



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – November 2011

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Because we are in the process of tearing down the old aviary and building a new one (for details, please see the enclosed flyer – Operation: St. Nicholas House), Petie our African Grey Parrot is currently ensconced in a cage in the monastery's office. We are tempted to say that he is taking to his new situation as a duck takes to water, but Petie might not appreciate the simile. At any rate, to our great surprise, he has gladly traded his large aviary for the opportunity to be around people nearly constantly. Equally to our surprise, he has shown an amazing repertoire of phrases (e.g. Good morning; Petie ready for bed?; Gotta go pray ...) and interesting human sounds (laughter, clearing one's throat, yawns ...). Many of these he has heard all along, but he hasn't really talked much until he started essentially living with us.

As you can imagine, Petie has been a source of both amusement and joy for all of us, and we are already regretting that he will eventually go back to the aviary (but with office privileges!!). He is one of God's wonderful little creatures, but it is only in spending more time with him that we are beginning to glimpse how wonderful he is.

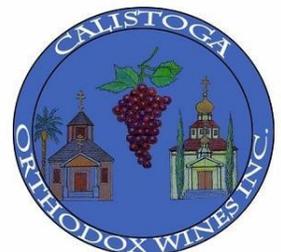
Sad, how much easier it is to find joy in getting to know God's lesser creatures than it is to find joy in loving the ones made in God's image. Of course, that is because our sin mars that image, and we stop looking for the wonders of God in the people around us. But if – with love, humility, and patience – we keep looking for that image in the people we live and work with, we will find more than we could ever have imagined!

with love in Christ,  
*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

P.S. Oscar is also alive and well, but much more eager than Petie to be out of his cage!

## CALISTOGA ORTHODOX WINES – Update

Some of you have been asking about our joint plans with St. Simeon Church to produce chalice wines. The original plan was to blend wines that had already been produced. This would have produced a good-quality wine, but not the top quality that we intend to produce. So, we are starting from the very beginning - the grapes.



We had a successful harvest of grapes this year. The wine will ferment in barrels and then in bottles for a total of two years. So, in answer to the question, we are still planning to produce chalice wine, but it will be a while yet. The bright side – we're confident that it will be all the more wonderful for the wait!!



### A VISIT

On Saturday October 15, Fr. Konstantin Gavrilkin and several of his parishioners from Christ the Saviour Church (San Francisco) celebrated Divine Liturgy with us here at the monastery. Fr. Konstantin is planning on coming on a regular basis with his parishioners. It was a joy to have them and we are looking forward to their next visit!

## WORK PARTY

On Saturday October 22, several of our good friends from St. Seraphim Church (Santa Rosa) built a beautiful new wall for our lower garden. We are deeply grateful for all their hard work and loving support. Many, many thanks!!!

*right – all in a day's work!!!*



## ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ HAVE BOOKSTORE, WILL TRAVEL

Recently, the sisters have started taking our bookstore out to the greater Orthodox community. On October 8, the sisters attended the Annual Bazaar at St. Nicholas Church (San Anselmo). Then, on October 23, the sisters were invited to set up a booth at Macedonian Park (here in Calistoga) for the annual St. Demetrios Feast. We are very thankful for the warm reception we received from both communities. We hope to come to several more parishes before the end of the year.



*At St. Nicholas Church – No, this isn't our new monastic headwear, but that sun DOES get hot!*



*At Macedonian Park – Demetra Bozionelos checks out our booth*

## ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ VISIT FROM FR. THOMAS HOPKO

On Sunday October 2, we were blessed with a visit from Fr. Thomas Hopko, who celebrated Divine Liturgy with us and graciously agreed to speak with us during lunch. With various stories, he reminded us of the basic truth that everything is about God. He also gently reminded us that – even in a monastery, or especially in a monastery – it's frightfully easy to forget this fundamental truth.



*Fr. John Ramos, Fr. Thomas Hopko, Fr. Joakim Provatakis*

If we ignore God altogether, we become worse than the beasts. But if we do all the externals without letting God transform our hearts, we become devils. He also reminded us that people don't need us – they need God. As long as we're giving of what we have, it can't fill their need. When we get out of the way, then they can receive God from us. What else is worth giving?



*Fr. Tom delivers the homily*

## ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪ ☪

## OCTOBER FRIENDS – Reflections on Righteousness

In his talk at the October Friend's Gathering, Fr. Deacon Gregory Roeber challenged an attentive group to ponder the Orthodox understanding of righteousness. Recalling the pillars of the spiritual life – fasting, prayer, and almsgiving – Fr. Deacon Gregory provided texts from the Old and New Testaments to demonstrate that righteousness is always an expression of mercy, such as almsgiving or hospitality. Since God is love, our participation in charity (love) makes God present and brings us into His life. We do not “earn” righteousness, but receive the gift of participation in it from God.

A lively discussion on Orthodox and Protestant understandings of grace, the nature of man, and synergy between man and God followed, revealing the urgent need for Orthodox to appropriate the theology of our tradition in the environment of American spirituality surrounding us. CDs of Fr. Deacon Gregory's talk can be obtained for the cost of postage by emailing [sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com](mailto:sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com).



*Deacon Gregory Roeber*

Announcing  
**THE NOVEMBER 2011 MEETING**  
of the  
**FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY**

**Sunday November 6, 2011**

Part 3 of 3-Part Series on Contemplative Prayer –

***Heaven in the Heart:***

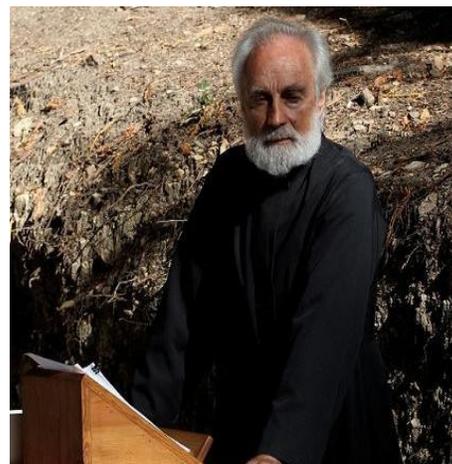
**Prayer as the Door to Contemplation**

Presented by

***Vincent Rossi***

Theologian, Educator, & Independent Scholar

*St. Seraphim Church, Santa Rosa*



4:00 PM – Presentation

5:00 PM – Vespers

6:00 PM – Potluck

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**December 4** Meeting – Fr. Lawrence and Mat. Ann Margitich (St. Seraphim Church, Santa Rosa) will give the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the talk on their pilgrimage – focusing this time on Constantinople

**January 8** Meeting – speaker and topic not yet determined

**February 12** Meeting – Archimandrite Irenei (Stenberg) will speak on an as yet undetermined topic

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL (707) 942-6244

or EMAIL [sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com](mailto:sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com)

STARTING IN JANUARY, FRIENDS MEETINGS WILL MOVE TO THE 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

## November 2011 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery (Blue) & St. Simeon Parish (Red)

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5 5:00pm Reader Vigil (St Simeon Church)
6 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (St Simeon Church)  4:00pm FRIENDS MEETING (Monastery)	7	8 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (St Simeon Church)  <i>Slavonic Liturgy</i>  <u>St Demetrius</u> (Old Style)	9 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (Monastery)  <u>St. Nectarios</u>	10	11	12 5:00pm Vigil (Monastery)
13 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (Monastery)	14	15	16 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (Monastery)  <u>St. Matthew the Evangelist</u>	17	18	19 5:00pm Reader Vigil (St Simeon Church)
20 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (St Simeon Church)	21 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (Monastery)  <u>Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple</u>	22	23	24 10:00am Thanksgiving Moleiben (St Simeon Church)	25	26 5:00pm Vigil (Monastery)
27 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (Monastery)	28	29	30 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (Monastery)  <u>St. Andrew the First Called</u>	Notes: Text in blue represents services at the Monastery Text in red represents services at the Parish		

### ***THE TIMES THEY ARE A'CHANGING! - Two schedule changes***

Starting in **November 2011**, our **Sunday Hours/Divine Liturgy** will start at 9:40 AM in order to match up with the Sunday schedule at St. Simeon Church. The meals following Sunday Liturgies will be **potlucks**. If you are interested in bringing something, please call us at 707-942-6244 or email us at [sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com](mailto:sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com).

Also, starting in **January 2012**, we are shifting our **monthly Friends' meetings** to the **second Sunday of the month**. We hope that this move will allow more people to come to these lovely events.

# Operation: St. Nicholas House

Dear Friends and Supporters of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Two years ago, when our sisters arrived at Holy Assumption Monastery, we walked into a veritable paradise – the outcome of years of labor and love on the part of Fr. Sergious and community members such as yourselves. The task of renewing and restoring the monastery now continues with the repair and renovation of St. Nicholas House. We invite you to be a part of preserving this special building through your prayers and financial support.



St. Nicholas House, located at the western end of the monastery property, was built in the early 1970s. With a kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and main room, the structure was intended to be a residence for a single priest or a few individuals. In 1981, an additional room, the “office,” expanded the functions of the house. Fr. Sergious enclosed part of the porch for an aviary after his arrival in 1998, but, since then, the house has seen little change or maintenance.

The roof of St. Nicholas House is in such bad shape that the section over the porch cannot be saved: the porch roof will be demolished before this season’s rains begin. Thus begins the first stage of a three-part renovation project that the sisters have developed with the help of local contractors:

1. Removing birds from current aviary, constructing a free-standing aviary, and demolishing the porch roof
2. Extending the footprint of St. Nicholas House, enclosing and weatherproofing the new structure (including a new roof)
3. Finishing a remodel of the inside of the structure

The sisters have chosen to undertake this task in three stages in order to minimize disruption of life at the monastery and in recognition of the difficult economic times in which we live. Our goal in remodeling the house is to make it functional for the community now in residence: the remodeled St. Nicholas House will offer ground-floor amenities to our aging sisters and visitors. By giving the house the attention it needs, we hope to ensure its functionality and service for another generation of sisters and pilgrims at Holy Assumption Monastery.

Estimated costs for the renovation are as follows:

- Aviary & Demolition: \$11,000
- Footprint extension, new roof & weatherproofing: \$56,000
- Interior remodel: To Be Determined

We would like to invite you to be part of rejuvenating St. Nicholas House, a work we pray will be to the glory of God and His Church. As the plaque by the front door of the house reminds us, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor build it in vain” (Ps 127, v.1). Please indicate “ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE” on the memo line of checks in support of the renovation, or contact us for more information. May God bless you for your prayerful support of Holy Assumption Monastery and the care of St. Nicholas House.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mother Melania".

Mother Melania and the Sisters of Holy Assumption Monastery