



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – April 2015

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

A friend would often recall an experience from grade school. When the students were standing in line, one student would invite a friend to jump the line to stand right BEHIND her. This was accepted practice (if the teacher wasn't around!), and thus our friend also accepted it - but very grudgingly. It drove her crazy that the "inviter" could do a favor that inconvenienced others but cost her nothing.

This story came to mind at our diocesan monastic retreat (see "HERE & THERE" on p. 2), where the retreat speaker, Fr. John Behr, stressed that to be truly human, we must embrace the self-sacrificial love of Christ on the Cross. While most of us are beyond the crass behavior of the "inviter," we are far more likely to see self-sacrifice as a necessary give and take than as our defining characteristic as human beings!

This truth makes sense of something else Fr. John kept emphasizing – the early Church did not separate Great and Holy Friday and Saturday from the Resurrection, but celebrated all three as Pascha, which is both "suffering" in Greek and the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for Passover. The Cross isn't just a way station to the Resurrection. Rather, as Fr. John kept reminding us, by dying on the Cross as a Man, Christ shows us what it is to be God. Thus, the Cross IS His glory. Freely accepting the Cross for our sake, He "passes over" from death to His glorious Resurrection.

Since we are made according to His image, we must tread this same path if we wish to be truly human. In many places in our world, Christians are doing exactly this. One thinks of the 21 Coptic martyrs who were beheaded for Christ on February 15 of this year and of the forgiving response of their families. We have not yet been called to such a martyrdom, but as Fr. John also stressed, we are ALL called to be martyrs (i.e. to be witnesses of Christ), with the main paths being marriage and monasticism. Either of these paths gives daily opportunities for true self-sacrificial love. So, the next time you are inconvenienced by a loved one (or a not-so-loved one!), rejoice. It's an opportunity to become a bit more human, to die a bit more with Christ, and to come a step closer to His glorious Resurrection!

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

ZOO UPDATE – A rough month, with a few bright spots!

It's been a hard month for our zoo. Emerald, the emerald cory, died, leaving our aquarium with just two zebra cories and four neon tetras. Oscar, our blue-crowned conure, escaped from the aviary. With the kind and sympathetic help of neighbors and friends, we found him a few times and came close to convincing him to come down. Sadly, he was too scared and he hasn't been sighted for weeks now. Lastly, Pulgita, our flop-eared bunny, died at the venerable age of seven or eight years.



Cha Cha bathing in our fountain – I could get used to this!

Now for the bright spots! Shortly after we lost Oscar, we discovered that our friend Bailey needed a home for Cha Cha, her sun conure. So, Cha Cha is now living in Petie's "outdoor cage" in front of Pixley's enclosure so that Pixley (who was best buddies with Oscar) and Cha Cha can get to know each other and – hopefully – bond. The only concern is that Cha Cha thinks she's a human! So, it may take her a while to bond with a bird!



Pulgita LOVED her chair

That left us still needing a companion for Fiver, our remaining bunny. As it so happened, our friend Tryphon, whose son David owned Pulgita and our other original rabbits, has a rabbit in need of a home. She's both young and small for her age. So, she has been named "Chiquita." She has not arrived yet, but we're already telling Fiver that he has a nice surprise coming. Stay tuned!

LENTEN RETREAT



Fr. Innocent

On Saturday, March 21, Fr. Innocent, Superior of St. John of San Francisco Monastery in Manton, CA, blessed us with his words on “Applying Monastic Principles to Everyday Life.” The principles he discussed included 1) abandoning ourselves to the will of God, 2) the importance of counsel, 3) the battle against the thoughts, 4) refusal to judge others, 5) self-accusation, and 6) obedience.



A sea of people!

To abandon ourselves to the will of God, we must cut off our own desires and do God's will. Three major obstacles to our relationship with God are 1) over-preoccupation with worldly affairs, 2) physical pleasures, and 3) obsession with wealth. It is no accident that the three main Lenten disciplines – prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – are important cures for these diseases. Using these cures, we can start to deny ourselves daily in the little things. Then, bit by bit, we will form a habit and can deny ourselves in big things. This helps combat the scatteredness of our minds, allowing us to focus more and more on God's will. Eventually, we can reach the stage at which, refusing to satisfy our own desires and trusting God more and more, we accept whatever happens as what we want.

Also important is seeking counsel. This does not mean getting many opinions (which easily leads to accepting the advice that we like as opposed to the wisest advice), but going to our spiritual father or mother regularly for their input. This is crucial for avoiding falling into pits because of our particular spiritual blind spots.

Another key issue is the battle against the logismoi – tempting thoughts that get in the way of our relationship with God. Often we make the mistake of thinking that we ARE our thoughts, but these tempting thoughts originate not with us but with demons. So, a very important way of handling them is to refuse to “let them land” in our hearts. It's also crucial to realize that we are weak and that we need God's aid to defeat these enemies. So, an active prayer life is essential. Starting our day with prayer and bringing our mind into our heart helps bring about an awareness of God that helps prevent logismoi from taking root.

Refusal to judge our neighbor is essential to progressing spiritually. Judging our neighbor has three stages – 1) running him down, 2) condemning him unjustly, 3) despising him. For example, we commit the first by saying “So-and-so told a lie,” the second by concluding “So-and-so is a liar,” and the third by seeing him as nothing but a liar and therefore despising him.

Instead of judging our brothers we should accuse ourselves. This means being willing to see where we are at fault in all of our interactions. Even if we're not directly at fault, there is always something in us that needs to change. Self-accusation CAN be harmful for those who believe that they are worthless, unlovable, etc. For them, thankfulness for everything in their lives takes the place of self-accusation (of course, we ALL benefit greatly from such thankfulness!)

Obedience is another indispensable part of the spiritual life (although the level of obedience that the monastic has towards his superior is generally not appropriate for the layperson). True obedience is our own enacting of Christ's free and loving obedience to His Father. Such obedience is a mystery, a live thing that is offered in love to God through the person of the spiritual father/mother in mutual love.

Fr. Innocent finished with a diagram of the house of the soul, with faith as the foundation; patience and courage as the cornerstones; various virtues as the individual stones; love as the roof that holds everything together; and humility as the mortar that holds all the stones/virtues and as the crown (i.e. the railing) around the roof that protects the children from falling! In building our house, though, we tend to lay one stone and take away two (e.g. somebody said something unkind to me and I don't say anything at the time, but then I tell someone else, “So-and-so was nasty to me, but I didn't say anything.” So, although I laid one brick of self-control, I took away two by boasting and tearing down my brother. We greatly appreciated this practical illustration that provides such a handy gauge of the condition of the houses of our souls. Many thanks, Fr. Innocent, and we hope this is the first of many talks here!



HERE & THERE

At our diocese' first monastic convocation at St John of San Francisco Monastery in Manton, CA, March 9-11.

A few of our many helpers at the March 21 retreat

A hard-working crew from St. Anna Church in Roseville gave us much needed and appreciated help in our garden on Saturday, March 28.



Archbishop BENJAMIN & Fr. John Behr



Fr. John and eager listeners



Like father, like daughter



KP duty can be fun!



Weeds, weeds, and more weeds!



Feeding the help

April 2015 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 pm Pre-sanctified Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	2	3 5 pm Vigil (at Monastery)	4 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Visiting Clergy 5 pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish) Lazarus Saturday
5 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) 6 pm Bridegroom Matins (at Monastery) Palm Sunday	6 7 am Bridegroom Vespers (at Monastery) 5 pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish) Great and Holy Monday	7 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Annunciation (Old Calendar) 6 pm Bridegroom Matins (at Monastery) Great and Holy Tuesday	8 7 am Bridegroom Vespers 6 pm Institutional Matins of Holy Thursday (both at Monastery) Great and Holy Wednesday	9 10 am Vespers Liturgy Visiting Clergy 6pm Matins w/ 12 Passion Gospels (both at Monastery) Great and Holy Thursday	10 7am Royal Hours (at Monastery) 1 pm Vespers (at St Simeon Parish) 6 pm Lamentations Matins (at Monastery) Great and Holy Friday	11 10 am Vespers Liturgy Visiting Clergy 11:30pm Midnight Office (both at Monastery) Great and Holy Saturday
12 12:00am Paschal Matins/Divine Liturgy (at monastery) Pascha <i>No Friends Meeting</i> 11:30am Paschal Vespers (at Macedonian Park)	13	14	15	16	17	18 5 pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
19 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Thomas Sunday	20	21	22	23	24	25 5 pm Vigil (at Monastery)
26 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Myrrhbearers' Sunday	27	28	29	30	PLEASE NOTE – the June 27 retreat with Dr. John Klentos will be rescheduled for another time. We plan to find another speaker for the June 27 Retreat.	