



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – August 2014

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Have you ever had one of those days when you're frustrated with the way things are going and say to yourself, "I didn't sign up for this!?" If we could sign detailed contracts for what life has in store for us, what stipulations would we insist on? Most of us probably would not ask for hardships, yet at some level we all realize that the hard times are what mold us into the kind of people we should be and, in our better moments, want to be. Mother Victoria often says, "Did you ever find a life of a saint which reads: So and so found the Christian Faith, was baptized, and lived happily ever after"?

In the end, what we all really DO want in our deepest hearts is real love – the kind of love that stands firm no matter what. No matter how wonderful our spouses, friends and family, life situations, etc. are, we cannot appreciate them unless we allow real love to take root in our hearts. And that takes hardship! So, next time something happens that we didn't sign up for, let's remember that without it, we probably will never attain what we DID sign up for!

with love in Christ,

Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery

ZOO UPDATE – Special Guest Star

We have been meaning for the longest time to devote a zoo update to Daisy, the lovely and loveable yellow lab who comes to visit with our good friend Rachelle. Daisy is amazingly well-mannered, likes cats (although we can't say that they fully return the favor!), and is always happy to be fawned on by the sisters. She would make a perfect monastery dog except for one thing – she's not black!



Daisy – If I'm REALLY good, can I sit ON the bench?



HERE AND THERE



Knowing that we have often sold lavender sachets, a few of our friends offered us their lavender, which other friends graciously helped to harvest and process. We sent some of the lavender to be distilled and will be selling lavender essential oil and hydrosol. Stay tuned for more info!

We were blessed to bring our bookstore to St. Seraphim Church for their feast day. Thanks to all there for their support!

We had the great honor of a visit from most of the ROCOR bishops who were on the West Coast for the 20th Anniversary of the Canonization of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco. We thank them for their visit – as does Petie the Parrot, who enjoyed all the attention!



We were surprised ('astounded' is more accurate!) to be asked to be the choir for the annual July 4 Divine Liturgy at Fort Ross. It is always a joy to be with His Eminence Archbishop BENJAMIN and we look forward to his serving at our altar feast of Dormition this month!

And the last (at least, at the time of writing!) in a month full of special blessings, the Kursk-Root Icon of the Theotokos visited St. Symeon Church. We thank Fr. Alexander Krassovsky for bringing her to us and all who came to venerate her. Truly, we are richly blessed!

JULY FRIENDS' MEETING

The topic for discussion at our July 13 Friends' meeting was “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?” (Jer. 12:5a, NKJV). God asks Jeremiah this question after he complains to God about why He allows the wicked to prosper. On the one hand, only through God's grace can a human contend with horses. On the other hand, God seems to expect Jeremiah to learn something from his foot race that will prepare him for the race with the horses. What might that be? Perhaps He is reminding Jeremiah that we need His help not just in huge things, but in things that we think we can handle by ourselves. We delude ourselves into thinking that our good traits (courage, intelligence, diligence, etc.) are all our own, when in fact they are gifts from God.

On the other hand, there is the joke about the man who sat atop his flooded house and turned down three rescuers because he was waiting for God to save him. He drowned and complained to God, “Why didn't You save me?” to which God replied, “What did you expect? I sent you two boats and an airplane!” So, perhaps the other lesson is that, while it is true that we can do nothing without God and all our good traits are gifts from God, we must still exercise them. After all, if we're too lazy to train for the foot races, why should we expect God to give us the ability to run with the horses? We have not shown any seriousness towards God by doing what we CAN do, and for God to give us great gifts when we are in such a state is not good for us or the people around us.

The discussion then returned to Jeremiah's complaint. Most of us get angry or frustrated when we see people prospering despite not living as they should. There are ways to exercise our spiritual muscles in such situations. Some possibilities are to remind ourselves that we too have our sins, to realize that we don't always see the whole picture, to look for good in the other person, to pray for them, and to thank God for all the good things we have that we have not deserved. In the end, though, this is all about love, and all love comes from the One Who IS Love. So, whether we are dealing with grave injustices, our increasingly crazy culture or just day-to-day irritations, if we wish to be at peace and to love those around us, this is only possible by throwing ourselves and those with whom we are at odds on the mercy of the One Who is our Peace and is Love Himself.



Are we going to be quizzed on this?



JUNE 28 RETREAT



Dr. John Klentos

On June 28, Dr. John Klentos (Patriarch Athenagoras Institute, Berkeley, CA) spoke on St. Nicholas Cabasilas' *The Life in Christ*. Cabasilas was an important political figure in 14th century Byzantium, serving as an adviser to Emperor John Cantakousenos until John's retirement to a monastery. The major theological controversy of the time concerned hesychasm. Cabasilas took the side of St. Gregory Palamas, who championed the hesychasts, who strove for union with God through a life of intense inner prayer.

One might expect a book written by a supporter of the hesychasts to be geared towards hesychastic practice. But *The Life in Christ* was written for those living in the world but wishing to live godly lives. It starts thus: *The Life in Christ originates in this life and arises from it. It is perfected, however, in the life to come ... It cannot attain perfection in people's souls in this life, nor even in that which is to come, without having already begun here.* The two key components of this life are the sacraments of the Church and the training of our will for virtue. The first part of the book is devoted to Baptism, Chrismation, and Communion as the sacraments that give us our being (Baptism), animation (Chrismation), and union with God through Christ's Body and Blood (Communion). As crucial as these are, however, they are not enough. We must still train our wills for virtue. This does not mean that we, by virtue, earn our salvation. Rather, it is a matter of guarding what God has given us as a gift. (John gave a very helpful illustration here of two grading philosophies – the first is that the student comes in with a zero and has to work up to an A; the second is that the student comes in with an A and must simply retain it.) So, it's an encouraging idea – we cannot and need not earn our salvation. We must simply, by training our wills for virtue, not throw away what God has freely given.

The main reason that we DO throw away God's gifts is that we get distracted by the things of the world. So, we must keep returning our eye to God when it wanders. Unlike the hesychasts, who do this by their intense inner prayer, Cabasilas counsels those who live in the world to do this chiefly by meditating on the goodness of Christ. Those who follow this path will come to recognize their own great worth as members of Christ's Body, and will not betray that worth (and Christ's love) by running after things that are unworthy of Christ. They will become mature in the life in Christ, which is the life of love. As Cabasilas puts it, in the last words of his book,

“What then may life be more fittingly called than love? For that which alone survives and does not allow the living to die when all things have been taken away is life – and such is love. When all things have passed away in the age to come, as Paul says, love remains, and it alone suffices for life in Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom is due all glory forever. Amen.



Listening to every word!

August 2014 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
				5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	1 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Procession of the Life-Giving Cross	2 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
3 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	4	5 5:00pm Reader's Vigil (at Monastery)	6 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Transfiguration	7	8 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	9 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) St. Herman of Alaska 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
10 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) THERE WILL BE NO FRIENDS MEETING	11	12	13	14 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	15 9:00am Meeting of the Bishop/ Hierarchical Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Dormition (Monastery's Altar Feast)	16 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
17 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	18 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)	19 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Transfiguration (Old Calendar)	20 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	21 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Apostle of the 70 Thaddeus	22	23 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
24 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	25 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	26 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Martyrs Adrian and Natalia	27 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)	28 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Dormition (Old Calendar)	29	30 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
31 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	REMEMBER TO SAVE THE DATE – Saturday, November 15 – V. Rev. Stephan Meholick, pastor of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, San Anselmo, CA, will speak on Orthodox Worship.					