



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – February 2013

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

We are still working to improve our singing. An often frustrating aspect of this is unlearning bad habits and inculcating good ones. The music we sing all the time is the most challenging in this regard. When doing drills or learning unfamiliar music, we can focus fairly easily on the new skills that we are developing. With the music we sing every day, though, it is discouragingly easy to go onto autopilot and fall into all our accustomed errors.

The rest of our life isn't much different. For instance, when we have problems with another person, we are counseled to recite daily our own faults and the other person's virtues and to ask God's blessing on that person. Just remembering to do this can be difficult. Even if we manage to keep this discipline faithfully, it often feels just as unrelated to real life (not to mention 'silly') as singing "Mi Me Ma Mo Mu" up and down a scale. Then, a situation comes up, we forget all we learned, and we react in anger. Not surprisingly, we get discouraged when this happens and are tempted to give up all together.

With our singing, we still hope to conquer our bad habits with diligence in our drills and increased mindfulness when singing the daily services. Doing the same with the rest of our bad habits, we can – by God's grace – look for the day when we are finally spiritually 'in tune.'

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



*It's nice, but isn't it a bit drafty?*

## ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE

As mentioned last month, we have shifted our focus from finishing the roof (which is now waterproof) to renovating the "fish shed," which will house the office while St. Nicholas House undergoes the renovations made possible by a generous grant from the Farah Foundation. Thank God, things are going along quite well.



*Much better, thanks!!*



## GARAGE SALE

On January 25 and 26, the sisters had a lovely garage sale. True, 'lovely' is not an adjective one associates with garage sales, but the people who came made it lovely. We made several new friends, and a lot of old friends came to support us. Several people brought items to add to the garage sale and others made donations even though they didn't find anything to buy. One lady joyously bought many things for her neighbor's family, who had just been evicted. May God bless her and them and all of you who love us far beyond our worth.



*Enthusiastic customers!*



*No, I am NOT for sale!! I just came to keep an eye on things.*

## THEOPHANY & MONASTERY BLESSING

We were blessed to have Fr. Mark Sahady and his family here to celebrate Theophany with us. We were particularly grateful for their kind-heartedness and lovely singing voices. As is our custom, we went out and blessed the Napa River, which was running merrily to greet the One Who deigned to be baptized in the Jordan to sanctify the waters.

Since we never seem to get our act together in time to bless the monastery on Theophany, Fr. Joakim kindly blessed the monastery later in the month. The 'zoo' shared in the blessing, of course. The koi took it in stride, but the rest of the critters were less than thrilled. As for the cats, they made it clear that they thought they were already holy enough!!



*The Sahadys check out the koi pond*



*The indoor blessing of the water*



*Processing down to the Napa River for the outdoor blessing of the water*



*Blessing the monastery grounds*



*I was just leaving*



## JANUARY FRIENDS MEETING

At our January 13 Friends meeting, Mother Melania spoke on *How Crazy Is That?! What the Fathers have to say about mental illness, demonic possession, and the insanity of sin*. We started studying this topic from the desire to answer heart-wrenching questions such as "Is my son demon-possessed or schizophrenic?" "Am I bipolar or possessed?" The answers amazed us. First, the Fathers understood mental illness to be distinct from demonic possession. Mental illness had been recognized in Greek medicine long before the time of Christ, and the Fathers accepted most of their classifications. Second, the general attitude of the Fathers towards the possessed and mentally ill was compassion. If the afflicted accepted their struggle with humility and thanksgiving, they were even greatly to be admired. Third, the Fathers in all seriousness believed that everyone who is not a saint is insane. This insanity consists of turning our backs on God, Who is the fundamental reality. Fourth, it is worse to be possessed by our passions than by a demon. The reason is that we willfully choose this type of possession and often even enjoy it! Fifth, possession by passions is actually a different and worse form of demonic possession. By willfully following our own desires instead of God's, we make our hearts dwellings fit not for God, but for the demons who also followed their own will instead of God's.

The upshot of all this is that the people whose spiritual condition we should be most concerned about are our own selves. This realization should radically change how we treat the mentally ill and possessed. Too often, we see them as the dregs of society or, at best, as pathetic beings that we are condescending to help. Rather, they are people bearing a heavy load that we probably could not bear ourselves. The least we can do is give them a kind word and do the little we can to help them bear their load. This is cheering news for the possessed and mentally ill. For the rest of us, though, if we take this seriously (as the Fathers certainly did), it may be a crushing blow. With that in mind, Mother Melania ended with words from St. John Chrysostom:

When we depart hence, then, and not till then, will the glorious victory be achieved. For instance, take the case of some evil lust. The extraordinary thing would be, not even to entertain it, but to stifle it. If, however, this be not possible, then though we may have to wrestle with it, and retain it to the last, yet if we depart still wrestling, we are conquerors.

As this is a topic that is near to all of us in one way or another, several people had a variety of questions that there was no time to address. So, Mother Melania will continue with the same topic this month.



*No, I can't talk without my hands!*

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

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| Sun   | Mon                                      | Tue   | Wed   | Thu   | Fri  | Sat  |
|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
|   |  |   |   |   | <b>1</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)  | <b>2</b><br>8:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)<br><br><u>Meeting of the Lord</u><br><br>Guest Clergy<br><br>5:00pm Reader Vigil (at Monastery) |
| <b>3</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  | <b>4</b>                                 | <b>5</b>  | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)         | <b>8</b><br>5:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)<br><br><u>St. Theodore the General &amp; Prophet Zechariah</u>  | <b>9</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)   |
| <b>10</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)<br><br>4:00pm Friends Meeting (at Monastery) | <b>11</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery) | <b>12</b><br>5:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)<br><br><u>St. Meletios of Antioch &amp; St. Aleksey of Moscow</u> | <b>13</b>   | <b>14</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish) | <b>15</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)<br><br><u>Meeting of the Lord (Old Calendar)</u>        | <b>16</b><br>NO VIGIL  |
| <b>17</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)   | <b>18</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery) | <b>19</b><br>5:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)<br><br><u>Apostles Archippus &amp; Philemon</u>                   | <b>20</b>   | <b>21</b>                                       | <b>22</b>  | <b>23</b><br>9:00am -3:30pm<br>RETREAT (at Monastery)<br><br>5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)  |
| <b>24</b><br>9:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  | <b>25</b>                                | <b>26</b><br>5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)  | <b>27</b><br>5:40am Hours/<br>Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)<br><br><u>St. Raphael of Brooklyn</u> | <b>28</b>                                       | <b>Notes:</b><br>Starting on February 8, weekday Hours/Liturgy at the Monastery will start at 5:40 AM, instead of 8:40 AM. |  |

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

*Sunday February 10, 2013*

***HOW CRAZY IS THAT?!***

***Part 2: Becoming Sane***

Presented by

***Mother Melania***

*Superior, Holy Assumption Monastery*



4:00 PM – Presentation

5:00 PM – Vespers

6:00 PM – Potluck

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

March 10 – Dr. Stephen Lloyd-Moffett will speak on "The Orthodox Difference: What makes Orthodoxy unique?"

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

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