



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – March 2013

1519 Washington St., Calistoga, CA 94515

Phone: 707-942-6244; Email: sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.holyassumptionmonastery.com/>



Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

A dear friend would often recount a favorite family story. Her young daughter had done something to raise the eyebrows a little. The mother, in mock despair, said “What are we going to do with you?” The daughter replied, “Keep me and love me.” The children of my friend, like all of us, failed their parents in big and small ways, but their parents always DID keep and love them. In the end, they turned into the fine adults that their parents had hoped for.

In our age of broken homes and broken hearts, this story no longer reflects a common experience. Many people live in a world of land mines – never knowing when their relationships are going to blow up under their feet. Some react to this by desperately trying to do everything right and despising themselves for failing. Others spend their lives trying to make sure their loved ones do everything right and despising THEM for failing! Still others give up the attempt altogether.

No matter how broken our families and our own lives are, though, we can always trust in the loving kindness of God, Who unweariedly showers down His gifts upon us. That is not to say that we will like everything that He allows to happen in our lives. In His love for His children, He also disciplines us so that we may grow up into the full stature of Christ.

As we prepare to enter Great Lent and journey towards the Pascha, may we increase in awe of and love for our God, Who despite our many failures DOES keep and love us!

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



Metropolitan Kallistos

A SPECIAL VISIT

Our community had the great honor and pleasure of hosting Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) for a short visit in mid-February when he was in northern California for the Ss. Cyril and Athanasius Institute's Symposium on Prayer. We are grateful to His Eminence for his kindness in visiting us.



His Eminence meets Petie



ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE

We are delighted to report that the renovations on the “fish shed” are almost done! Soon, the sisters will begin moving the office into its temporary home. The next step in construction is to enlarge the bathroom in St. Nicholas House and make it more handicapped-accessible. We do have one unexpected problem, though. The “fish shed” is so nice now that several sisters are hoping to live in it!



Proof that work can be fun!



Almost finished!

ORTHODOX LIFE IN THE INTERNET WORLD

On Saturday February 23, Dr. John Klentos and Ann Woods of the Patriarch Athenagoras Institute spoke on *Orthodox Life in the Internet World*. Dr. Klentos spoke first, addressing the issues “What is the Orthodox Life?” and “What are the advantages and challenges of our Internet Age?” After a lively discussion, he summed up the answer to the first question as follows: The Orthodox Life is a life 1) within the Church, 2) of doxology (praise of God), 3) focused on Christ, 4) oriented towards the Eschatological Paradise (the fullness of time, life in the Kingdom of Heaven), and 5) rooted in tradition. As for the second question, the main advantage of the Internet Age is vastly increased communication and with it the opportunity for reaching out with the Gospel. The major challenges are the disconnect from the actual world (including the people around us and the Church) and the greatly increased temptation to focus on ANYTHING but God. To address these challenges, we need to be aware of 1) our goal – to love God and our neighbor and to be holy and 2) our time – remembering to consecrate it to God. Dr. Klentos also stressed the importance of St. Nicholas Cabasilas' (ca. 1320-1392) *The Life in Christ* as a guide for Christian laypeople trying to live the Orthodox life today.



*Dr. John Klentos-
making a forceful
point!*



*Ann Woods – there is
something to be said for
pre-internet technology*

In the second talk, Ann used St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1749-1809) as an historical precedent. Colonial expansionism, scientific endeavor, and printing presses were vastly increasing people's ability to communicate. Grasping this great opportunity to educate the laity, St. Nicodemus published the *Philokalia* and a great many texts. He also recognized the danger of certain trends of the time and worked to craft appropriate responses. Thus, he provides a model of discernment in responding to major cultural change. The discussion then turned to resources that help us respond wisely to our internet world. These can largely be summed up by the Liturgical, Sacramental, and Ascetic life of the Church; reading of Scriptures and the Fathers; a life of repentance and faith; and the help of others, particularly those who are farther along on the path towards God.

This was the first of what we hope are many retreats jointly sponsored by the monastery and the Patriarch Athenagoras Institute. We are deeply grateful to our speakers and to Metropolitan Nikitas for this opportunity. Hopefully, we will soon be announcing our next retreat!



FEBRUARY FRIENDS MEETING

At our February 10 Friends meeting, Mother Melania spoke on *How Crazy Is That: Part 2 – Becoming Sane*. She framed the question of sanity and insanity with the illustration of creation as a gift. All creation is given to us to help us know God. So, creation is like a series of gift boxes and God is the gift inside. Each gift box reflects God in a unique way. Because of the fall, though, we focus on the gift box and forget that God is the real gift. For example, water should cause us to desire the Fountain of Life. However, in our fallenness, we see water as a thing in itself and miss its inner meaning. Through His Incarnation and the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ changed this tragic state of things. Renewing nature, He made the “gift boxes” transparent again for those who are willing to search out God first and foremost.

The connection to insanity and demonic possession is this. Everyone except the saints is insane in the sense that we see something – say, a tree – and don't go further to see God revealed in the tree. An insane person or demoniac might think the tree is an enemy soldier and try to kill the “soldier” in fear. While their actions may be “crazy” and even destructive, their insanity is to be pitied. The important question is not how we react to the “gift box,” but whether we desire the God, the Gift inside every gift box. An insane person or demoniac, despite his irrational actions, may in his moments of lucidity yearn towards God. The rest of us may be content just to go along in our fallen way – appreciating the gift boxes, but never yearning for the Gift. So, as with last month's talk, the conclusion is that WE are the ones who are the most insane.

Mother Melania ended with a classic piece of monastic advice: 1) never do your own will and 2) always take the blame. When, in a spirit of humility and trust, we stop exerting our own wills, whatever happens will BE our will because we are assured that whatever God allows He allows for good. If we always take the blame, we never have to defend ourselves – God Himself will defend us. Yes, we will go through difficult times, but we will emerge purified. We can't do this all at once, though. So, we have to start somewhere. A good place to start cutting off our wills is not to insist on our will when we know it creates difficulties for the people around us. We can also say “No” to ourselves in little things – wanting to look at the clock, wanting a second cup of coffee, etc. As for taking the blame, we can start by accepting blame when we already KNOW it's our fault but are just too proud or embarrassed to admit it. The next step is to accept blame when everyone around agrees that it is our fault. Most likely they're right!! If we work on just these two things, it's a short cut (although a steep one!) to move from the insanity of our self will to the sanity of life lived for God.

March 2013 Schedule for **Holy Assumption Monastery** & **St. Simeon Church**

Monastery contact info – (707) 942-6244; email – sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com;

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

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
3 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	4	5	6	7	8 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	9 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Memorial Saturday & 40 Martyrs of Sebaste</u> 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Church)
10 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Church) Meatfare FRIENDS MEETING (at Monastery)	11 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	12 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Ven. Theophanes the Confessor/ Pope Gregory the Dialogist</u>	13	14	15	16 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
17 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Followed by Forgiveness Vespers Cheesefare	18 6:00pm Great Compline w/ Great Canon of St. Andrew (at Monastery)	19 6:00pm Great Compline w/ Great Canon of St. Andrew (at Monastery)	20 6:00pm Pre-sanctified Liturgy (at St Simeon Church) 8:30pm Great Compline w/ Great Canon of St. Andrew (at Monastery)	21 6:00pm Great Compline w/ Great Canon of St. Andrew (at Monastery)	22 6:00pm Pre-sanctified Liturgy (at Monastery) 8:00pm Matins	23 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>St. Theodore Saturday</u> 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Church)
24 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Church) 5:00pm Vespers for Annunciation (at Monastery)	25 6:00 am Matins for Annunciation 6:00pm Vespersal Liturgy of <u>Annunciation</u> (both at Monastery)	26	27 6:00pm Pre-sanctified Liturgy (at St Simeon Church)	28	29 6:00pm Pre-sanctified Liturgy (at Monastery) 8:00 pm Matins	30 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy <u>Soul Saturday</u> 5:00pm Vigil (both at St Simeon Church)
31 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Church)	Notes: Please see www.holyassumptionmonastery.com for the monastery's detailed Lenten schedule					

Announcing
THE MARCH 2013 MEETING
of the
FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

Sunday March 10, 2013

THE ORTHODOX DIFFERENCE:
What Makes Orthodoxy Unique?

Presented by

Dr. Stephen Lloyd-Moffett

Associate Professor, Religious Studies, CalPoly, San Luis Obispo

Author of

Beauty for Ashes: The Spiritual Transformation of a Modern Greek Community



4:00 PM : Presentation

5:00 PM – Vespers

6:00 PM – Potluck

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE FRIENDS OF HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

April 14 – still a mystery!

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