



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – April 2013

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Our singing seems to make its way into this newsletter rather often. One of the standing jokes around here is that people tell us how beautiful our singing is and we wonder, “Why is it that THEY hear the angels singing and WE only hear ourselves?” We're only half joking when we say that. We, too, notice that the singing sounds better when we're at a little distance, but we are pretty convinced that this is more a result of God's mercy than of physics (by the way, if any of you can explain the physics of this, let us know!!)

This situation mirrors our day-to-day lives. We are constantly tempted to focus on the disharmony between us and those with whom we live and work. Focusing on our fellows' mistakes is a recipe for judgment and anger; focusing on our own, a recipe for despair. If only we took a step or two back, we would hear the greater harmony that eludes our ears most of the time. Yes, that harmony probably has much more to do with the aid of the angels and of God's mercy than anything else. But over time, if we pay more attention to the heavenly harmonies than to the earthly disharmonies, we may find ourselves singing in tune with the heavenly hosts!

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*



*Before*

## ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE

The “fish shed” is finally ready for its temporary assignment as our monastery office. In fact, the office sisters have already moved in. Soon we will begin the renovation of the St. Nicholas House bathroom. However, we are still sorting out some of the logistics. So, we hope to finish the St. Nicholas House roof while the sorting out process goes on.



*AFTER!!!*

## ZOO UPDATE



*Maggie – I own the world  
(except those parts where  
Ashley happens to be)*

When the next-door-neighbors went out of town for a week, their cat, Maggie, decided to make the monastery her temporary home. However, although Maggie loves greeting people and getting their attention, she isn't so friendly with the monastery cats. The nuns weren't concerned, though – our cat Ashley is such a veteran of life that nothing phases her. Sure enough, one of the sisters witnessed the first encounter between Ashley and Maggie. Lying on the deck in the sun, Maggie was sleeping blissfully while a sister sat nearby. From the garden, Ashley saw the sister sitting quietly and seized the opportunity for a lap. When Ashley hopped onto the deck, Maggie woke up, and the two suddenly found themselves nose-to-nose.

Maggie went into "defense" mode immediately, with plenty of howling, hissing, and fur-bristling. Ashley looked at her for a moment, and then calmly sat down and turned to look at the sister, as if to ask, "Are you going to do anything about this?" When the sister remained motionless, Ashley looked again at Maggie, who was continuing to give new meaning to the phrase "hissy-fit." With one more glance at the sister ("Really? You're not going to do anything?"), Ashley looked right at Maggie and *yawned*. She then sauntered past her growling neighbor and came to get the lap she knew was waiting for her. Maggie turned tail and fled. Needless to say, she was overjoyed when her owners returned home, and the sisters continue to dote on the magnificent Ashley.

## ***MARCH FRIENDS MEETING***



*A full house!*

At our Sunday March 10 Friends Meeting, Dr. Stephen Lloyd-Moffett spoke on *What Makes Orthodoxy Unique*. After mentioning some traditional ways in which people seek to define the uniqueness of Orthodoxy, Stephen listed seven things in the Orthodox world view that distinguish it from western Christianity's world view. First, we hold that God is foundationally mysterious. While all Christians hold that God can be rationally spoken of and yet can never be fully explained, the Orthodox focus more on this mysterious aspect than does the West, which emphasizes rational explanations of God and proof of His existence. The East, on the other hand, marvels at the depths of the mystery of God.

Second, the Orthodox view of salvation focuses on Christ's victory over death, whereas the West focuses on atonement for sin. For the Orthodox, sin is generally understood as the response of fallen man to death. Thus, the defining moment of salvation for the West's atonement model is the Cross, whereas the defining moment for the Orthodox is the Resurrection. In triumphing over death, Christ removes the impetus to sin. Third, for the Orthodox, the goal of Christian life is Dynamic Deification, whereas the West has a more static goal. In many Protestant traditions, one simply says a prayer and is understood to be saved from that moment. Even in Catholicism, the goal of Christian life tends to be static. St. Augustine speaks of a beatific vision. Seemingly, once one reaches this vision, he has no further to go. For the Orthodox, the goal is to be so full of the Divine Energies that the Holy Spirit continuously flows through us. This is an endless journey towards and into relationship with God, not a static destination. Fourth, Orthodoxy has a hesychastic perspective. Western Christianity has tended to understand the spiritual life in intellectual and emotional terms – sometimes combining and sometimes contrasting them. Orthodoxy has a much broader view, believing that all creation can be transformed by God's grace. While not putting our trust in the material world, we worship God not just “spiritually” and emotionally, but with our bodies and with the material things around us.

Fifth, the Orthodox believe in Life-giving asceticism. While generally looked at askance by Protestants, asceticism did hold an important place in traditional Catholicism, but has become marginalized in modern times. This is a natural outgrowth of the shift of emphasis to the mind and emotions – the role of the body is forgotten. In the Orthodox understanding, the body can be transformed into a faithful and glorious servant of the spirit or it can become a thief. Asceticism provides the discipline necessary for the transformation of the body. Sixth, the goal of worship for the Orthodox is not an emotional or intellectual experience, but the bringing of the earthly to the brink of the heavenly. The Orthodox are generally leery of the emotions because they are easy to manipulate. Therefore, it is easy to fool ourselves into thinking we are progressing spiritually, when we are merely having pleasing emotional experiences.

Seventh, and most emphasized by Stephen, the Orthodox conception of the Church is strongly communal. Again, all Christians understand themselves as a community, but the difference is in where the boundaries lie. In the West, the community may be the individual church, the denomination, or even all Christians alive at that time. To the Orthodox, the Church is all Orthodox Christians over all times and places who have remained faithful to God. So, even when there is nobody at Liturgy except the priest and one other person, the Church is full of the saints and angels. The icons represent this part of the Church. That is why icons do not depict what the saints looked like on earth. Rather, they represent how the saints are now, because they are in fact present now.

Stephen finished by stressing the importance of this community aspect of Orthodoxy as an evangelical tool. In our day of relativism, the claim of holding the truth does not resonate with many Americans. But Americans increasingly are realizing that we have become very isolated and are longing to be members of a true community. This community that reaches all times and places past and present and eternal is indeed the true community for which we all long.



## ***AN EVENTFUL MONTH!***

We had a month full of visits from old friends and new. Below are a few pictures of their visits.



*Showing the ropes (and the bells) to the youth from Holy Nativity Church, Novato*



*The ladies from Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Ben Lomond, learn about the monastery's chapel*



*The Women's Board of the Patriarch Athenagoras Institute (along with their husbands) came for a visit*

## April 2013 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

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website – <http://www.holyassumptionmonastery.com>

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 6:00 pm Vigil (at Monastery)	<b>6</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  5:00pm Vigil (both at St Simeon Parish)
<b>7</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  <b><u>Annunciation (Old Calendar)</u></b>	<b>8</b> 5:00 pm Holy Unction Service, served by Archbishop KYRILL (at St Simeon Parish)	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 6:00 pm Vigil (at Monastery)	<b>13</b> 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  5:00pm Vigil (both at Monastery)
<b>14</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  4:00pm <b>FRIENDS MEETING</b> (both at Monastery)	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 6:00pm Matins with Great Canon (at St Simeon Parish)	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 6:00 pm Vigil (at Monastery)  <b><u>Laudations of the Theotokos</u></b>	<b>20</b> 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
<b>21</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy  8:00 pm Matins (both at Monastery)	<b>27</b> 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <b><u>Lazarus Saturday</u></b>  5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
<b>28</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  <b><u>Palm Sunday</u></b>  6:00pm Bridegroom Matins (at Monastery)	<b>29</b> 5:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy  8:00pm Bridegroom Matins (both at Monastery)	<b>30</b> 5:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy  8:00pm Bridegroom Matins (both at Monastery)	<b>MAY 1</b> 5:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy  8:00pm Institutional Matins of Holy Thursday (both at Monastery)	<b>MAY 2</b> 9:00am Vespertal Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  6:00pm <b>Service of the 12 Passion Gospels</b> (at St Simeon Parish)	<b>MAY 3</b> 8:00am Royal Hours (at Monastery)  3:00pm Vespers (at Monastery)  <b><u>Taking out the Shroud</u></b>  6:00pm Matins with Lamentations (at St Simeon Parish)	<b>MAY 4</b> 9:00am Vespertal Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  10:00pm Reading of the Acts (at Monastery)  11:30pm Midnight Office (at Monastery)  12:00 am Paschal Matins/Liturgy (at Monastery)

**NOTE: On Pascha (May 5) Agape Vespers will be held at 11:30 AM at St. Demetrios Chapel, in Macedonian Park**

Announcing  
**THE APRIL 2013 MEETING**  
of the  
**FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY**

*Sunday April 14, 2013*

**A MUSICAL JOURNEY  
THROUGH LENT**

Presented by

***Nicolas Custer***

*Choir Conductor, St. Seraphim Church, Santa Rosa, CA*



4:00 PM – Presentation

5:00 PM – Vespers

6:00 PM – Potluck

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

May 12 – Archimandrite Irenei Steenberg will speak on *The Place of Doubt in the Life of a Christian*  
June 16 (NOT JUNE 9) – Robin Joy Wellman, State Park Interpreter, will give us an update on events concerning Fort Ross.

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