



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – February 2015

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

When we were at St. Seraphim Church on January 2 for their feast day, we were struck by the icon of the Venerable Elders of Optina. In this icon, St. Ambrose is holding a scroll that reads, “Brethren, above all things, humble yourselves.”

This seems a very fitting injunction to muse on during this season – when we have celebrated Christmas and Theophany and are approaching the “Meeting of the Lord,” the celebration of Christ's entry into the Temple as a Babe. Throughout this whole period, we see the humility of Christ. The King of heaven is cradled in a manger of dumb beasts, is circumcised as an 8-day-old Infant, shares in the baptism of sinners though sinless, and now comes in the arms of His mother to His own Temple! Shortly, we will be celebrating His most extreme act of humility – the Crucifixion – and the glorious Resurrection that springs from it.

Yet we who are the followers of the One Who for love of sinners abases Himself find it so difficult to humble ourselves. We want to be resurrected but not to die first! Still, within us is some seed – large or small – of self-sacrificing love for the One Who sacrificed Himself for us. Let us water it by remembering St. Ambrose's words and acting on them in our daily interactions with our family, neighbors, co-workers ... If we do this, we will set our feet ever more firmly on the path to the Kingdom of our humble God.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

## THEOPHANY 2015

We were blessed to have Fr. John Schettig with us to celebrate the Vesperal Theophany Liturgy and Fr. James Jorgensen to celebrate the main Theophany Liturgy. On Old Calendar Theophany, Fr. Joakim came to do the blessing of the monastery. What a joyous time!



*Fr. John blesses the Napa River  
in back of the monastery*



*Fr. James performs the  
indoor blessing of the waters*



*Fr. Joakim blesses the aviary*

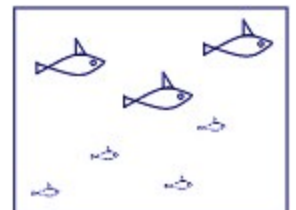


*Daisy tells Mother  
Melania, “I’d have come  
along if you had let me!”*



## ZOO UPDATE – Little fishies still with us!

We are happy ('immensely relieved' is more accurate) to report that all the little fishies are still alive. As we mentioned last time, the four neon tetras have been dubbed *The Four Musketeers*. The largest has been named Porthos (the heftiest of the four human musketeers), but we can't differentiate the rest enough to decide who is who. The emerald cory has been unimaginatively named Emerald, while the other two cories have been dubbed Ping and Pong since they like to bounce around the tank. For now, at least, things are looking up for the aquarium denizens!



*Having given up on getting a  
good photo of the aquarium,  
we decided to present an  
artist's rendering*

## JANUARY 2015 FRIENDS' MEETING

For the January Friends Gathering, we reflected on a hymn from the January 8 matins canon for St. George the Khozebite:

*O wise one, thou didst greatly desire to behold and worship at the sepulcher of the Ever-existing One; and while there thou didst in holy manner conceive the thought of dying, through abstinence, with Him Who in His loving-kindness allowed Himself to be slain, O venerable one.*



*Hmm, let me think about that one!*

“Dying through abstinence” is NOT a call to starve oneself to death or to engage in self-centered, sick ascetic practices. Rather, it is a love-motivated sacrifice in response to the love of Christ, Who died for us. Then we looked at what abstinence might mean for us, what keeps us from “dying through abstinence,” and what strengthens this desire and helps us to act on it.

Abstinence is not limited to abstaining from food. Instead, it is abstaining from anything that stands between us and God, whether it be harmful, harmless, or even good in itself.

Some things that prevent us from truly dying through abstinence are self-absorption, distraction by worldly things, and a lack of spiritual hunger. One way or another, we tend to focus on God's gifts and forget the Giver.

To reverse this, we need to make God our first priority, to love Him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and our neighbor as ourselves. But how do we do that? Through thankfulness for God's love and gifts, but also for our sufferings. Through following the life of the Church – the daily cycles of services, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, Bible reading ... With the help of others on the same path. Slowly and patiently, as the abbot said: “We fall and get up, fall and get up, fall and get up.”



*A sea of black - mostly*



### HERE & THERE



*Ready for business!*



*The mynah hat makes another appearance!*



*Shall we dive in?*



*A ladybug convention!*

Once again, we were invited by St. Seraphim Church to take our bookstore to their January 2 Feast Day. Many thanks!!

Some of the sisters and a friend or two took a stroll up Old Lawley Toll Road and found – among other things – a lovely waterfall and a bunch of ladybugs trying to stay warm.



*A hard-working crew!*



*Hey, we're getting good at this!*



*We could use some customers over here!*



*That's better!*

The weekend of January 10, a joint work party from St. Anne Church, Roseville, and St. Mary Magdalene Church, Merced, put up a new fence in place of one undermined by the December rains. A great blessing for us!

The sisters have been participating in Calistoga's Farmers' Market for most of the winter. We will be taking a break from the Market during Lent and starting again in late April, after Pascha and Bright Week. See you then!

## February 2015 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

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| Sun                                                                                                                                                                       | Mon                                                                                                        | Tue                                         | Wed                                                                                                                                           | Thu       | Fri                                         | Sat                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br><u>Publican and<br/>           Pharisee</u><br>5:00pm Vigil<br>(both at<br>Monastery)                                      | <b>2</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at<br>Monastery)<br><u>Meeting of the<br/>           Lord</u> | <b>3</b>                                    | <b>4</b>                                                                                                                                      | <b>5</b>  | <b>6</b>                                    | <b>7</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at St<br>Simeon Parish)                                                                               |
| <b>8</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at<br>St Simeon Parish)<br><u>Prodigal Son</u><br>4:00pm Vespers,<br>followed by<br><b>FRIENDS POTLUCK</b><br>(at Monastery) | <b>9</b>                                                                                                   | <b>10</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at<br>Monastery) | <b>11</b><br>5:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at<br>Monastery)<br><u>Martyr Victoria<br/>           and Hieromartyr<br/>           Blaise</u> | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at<br>Monastery) | <b>14</b><br>5:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at<br>Monastery)<br><u>Soul Saturday</u><br>5:00pm Vigil (at St<br>Simeon Parish) |
| <b>15</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at<br>St Simeon Parish)<br><u>Meatfare</u><br>and<br><u>Meeting of the<br/>           Lord</u><br>(Old Calendar)            | <b>16</b>                                                                                                  | <b>17</b>                                   | <b>18</b>                                                                                                                                     | <b>19</b> | <b>20</b>                                   | <b>21</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at<br>Monastery)                                                                                     |
| <b>22</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at<br>Monastery)<br>followed by<br><u>Forgiveness<br/>           Vespers</u><br><u>Cheesefare</u>                           | <b>23</b><br><b>BEGINNING OF<br/>           THE GREAT FAST</b>                                             | <b>24</b>                                   | <b>25</b><br>6:00pm<br>Presanctified<br>Liturgy (at<br>Monastery)                                                                             | <b>26</b> | <b>27</b>                                   | <b>28</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at<br>Monastery)                                                                                     |

**SAVE THE DATE –**

**Saturday, March 21, Hieromonk Innocent, Superior of St. John of San Francisco Monastery, Manton, CA, will present a Lenten Retreat entitled “Applying Monastic Principles to Everyday Life.”**