexander Schmemmann and a well-loved seminary cat named Rizhik. To the question of whether our beloved animals will be with us in heaven, Fr. Alexander responded, “Can you imagine heaven without Rizhik?” We will not be so bold as to enter on such theological speculations, but we can say for sure that Holy Assumption Monastery will never be quite the same without Ashley.

MAY FRIENDS MEETING



Fr. Irenei

Our May 12 Friends' meeting fell on Thomas Sunday. So, our speaker, Fr. Irenei Steenberg, spoke on "The Place of Doubt in the Life of a Christian." Coming right after Pascha and Bright Week, Thomas Sunday, in a way, is the first day of the "regular" year. The Royal Doors are closed and we are no longer doing Paschal services, but we still sing "Christ is risen," and we are not yet praying the prayer to the Holy Spirit. It is the Church's way of telling us that after Pascha, we must go on living our lives, but our lives must be forever changed by the Resurrection. The fact that today – the first Sunday of the rest of the year – celebrates the "believing unbelief" and the "unbelieving belief" of St. Thomas is surely no coincidence. Christians are deeply ashamed and unnerved by their unbelief and yet the Church celebrates St. Thomas' act of "believing unbelief."

In making sense of this, Fr. Irenei asked "Is all doubt the same?" Answering with a strong, "No," he differentiated between two types of doubt – 1) worldly doubt and 2) Christian doubt. Worldly doubt is an idolization of our own intellect. Those with such a view consider it essentially immoral to believe something that we can not fully understand. Such doubt has no interest in a relationship with God. It says "God, I don't understand You – go away!" Christian doubt, on the other hand, in recognition of our weakness and limitations, says "God, I don't understand You. Help me!" Father then gave four characteristics of such doubt.

1. Christian doubt seeks correction and strives towards the experience of God. St. Thomas did not understand, but wanted to touch and see the One that he could not comprehend.
2. Christian doubt engenders faith. The result of St. Thomas' doubt was not separation from God, but a faith unshakeable by persecution and death.
3. Christian doubt probes for the deepest truths. After the other apostles had seen Christ, they told St. Thomas, "We have seen the Lord." But after he touched Him, St. Thomas said, "My Lord and my God." So, bringing his doubts humbly to God, he was able to go further into the mystery of Christ than the others yet had. This took a God-given bravery – no one else but St. Thomas dared to ask to touch Christ and do so.
4. Christian doubt becomes a revelation and prophecy to the Cosmos. The hymns for this week are full of the thought that St. Thomas' unbelief makes possible our belief in the Resurrection. If he had not put his hand in the wounds, we might think everyone had a vision or hallucination. But St. Thomas touched the risen Christ, and in his touching, we all benefit.

So, the answer to the question "What is the place of doubt in the life of a Christian?" depends on the kind of doubt it is. If it is the worldly kind, the answer is, "This is poison. Flee from it to the Church and to Confession." If it is the Christian kind, the answer is, "Don't be afraid of it. Such doubt will lead us to new life in Christ." If we humbly and openly show this doubt to God, He will return it to us as a deeper Love and Friendship with Him than we could have imagined.



FARMERS' MARKET – a Fine Start!

Saturday May 18 was our first day at the Calistoga Farmers' Market. We couldn't have asked for a lovelier day. Customers and vendors alike hastened to assure us how glad they were to see us there, and we sold a good portion of the sweets we prepared. Special thanks go to Karen Verzosa, the manager of the Market. Karen went out of her way to help us avoid problems, to fix any problems that might arise, and to encourage people to come to our booth. We are grateful to God and to our Calistoga community for the love and support shown us in the first of what we hope will be very many Saturdays at the Farmers' Market!



Ready for business – well, almost!



RAISING THE ROOF!



Couldn't we have found a better place to hold a meeting?!

At long last, the roof to St. Nicholas House is finished! Special thanks to Raneri & Long Roofing Co. for an excellent job at extremely reasonable rates and to an anonymous donor who provided funds to cover the remaining costs.

Now that the roof is complete, we can turn our sights to the interior remodeling. The next phase of the project – made possible by a generous grant from the Farah and Cottonwood Foundations – will be to enlarge the bathroom and make it more accessible to sisters with disabilities. We are slated to start in the first week of June. Stay tuned for updates!



A happy roof!

June 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
						1 6:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
2 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	3	4	5	6 4:00 pm Matins (at Monastery)	7 5:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	8 6:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
9 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	10	11 6:00 pm Paschal Vespers (at Monastery)	12 6:00pm Paschal Matins/Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) 6:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)	13 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Ascension	14	15 6:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
16 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy 4:00pm FRIENDS MEETING (both at Monastery)	17	18	19	20	21	22 6:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
23 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Pentecost 6:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	24	25	26	27	28 6:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	29 5:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Ss. Peter & Paul</u> 6:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
30 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	Notes:					

Announcing
THE JUNE 2013 MEETING
of the
FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

Sunday June 16, 2013

COLONY ROSS –
Everyday Life

Presented by

Robin Joy Wellman

State Park Interpreter, Fort Ross



4:00 PM – Presentation

5:00 PM – Vespers

6:00 PM – Potluck

UPCOMING MEETINGS

July 14 – Dale Liid (Adjunct Faculty Member of Fuller Theological Seminary, retired) will speak on *Monastics of the Judean Desert: the People and the Places*

August 15 (Thursday) - Dormition – please join us for our altar feast!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL (707) 942-6244
or EMAIL sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com