



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – January 2015

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Lately, we've been thinking about the paradoxes of water. As drought-plagued as California has been for months, we are thankful for all the rain we got in December. Yet, too much rain can be disastrous for local agriculture, flood-prone residential areas, motorists ... In short, rain is life-giving, but can also kill.

Soon, we will be celebrating Theophany – the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan. In baptism, we are also confronted with the paradoxes of water. We die in the water, but the water brings us life. Then we come out of the water and commence a lifetime of dying and living. All the hardships of our lives (drought, flood, problems on the job, financial woes ...) are chances to die to our selfish inclinations and live unto God. If we embrace these opportunities with repentance and humility and gratitude, we will be like the house that was built on solid ground – though the rains come crashing down, we will stand.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

ZOO UPDATE – Little Fishies: Staying Alive!



We have spent a lot of time trying – without success – to get clear pictures of the fish. So, we decided to make this a puzzle picture – can you find SEVEN fish?

The fish in the aquarium have been having a hard time of it lately. First, Caesar died. Then, we bought some neon tetras, only to find that our Chinese algae eaters had begun preferring neon tetras to algae. So, we sent the algae eaters back to the pet store and got some black-skirt tetras, two cory catfish and an emerald catfish to go with the surviving tetras, but the black-skirt tetras developed ich (a common infection of aquarium fish) and died.

So, we are down to the four remaining neon tetras (now dubbed “the four musketeers”) and the three catfish (which we are told will not get much bigger and NOT develop a taste for sushi). We apologize to our fish for our shortcomings in pisciculture. We hope to do better!



TREE-MENDOUS DOWNPOURS

The December rains proved too much for a few of our oak trees. One half of a double-trunked tree fell, and the other half had to be cut down before it fell. Then another tree fell into the river. Thanks to Fr. John Christianson, Fr. Ian MacKinnon, and several other friends, the double tree was quickly and expertly dealt with. The other tree, by virtue of having fallen into the river, is under the jurisdiction of Napa Department of Public Works, who are taking care of it. We are extremely grateful to all who have helped and are helping us.



Working hard!



You think THIS looks challenging?



*Look at the REST of the tree!
(Fr. John is in the white circle!)*



All in a day's work!

DECEMBER 2014 FRIENDS' MEETING

For the December Friends Gathering, we reflected on a hymn from the vigil service for St. Nicholas of Myra: "Good and faithful servant, / laborer in the Vineyard of Christ. / Thou didst bear the burden of the day, / and increased the talent given thee. / Thou didst not envy those who came after thee; / Wherefore the gates of heaven were opened to thee. / Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, / and pray for us, O Saint Nicholas!" This hymn weaves together the Parable of the Vineyard Workers (Mt 20:1-16) and the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30). In the first parable, the master of the vineyard finds workers to bring in his harvest at various times of the day. When he calls the workers to receive their pay, the workers who labored since dawn become incensed when all laborers receive the same pay, whether they labored for one hour or many. In the second parable, a master leaves his servants with talents (large amounts of money) while he goes on a journey. When he returns, two of the servants have doubled what they received, but the last servant (who had the least entrusted to him) complains of the responsibility his master gave him and practically throws the talent in his master's face. We wondered, why did the service for St. Nicholas join these two parables together, and what can we learn from them, and from the example of St. Nicholas?

The text of the hymn provided wonderful insight into these parables. "Thou didst not envy those who came after thee." St. Nicholas lived a holy life, but perhaps in his spiritual journey he faced the temptation of wondering, "Why me?" "Why do I have to work harder than others?" "Why are others going to enjoy the benefits of my labor, without having to work in their turn?"

Sometimes such thoughts can even lead us to the desire to take from others what they have -- this is the deadly sin of envy. If St. Nicholas did face such temptations, he conquered them in the name of Christ. Christ counsels us to resist the urge to compare ourselves with our neighbor. All we need to concern ourselves with is the prize of the Kingdom Christ has promised us, if we work diligently to keep His commandment of love for God and neighbor.



Smile!

In the second parable, we noticed that the lazy slave has a major attitude problem! Although the first two slaves successfully trade with their master's money, the third slave considers this charge unfair; he has decided this is outside the realm of his capabilities, and he resents the task his master has given him. As his master points out, he could have put the money in the bank; we also reflected that he could have asked his fellow slaves for help! And one can speculate that even if he had begged his master for mercy, his laziness would have been forgiven, for it is not the money itself the master cares for. The master is concerned with giving his servants a chance to grow and learn, and rewarding them for their efforts. So while in the first parable we learned not to compare and judge our neighbors for an apparent lack of labor, in this parable we learn that we cannot take our reward for granted and refuse to accept the responsibilities God gives us. These responsibilities are actually opportunities, as St. Nicholas proved. His life was strewn with difficulties (contending against heresy, caring for the poor, and working as a bishop instead of withdrawing to the desert, as he desired), and his unselfish service to the Body of Christ united him to the Lord. May God help us also to utilize our talents for the service of others, not comparing or judging, but in humility admitting our failures, and never ceasing to ask for God's grace and help in striving towards the Kingdom.



CHRISTMAS 2014

We are thankful to Fr. Edward Henderson (St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Berkeley) for celebrating the Nativity of Christ with us. We are also thankful for the many friends and parishioners who joined us, helped with the cooking, preparation, etc. We hope to see you all – and more – next year!



Vespers Liturgy



Singing at the Holy Meal –
tra la la la la



Christ is born!
Glorify Him!



Christmas Day Liturgy



Sharing Christmas Cheer

January 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
			5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	1 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>St. Basil and Circumcision of the Lord</u>	2	3 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
4 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	5 7:00am Royal Hours 1:00pm Vespers Liturgy, followed by Indoor Blessing of the Waters <u>VISITING CLERGY</u> 5:00pm Vigil (all at Monastery)	6 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy & Outdoor Blessing of the Waters (at Monastery) <u>VISITING CLERGY</u> <u>Theophany</u> 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)	7 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) <u>Nativity (Old Calendar)</u>	8	9	10 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
11 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) 4:00pm Vespers, followed by FRIENDS POTLUCK (at Monastery)	12	13 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	14 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Leavetaking of Theophany and St. Nina</u>	15	16	17 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
18 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)	19 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) <u>Theophany (Old Calendar)</u>	20 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	21 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Maximus the Confessor</u>	22	23	24 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
25 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy ZACCHAEUS SUNDAY <u>Parish Annual Meeting at coffee hour</u> (both at St Simeon Parish)	26	27	28	29 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	30 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) TENTATIVE <u>Three Hierarchs</u>	31 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)

SAVE THE DATE –

Saturday, March 21, Hieromonk Innocent, Superior of St. John of San Francisco Monastery, Manton, CA, will present a Lenten Retreat