



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – November 2012

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

There is a story about a monk who used to double or triple the number of prostrations assigned to him by his elder. The monk 'just happened' to leave his door ajar – so that people might 'just happen' to notice how many prostrations he was doing. On discovering this, the elder rebuked the monk and told him to do only the number of prostrations he had been told to do. To the monk's utter astonishment, he was unable to complete this smaller number. The reason? Pride and vainglory are mighty motivators, and when the monk was stripped of them, he had little motivation remaining.

Most of us have never had quite so graphic an illustration of this, but unless we're saints, we are motivated by pride and vainglory far more often than we think we are. An excellent indicator of how much these passions poison our good deeds is our response when people ignore or even criticize what we consider to be good works. Given that litmus test, we soon see how far we are from true goodness and humility. The good news is that recognizing the muck in our lives is the first step towards cleaning it up! Then, as we see that God continues to shower all His goodness upon us, we begin to be filled with gratefulness and love. And these, when they come to full fruition, will be the mightiest motivators of all!

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

## ZOO UPDATE



*Petie, Pearl, and servant*

We had a slightly larger bird population for a week or so in October. Emerald the Severe Macaw (and no, we have no idea where the breed name came from) and Pearl the African Grey came for a holiday when their caretaker Rachelle was elsewhere. Pearl was sporting a collar. Rachelle says that it's because Pearl had been plucking out her feathers, but we think that Pearl is just convinced it makes her look snazzy!



*Emerald really had a ball!*

## ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE

We are delighted to announce that we have met the \$6,000 matching grant! At last count, we have received over \$7,000. Thanks to all of you who helped, Michael and his helpers are busily doing the preparatory work for laying down the shingles. Thankfully, the weather in the next several weeks is supposed to be good, and – God willing – St. Nicholas House will soon have its new roof! Stay tuned for updates!



*All in a day's work!*



*At the fundraiser*

## FUNDRAISER FOR CALISTOGA ORTHODOX WINES

On Sunday, October 7, a wine-tasting fundraiser was held at St. Simeon Church in order to raise funds to buy this year's crop of grapes. The fundraiser was a great success, and we are grateful to all who made it so. We are also very pleased to say that our very first chalice wines will be bottled and ready to sell in March 2013!

## OCTOBER FRIENDS MEETING

At our Friends meeting on Sunday, October 14, Deacon John Dibs spoke on three Latvian priests [Fr. Nikolajs Vieglaiss (1907-1992), Fr. George Benigsen (1915-1993), and Fr. Alexei Yonov (1907-1977)] who each completed his church ministry in the San Francisco Bay Area. This was of particular interest to us because Fr. George and his wife Helen lived on the grounds of Holy Assumption Monastery in the 1980s and 1990s. Deacon John focused on a remarkable period of church activity during World War II. The three Baltic states (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) had been independent democracies in the years between the two World Wars. They were occupied by the Soviets in 1940, then by the Germans from 1941 to 1944, and then again by the Soviets until the fall of communism. During the first Soviet occupation, the Baltic states got a taste of the oppression that was to come as people disappeared into the gulags, while the faith within the church persevered.



*Deacon John Dibs*

After the first Soviet occupation, the invading Germans were treated as deliverers. Indeed, probably largely for propaganda purposes but also due to the presence of several good Christians among the Germans, the Orthodox in the German-occupied areas received freedom to teach and practice their faith. Metropolitan Sergei Voskressensky, exarch of the Orthodox Church in the Baltic States, took advantage of this situation to start a mission from Pskov (an ancient and important Russian city on the western border), which resulted in a revival of church life in a huge region of western Russia. Fr. Alexei Yonov, who was part of the Pskov mission, recalls meeting two laywomen on the road. When they discovered that the priests were coming to their city, they thanked God. Having previously heard that there were priests in Pskov, they set out on foot to traverse the long distance because of their keen desire to have a priest to celebrate Liturgy. There were just a few priests for this huge area, and they worked under very difficult circumstances, but they found it a very rewarding experience. Sadly, when the Soviets returned to occupy the area, the mission in the region of Pskov ended. Some priests were caught and sent to the gulags, but all three of these priests and their families eventually made their ways to the United States.

Another part of this story has to do with the Tikhvin icon of the Theotokos, which is historically one of the most important icons of Russia. As a significant cultural object, the Germans took it from the monastery in Tikhvin and allowed it to be kept at the cathedral in Pskov. Before the Soviets retook the city, the icon was taken to Riga, Latvia and presented to Bishop John (Garklavs). When the Germans retreated from Latvia, taking with them those individuals who were in positions of leadership, Fr. Nikolajs was ordered by the Germans to take the icon, and he and his family joined up with Bishop John and other priests and their families as they made their way through the Displaced Persons camps with the Mother of God as their protectress. Bishop (and later archbishop) John was assigned to Chicago, intending to keep the icon safe until it could be returned to Russia. He died before this was possible and his adopted son, Fr. Sergei Garklavs, took over the responsibility. To the great joy of the Russian people, in 2004 the icon was returned to the monastery in Tikhvin, with hundreds of thousands of people turning out to welcome her home after an absence of some 60 years.

As Deacon John remarked at the beginning of his talk, secular historians often put a spotlight on the history of power and influence. But church history is about seeing the Light of Christ in the dark places of the world through the faith of the humblest servants. And the time he spoke of certainly fits that description.



### ***HERE, THERE, & EVERYWHERE!!***

Life certainly hasn't been boring lately! On October 6, we had our bookstore at the Harvest Festival of Holy Dormition Church (Santa Rosa) and at the annual bazaar of St. Nicholas Church (San Anselmo). October 14 was our Friends' Sunday. On October 20, we were one of five homes in a walking tour fundraiser for Calistoga's Sharpsteen Museum. On October 27, a work party consisting mainly of friends from All Saints Church Rohnert Park came and helped with garden and kitchen duties. Finally, on October 28, we participated in the annual St. Demetrios Liturgy at Calistoga's Macedonian Park and had our bookstore at the picnic following. We thank everyone who invited us to their festivities and everyone who attended the walking tour. It is always a joy to visit with old friends and make new ones!



*Holy Dormition Harvest Festival- ready & waiting!*



*St. Nicholas Church Bazaar – lots of interest!*



*Walking tour participants learn about the chapel*



*Our intrepid gardeners!*



*Macedonian Park – everyone loves a picnic!*

## November 2012 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 5:00pm Vigil (at Holy Assumption Monastery)
4 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Holy Assumption Monastery)	5	6	7	8	9	10 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
11 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  4:00 PM – FRIENDS MEETING (at Holy Assumption Monastery)	12	13	14	15 5:00pm Vigil (at Holy Assumption Monastery)	16 8:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Holy Assumption Monastery)  <u>St. Matthew the Apostle</u>	17 5:00pm Vigil (at Holy Assumption Monastery)
18 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Holy Assumption Monastery)	19	20 5:00pm Vigil (at Holy Assumption Monastery)	21 8:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Holy Assumption Monastery)  <u>Presentation of the Theotokos</u>	22 10:00am Thanksgiving Moleiben (at St Simeon Parish)  <i>Thanksgiving Day</i>	23	24 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
25 9:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	26	27	28	29 5:00pm Readers' Vigil (at Holy Assumption Monastery)	30 8:40am Hours/Divine Liturgy (at Holy Assumption Monastery)  <u>St. Andrew the First-Called</u>	Notes:

Announcing  
**THE NOVEMBER 2012 MEETING**  
of the  
**FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY**

*Sunday November 11, 2012*

**MONASTERY & CHURCH LIFE  
IN RUSSIA:**

*Recollections of an American Pilgrim*

Presented by

***Elena Gutteridge***



4:00 PM – Presentation

5:00 PM – Vespers

6:00 PM – Potluck

**UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY**

December 9 – Vincent Rossi – Theologian, Educator, and Independent Scholar – will speak on *Two Hesychast Reflections on the Nativity of Christ: Ss. Theoleptus of Philadelphia and Gregory Palamas*.

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

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