



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – July 2017

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

A friend of ours often uses the phrase "Is this the bridge you want to die on?" It's a pithy reminder that most of the things that upset us are simply not worth the high toll they take on our relationships, not to mention our very lives. The question is worthy of serious deliberation. So often, we find ourselves on a "bridge" that we didn't mean to be on, but we're too proud or embarrassed or angry to admit it. Then we find ourselves in a fight with another person while the train is making its way to the bridge! Other times, we are so stubborn and foolish in our passions, that we DO choose to make a stand on a bridge. So, we do well to ask ourselves what bridges we've foolishly found ourselves on - purposely or not - and why.

Even more important, we need to ask ourselves the question, "What bridge DO I want to die on?" This brings to mind a video that comes across the internet every so often. Several people are laboriously carrying their crosses, but one keeps complaining that his cross is too heavy and begging God to lighten it. Eventually, he takes matters into his own hands and cuts off the bottom of his cross. He goes forward, whistling cheerfully, while everyone else continues laboring under their crosses. Then, they reach a deep chasm, which they traverse by laying their crosses over it and walking across them. The man who cut his cross is appalled, realizing that he can not pass over because his cross doesn't reach.

So, in the end, the only bridge worth dying on is the one that spans the chasm between us and God. The chasm is our sins, and the bridge is simultaneously Christ's cross and the crosses He has given specifically to each of us (which, yes, often appear to be given by our family members, neighbors, co-workers, etc.). And ironically, only if we are willing to die on that bridge - to give up our own lives and wills for love of God and neighbor - can we cross that chasm to live forever with the One Who bridged it with His Cross and died willingly on that bridge for us.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*



*This could sure use some work!*



*Getting there!*

## ZOO UPDATE – Happy Bunnies

The bunnies' housing upgrade is now complete! Not only do they have a new roof, but they have their own garden, too. So, if they ever complain about a veggie shortage, don't believe them!



*Great craftsmanship!*



*And tasteful interior design!*



## HERE & THERE

Mark Galperin and his son Ivan of Blagovest Bells are re-hanging our bells and building a console, so that one person can play all the bells at once (after LOTS of hard practice!).



*A challenging job, but after a while you get the hang of it!*

We're always happy to see our friends from the Ladies' Guild from Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Clearlake.



*Same time next year?*

Sampling our Currant Nut Crunch and Sisters' Choice Granola at Oakville Grocery in Oakville.



*You do have to be a bit crackers to do this job!*

Progress on the bookstore is slow and steady. This is encouraging since we're good at "slow," but not so good at "steady." We're still hoping to finish by the end of the month.



*A work in progress – just like the rest of us!*



## **GOSPEL OF MARK WORKSHOP**

On Saturday, June 24, John Burnett, former African missionary, presented a very illuminating workshop on the Gospel of Mark. The workshop and a soon-to-be-released book grew out of his reflections on teaching Scripture in a Uganda seminary.

One key to the question of what makes Mark special is the backdrop against which it was written. As Eusebius tells us, Christians had fled to Pella, on the other side of the Jordan toward what Mark calls the “Sea” of Galilee, shortly before the siege of Jerusalem that ended the First Jewish Revolt (66-70 AD). The rebels expected God to restore David's kingdom. In this context, Mark's Gospel is a stunning proclamation of the Kingship of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, this is somewhat lost in English translations, which typically start out, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” That is indeed a possible translation, but “archē” (beginning) means “empire” as well as “beginning”. Likewise, for Mark, “euaggelion” (gospel) meant “good news” and has particular associations with the birth or accession of an emperor, as well as links with Old Testament promises. “Christos” (Christ, anointed one) is of course the Greek translation of “Messiah”— i.e. the Anointed King who would bring about God's “basileia,” His “reign” or “regime”— and “regime” is better than “kingdom”, since a “kingdom” is a place and “basileia” really means the activity of ruling. And “Son of God” was a title of the Roman emperor— and of Israel itself! (Ex 4.23). So Jesus comes into Galilee, proclaiming (not “preaching”) “God's good news!”— the arrival of “God's regime” (1.14-15). But what is this “regime” about? The rebels and the Romans thought they knew well enough!

Seeing the structure brings the story into focus. Mark's Gospel can be divided into Prologue (1:1-13), Part 1 (1:14-8:21), Part 2 (8:22-16:8), and Epilogue (16:9-16:20). The two main Parts have three sections each, which take up the major themes, respectively, of Authority, Sea, and Bread; and then Way, Jerusalem, and Cup and Throne.

The first section of Part 1 shows Christ coming into Galilee with authority to heal, to forgive, to cast out demons, and over the sabbath. In the second section, He teaches from a boat, and journeys by boat to the eastern, Gentile side of the “Sea”, where He initiates the “mission to the Gentiles”, casting a “legion” out of a man who “dwelt in the tombs” and sending him to proclaim what God had done for him; then He crosses back by boat to the eastern, Jewish side, where He heals one daughter of Israel and raises another from the dead. In the third section, He leads the disciples from feeding 5,000 Jewish men with five loaves of bread to feeding 4,000 Jews and Gentiles, men and women, with seven— teaching meanwhile that what defiles a person comes from the inside, not from the outside, and showing that God's regime is for all, not just for Jews only. All along, the Pharisees and Sadducees bitterly challenge Him, and— surprisingly— the disciples themselves are blind to who He is, and to what the “bread” is all about.

As Jesus and His “blind” disciples arrive in Bethsaida, the first section of Part 2 begins with the healing of a blind man! — and ends with one too. Between these bookends, the disciples follow Jesus on the Way, and at every step resist His teaching that the Messiah's way is the Way of the Cross. The “Jerusalem” section then begins with Jesus' entry into the temple. Because the temple-state is opposed to his Way, He rejects it and symbolically shuts it down, and engages in mortal combat with the rulers, in a series of furious debates. He then exits the temple for the last time and speaks of its destruction. The final section is the passion narrative, in which the Son of Man drinks the cup the Father gives Him, and is finally enthroned as the Son of God— on a cross.

The original text of Mark ends with a “young man in a white robe” telling the myrrh-bearing women inside the tomb, “He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him.” He also tells them, “He goes before you in Galilee”. Galilee is where their discipleship began! But they flee and say nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. This strange, original ending is in keeping with Mark's emphasis on the disciples' blindness— for failure does not lie outside the story, but is at its very center. And yet— in the ancient Church, this Gospel was read during Lent, and the story of the women would have been the last reading on the night of Pascha. So, from a Liturgical viewpoint, the Gospel really ends— or begins anew!— as Jews and Gentiles, men and women, step forward to partake of the “One Bread” who was with the blind disciples in the boat (8:14).

On the eve of Jerusalem's destruction, Mark proclaimed as “God's regime” something that neither the rebels nor Rome could recognize— not an earthly regime of pomp and violence that would exalt one group and oppress another, but the kingship of the Suffering Servant whose throne is the Cross, who came as the servant of all— a revelation so stunning that even His closest disciples could barely accept it, if at all. Yet Jesus promises, “Some of [the blind] standing here will not taste of death till they see God's regime already come in power” (9.1).

Mark 16:9-20 is canonically accepted, but was appended later by a different author, perhaps to provide a more “satisfying” ending outside of the Liturgical context. These verses, of which there are several versions, largely summarize the resurrection appearances in Luke.

John's book will be available soon. We are very much looking forward to its publication, both because the small taste we have had convinces us it will be well worth reading and because it will help support many poor students in Uganda and even a computer programming school which St Nicholas Church's (San Anselmo) “Africa Fund” is starting there. If you're interested in obtaining a copy of the book or in knowing more about the Africa Fund, or would like Mr Burnett to come and speak in your parish, you can email him at [jbb@jbburnett.com](mailto:jbb@jbburnett.com).

## July 2017 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

Monastery contact info – (707) 942-6244; email – [sisters@holyassumptionmonastery.com](mailto:sisters@holyassumptionmonastery.com)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Due to major repairs at St. Simeon Church, all services are at the Monastery until further notice.</p>						1 5 pm Vigil
2 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  TENTATIVE	3 4pm Vespers and Matins –  <u>Installation of New Abbess</u>	4  10am Hierarchical Divine Liturgy  FORT ROSS	5	6	7	8 5 pm Vigil
9 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy	10	11	12	13	14	15 5 pm Vigil
16 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  TENTATIVE  5 pm Vigil	17 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  <u>Great Martyr Marina &amp; the Royal Passionbearers</u>	18	19	20	21	22 5 pm Vigil
23 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy	24 6 pm Vigil	25 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Dormition of Righteous Anna</u>	26	27	28	29 5 pm Vigil
30 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy	31					

**SAVE THE DATE: Saturday November 4**  
**Incarnating Christ in the Midst of Our World**  
 led by **Abbot Tryphon** of All-Merciful Saviour Monastery, Vashon Island, WA