



## Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – August 2013

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

In a discussion about how hard it is to find jobs nowadays, the old adage came up – it's not what you know, but whom you know. At its best, this is a recognition that when many people are equally qualified, the job goes to someone who has an "in." At worst, it's about rank favoritism and nepotism.

This discussion brought up a memory of a childhood friend Ned, who was a high school principal. Tragically, he died in a car accident in his late 30s. At the funeral, a student came up to Ned's mother and said in tears, "He knew my name," to which she replied, "Why WOULDN'T he know your name?" The student answered, "You don't understand. I'm a 9<sup>th</sup> grader. We are nothing, but he knew my name."

This incident sets the aforementioned adage on its head. It really ISN'T about what we know, but about whom we know. Ironically, name-droppers and carriers of favor don't really "know" the people they know because their focus is on themselves. Ned knew his students by name because he loved them, and they were transformed by that love.

God and His saints know us by name. This is not because we deserve to be known, but because God is Love and His saints are full of Him. So, we have nothing to boast of, but if like the anonymous 9<sup>th</sup> grader, we respond with humble gratitude to this undeserved love, we will be transformed and become bearers of God's love also.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

### ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE

We are happy to announce that the St. Nicholas House bathroom renovation is essentially finished. All that remains to do at the time of this writing is to put in the cabinets. The sisters will be able to move back there soon. The next phase of the renovation will be enclosing the side and front porches. Stay tuned!



*Left – an encouraging degree of progress!!*

*Right – Blake Jr. gives Blake Sr. a few tips on installing an on-demand water heater.*



### ZOO UPDATE



*Baby – small but mighty!!*

One of the less well-known members of our "zoo" is Baby the Parakeet. His relative anonymity has to do with the fact that he has lived mostly in the cell of one of the sisters who lives in St. Nicholas House. With the remodel, Baby was out of a home. So, he's been living with Pixley and Oscar, the conures. To be more exact, his cage is in Pixley and Oscar's domain, but Baby had been quite reluctant to come out and meet them. So, the other day, we were quite pleased to see him actually come out of his cage. To our great surprise, though, Baby appears to have a Napoleon complex, and he was soon chasing poor Oscar all over the enclosure and even biting at Oscar's tail. So, Baby's cage door is closed again until he moves back to St. Nicholas House or gives a solemn promise to improve his manners!

## ***JULY FRIENDS MEETING***

On July 14, Dale Liid spoke on *Monasticism in the Judean Desert: Hearing God in the Silence*. It is not possible to do justice to his talk because it depended heavily on maps and pictures (which Dale has kindly made available for anybody who is interested. So, if you would like copies, please contact us). One theme that kept surfacing was the importance of the places themselves. All these saints lived in or near places where the prophets, the apostles, and Christ Himself walked.

Dale concentrated on four great saints of the Judean Desert: St. Euthymius the Great (377-473), St. Theodosius the Coenobiarch (423-529), St. Sabbas the Sanctified (439-532), and St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem (560-638). They came from different backgrounds, but all in one way or another were seeking out the silence of the desert to get away from the noise of the world and to answer Christ's call to come apart to a quiet place with Him. Each in his own way also fulfilled the Gospel commandment to love his brother – the first three as leaders of monastic communities (St. Sabbas in particular was noted for making peace with those who broke away from his community and then helping them to build strong monasteries – both physically and spiritually). St. Sophronius towards the end of his life was Patriarch during the fall of Jerusalem. After a two-year siege, he surrendered to the Caliph Ibn-Al-Khattar in order to protect his people and the holy places. Through his humility, many holy places were saved and the people were spared the worst ravages of occupation. For us, the basic message is that we all have to get away from the noise and self-aggrandization of the world and embrace silence. Only in silence can we hear God and resume the conversation that was broken in Paradise.



*Dale Liid*



## ***RETREAT – THE JEWISH ROOTS OF CHRISTIANITY***

On Saturday, July 20, Archbishop BENJAMIN gave a wonderful retreat on *The Jewish Roots of Christianity*. He asked us to imagine a two-branched tree – its roots being the Law given on Sinai and its trunk being the Judaism of the Second Temple (Christ's time). Of the two branches, one (Christianity) goes straight up, while the other (rabbinical Judaism) goes out at an angle. The basic idea is that Christianity is not a break from the religion of the Old Testament, but its true heir and fulfillment. Rabbinical Judaism shares much of the same history, but is a different religion with a different focus. The next two parts of the retreat (the synagogue and the temple) examined how the two branches split apart and how their focuses differ.

Synagogues appear to have originated at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Till then, Judaism was centered around the ritual and sacrifices of the Temple. With the destruction of the Temple and deportation to Babylon, the Jews faced a crisis – how could they retain their religious and national identity? The answer was the synagogue – with its focus on the reading and exegesis of the Torah. The chief persons in the synagogue were not the Levitical priests of the Temple, but the rabbis – the teachers and master scholars of the Law. After the return from Babylon, the Temple was rebuilt, but the Ark of the Covenant was gone (it is unclear what happened to it, but it does seem to have been taken away BEFORE the Babylonian conquest because it is not included in the list of spoils taken from the temple by the Babylonians) and with it, the chrism used to anoint the High Priest. So, some Jews considered the Second Temple to be bogus. During the time of the Second Temple, there were two powerful religious camps: the Pharisees (the master scholars of the Law) and the Saducees (largely of the priestly lines and wealthy, and very much tied to the temple). When the Romans destroyed the Temple in AD 70, another crisis erupted. The Saducees lost their power base with the destruction of the Temple, while the Pharisees and the synagogue flourished, becoming the basis of rabbinical Judaism as we know it. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars thought that early Christianity was modeled on the synagogue and not on the Temple. While there is some truth to this (the first part of the Liturgy has much in common with the synagogue – e.g. processing with and reading the Scripture, hymns, and a sermon), the scholars who made these conclusions were mostly Protestants, whose own worship services consisted mostly of the reading of Scriptures, singing of hymns, and a sermon. So, they missed the deep connection to the Temple worship.



*Archbishop BENJAMIN*

This connection of Orthodoxy with Temple worship is less with the details of the Liturgy than with its inner meaning. All the Temple sacrifices pointed to Christ – the great High Priest (for us Orthodox, the only Priest – all other priests are living icons of Him) Who offers Himself as the perfect Sacrifice. The High Priest of the Old Testament was the image of God among His people. He had a miter on which was written the Divine Name, but also had a garment made of four colors of threads that represented the four elements (and thus the material creation). So, the High Priest was an image of the Incarnation – God, wrapped in matter, walking among His people. His Eminence also spoke about the Day of Atonement and how the Jewish understanding of “atonement” was not a penal one (so-and-so sinned, so somebody has to be punished), but about repair and restoration. Thus, Christ did not die to satisfy the “righteous anger” of His Father. Rather, He gives His very blood to restore mankind's relationship with the Father and thus renews all Creation.

In the end, the difference between Christianity and rabbinical Judaism lies in their answers to the question, “Who is Jesus?” Rabbinical Judaism considered Him the illegitimate son of “that woman.” Christianity considers Him the Word of God Who gave Moses the Law, the One to Whom the whole Old Testament points – the Son of God and God Incarnate.

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

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| Sun  | Mon   | Tue   | Wed   | Thu   | Fri                                  | Sat   |
|--|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|
|  |   |   |   | 1   | 2                                    | 3<br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at Monastery –<br>Visiting Clergy)  |
| 4<br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at Monastery –<br>Visiting Clergy)  | 5<br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at Monastery –<br>Visiting Clergy)  | 6<br>8:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at Monastery –<br>Visiting Clergy)<br><u>Transfiguration</u> | 7   | 8   | 9                                    | 10<br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)  |
| 11<br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)<br><br><b><u>NO FRIENDS<br/>MEETING THIS<br/>MONTH</u></b> | 12  | 13  | 14<br>5:00pm Vigil<br>(at Monastery)  | 15<br>9:00am<br>MEETING OF<br>THE BISHOP<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at Monastery)<br><br><u>DORMITION</u>            | 16<br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at Monastery) | 17<br>8:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br><u>3<sup>rd</sup> Day of<br/>Dormition</u><br><br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(both at<br>Monastery) |
| 18<br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at Monastery)<br><br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)                      | 19<br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)<br><br><u>Transfiguration</u><br>(Old Calendar) | 20  | 21  | 22  | 23                                   | 24<br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)  |
| 25<br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)  | 26  | 27<br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)  | 28<br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at St Simeon<br>Parish)<br><u>Dormition</u><br>(Old Calendar)<br><br>6:00pm Vigil<br>(at Monastery) | 29<br>5:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy<br>(at Monastery)<br><br><u>Beheading of<br/>St. John the<br/>Baptist</u> | 30                                   | 31  |

### UPCOMING FRIENDS MEETINGS

Our August Friends Meeting has been canceled due to our Dormition celebration

September 8 – Mystery speaker. Stay tuned!

October 13 – Fr. James Jorgenson will speak on a topic yet to be determined