



## *Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – March 2014*

1519 Washington St., Calistoga, CA 94515

Phone: 707-942-6244; Email: [sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com](mailto:sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.holyassumptionmonastery.com>



Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Recently, one of the sisters was recounting that old story about how to catch a monkey. You secure a hollow coconut shell to a tree, put a hole in it just big enough for the monkey's hand, and put a favorite monkey treat in the shell. The monkey will stay there because he can't get his clenched hand out of the coconut shell, but is unwilling to let go of his treat. So, he is caught by his own greed, and probably very frustrated too because that tantalizing treat is SO close yet so unattainable. Still, if he COULD get the treat, would things be any better for him?

The question brings to mind the chapter from *Watership Down*, in which the wild rabbits meet a colony of large, strong, highly cultured rabbits, who turn out to be raised for food and always in peril of being snared and eaten. They could easily have become free, but did not choose to do so because they did not want to exchange their easy lives for the difficult lives of the wild rabbits. In making that choice, they chose a pleasant slavery with an unpleasant end over the difficulties of the normal life of a rabbit.

Every year during Great Lent, we are granted the opportunity to free ourselves from slavery to this world – whether it is the frustrated slavery of the monkey who can not get what seems so close or the apparently happy slavery of the rabbits who are unwilling to face the difficulties of life in this fallen world. The rabbits who live the free life will still surely die, but they will die free. In the “real” world, we will die also. But if we die free of the shackles of this world, we will live forever free in Christ.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

### ***ZOO UPDATE – and then there was one***

Shortly after last month's newsletter appeared, a friend gave us the disturbing news that algae-eaters are known to be particularly fond of escargot – shell and all! Whether it was one of our algae-eaters or goldfish, SOMEBODY seems to have eaten the little gray and white snail. The fact that we can't even find his shell puts suspicion heavily on Mao and Chiang. So, all that is left of our snail population is the large reddish snail, who is now known as Neville Chamberlain, for spending most of his time shut up in his shell and hoping for “peace in our times.” If his tactics change, we'll let you know!



*Neville makes a brief foray out into the open!*

### ***FRIENDS MEETING FOR MARCH CANCELLED***

Because the second Sunday of March (March 9) is Triumph of Orthodoxy Sunday this year, we will be canceling our March Friends' Meeting. However, at this writing, there is still room available at the March 15 retreat on the Orthodox Perspective on Addiction and Recovery. If you are interested, please call 707-942-6244 or email us at [sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com](mailto:sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com). Thank you!

## JANUARY FRIENDS MEETING

The discussion at the February 9 Friends' meeting started with the reading of a homily on healing by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh. [For the full text, please see page 3 of the following .pdf file – [http://orthodoxdelmarva.org/files/bulletins/2006/Bulletin\\_11\\_12\\_06.pdf](http://orthodoxdelmarva.org/files/bulletins/2006/Bulletin_11_12_06.pdf)] The premise of the homily is that not everybody receives healing from Christ because to be truly healed, we must open ourselves not to healing, but to God. If we are seeking merely cessation from sickness and pain, we are just asking to forget our mortality instead of using it as a wake-up call to shake off everything that kills the life of God in us. So, to be truly ready for healing, we must not simply desire to return to the life we were living, but must be willing to take on the responsibility of a new wholeness – to be light, salt, joy, hope and love and to give back to God and man. The reading sparked much discussion. One memorable point of discussion was thankfulness for the “wound” – a realization that the painful things that happen to us are gifts because they bring us to our senses.

The conversation then turned to a study by a well known therapist, who was seeking to determine what made for good or bad marriages. He and his colleagues looked at many variables and had a variety of ideas about how certain personality traits, demographics, etc. would affect this. To his surprise, though, he found that the characteristic most likely to make for a good relationship was the refusal to blame the other person, along with the willingness to take full responsibility for the problems in the relationship (this is not the same as blaming oneself as a terrible person or assuming that the other person can not also change for the better) and a commitment to the happiness of the other person. The bad news is that those who are committed to blaming the other person spiral down in their relationships. But the good news is that those who are willing to take full responsibility for the problems in the relationship often are able to quickly turn around relationships that had been in serious trouble. So, in the end, the biggest factor in turning around relationships was the willingness to see one's own part in the problem and to do what was necessary to change it.

Unfortunately, this is often where we fail in our relationships with each other and with God – we lack the will to admit our shortcomings and sins and to change. So, what do we do about that? We make a consistent effort to be thankful – as we find much to be thankful for in the people we have trouble with and in all of God's creation, we can become more willing to do the work needed to become closer to God and each other. And we often need to “fake it till we make it.” But first and last and most important, we need to beg God to soften our stony hearts. May we all find the courage to do this painful but immeasurably rewarding work!



*A few of our faithful friends*



## SOUL SATURDAY

On February 22, we were blessed with a visit from the Myrrh-bearers of St. Timothy Church, Fairfield, with their sponsors and chaperones. Following the Liturgy and meal, Mother Melania gave a short talk, after which they did some much needed gardening work, for which the garden (and we!) thanks them profusely!



*During Divine Liturgy*



*Hmm – what shall I try first?*



*Say cheese!*



*A new take on the old bucket brigade*



*Weed patrol extraordinaire!*



## GREEK BAKING

When Karen, the manager of the local Farmer's Market, suggested we make amaretti cookies, Sr Marie remembered her sister-in-law Hope's mother Mary makes the best almond cookies. So, Mary and Hope gallantly made the trek up to Calistoga to teach us how to make them. Now that we have TWO almond cookie recipes, we'll need some taste testers!



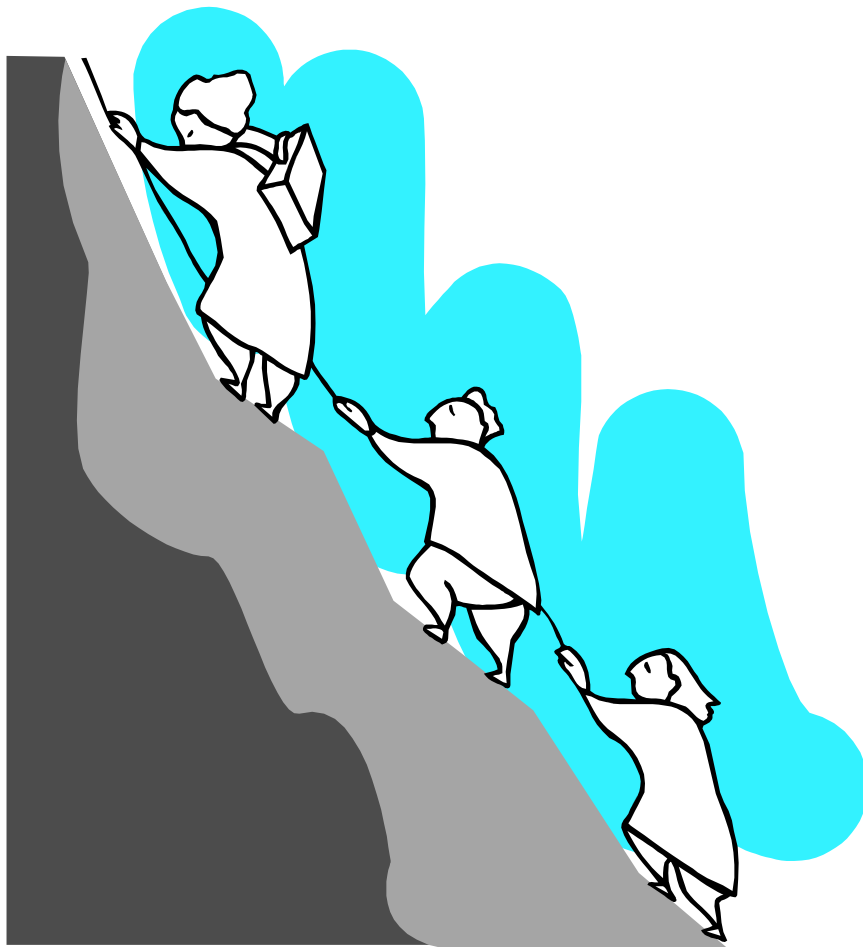
*It's easy when you know how!*

**March 2014 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church**

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
2 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  followed by Forgiveness Vespers	3	4	5 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy (at Monastery)	6	7 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	8 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
9 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  <b>NO FRIENDS MEETING THIS MONTH</b>	10	11	12 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy (at Monastery)	13	14	15 <b>9:00 AM-3:00 PM Retreat – Addiction &amp; Recovery from an Orthodox Perspective</b>  5:00pm Vigil  (both at Monastery)
16 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <i>Visiting Clergy</i>	17	18	19 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy (at Monastery)  <b>TENTATIVE</b>  <i>Visiting Clergy</i>	20	21 4:00pm <b>UNCTION SERVICE</b> served by Archbishop Kyrill (at St Simeon Parish)	22 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy  5:00pm Vigil  (both at St Simeon Parish)
23 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	24	25 6:00 am Matins for Annunciation  6:00pm Vespers Liturgy of <u>Annunciation</u>  (both at Monastery)	26 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy (at Monastery)	27	28 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	29 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy  5:00pm Vigil  (both at Monastery)
30 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	31		Notes:			

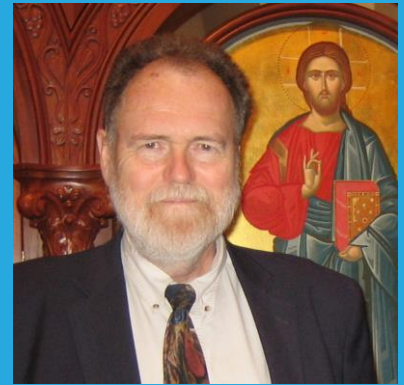


# **SATURDAY MARCH 15** **ADDICTION AND** **RECOVERY FROM AN** **ORTHODOX** **PERSPECTIVE**

**9am – 3pm**

Retreat Schedule will include lunch and Akathist service in monastery church

**With Floyd Franz**



OCMC missionary  
Director and founder of  
**St. Dimitrie Basarabov  
Program**  
Addiction Education and  
Counseling in Romania

**No fee – freewill  
offering**

**Limited capacity –  
RSVP!**

**HOLY ASSUMPTION  
MONASTERY**

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