



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – February 2014

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Some weeks back, Fr. Joakim gave a wonderful sermon about “entitlement,” and how a sense of entitlement squelches thankfulness. The sermon sparked a spirited conversation about what exactly qualifies as entitlement. In common usage, entitlement seems to mean believing that we deserve things that we did not earn (just think of all the endless accusations of entitlement leveled at Welfare recipients). So, when we feel that we DID earn somebody's kindness, respect, etc., we do not accuse ourselves of a sense of entitlement when we're a bit miffed at not being treated the way that we “deserved.”

What's wrong with that? As Father mentioned, it leaves no room for thankfulness. We can't be properly thankful for what we feel is simply our due. But isn't it strange that we expect to receive what we deserve when we do good, but get upset when we get what we deserve when we mess up? So, if we widened our view a bit, we would realize that most of us have nothing to complain about. If the people in our lives are not always quick to recognize when we do well, they're probably much quicker to overlook our faults than we realize. This, indeed, is cause for thankfulness! And if the forbearance and forgiveness of our fellow sinners is cause for thankfulness, what joy and gratitude are called for by the untold mercies we receive from God every second of every day?

May God grant us eyes to see the love and forbearance we constantly receive from Him and each other. If we see just a small part of it and respond in thankfulness, we will be transformed.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

ZOO UPDATE – Fish ...

Caesar and Zorro have new “digs” and some new aquarium-mates. One of the sisters happened to find a nice 10-gallon tank at a secondhand store. As the goldfish were outgrowing their 5-gallon tank, this was welcome news – to the sisters at least. Caesar and Zorro were a bit shell-shocked at first, but soon decided that they liked their new home – replete with more plants to hide in, snazzy backdrop, bright new light, and new companions – four snails and two Chinese algae-eater fish (currently named Mao Tse Tung and Chiang Kai-Shek).



Mao – Ready or not, here I come!

Unfortunately, Caesar seems to have a taste for escargot. So, only two of the four snails are still with us. Hence, the algae-eaters were recruited to do the snails' job. The algae-eaters are too fast for our slow-moving Caesar to catch. In addition, Mao seems to have something of a Napoleon complex because he was seen butting into Caesar and Zorro at feeding time! If Caesar doesn't watch out, Mao may attempt a coup!

and (Banana) Chips

We regret to report an error from last month's zoo update concerning the parrots and the banana chips. It seems that, while Petie did indeed reluctantly eat the homemade banana chips, Oscar and Pixley consistently showed their disapproval by dropping them all to the floor in disgust. Apparently, their resistance rubbed off on Petie, and the nuns have now given up the attempt as a lost cause. What a surprise!

JANUARY FRIENDS MEETING

On January 12, we had our first Friends' meeting with the changed format (Vespers at 4 PM, followed by a potluck with an informal discussion). The discussion started with a reading from *Flight from the Devil: Six Slave Narratives* (autobiographies of former slaves in the antebellum South). This particular story was about Manning Brown, who lost his mother while he was an infant, and Mamma Betty, the slave who raised him. He became such a bad alcoholic that he at times would not know his own family. Once while in this state, he threatened to kill his wife, who ran to Mamma Betty for help because he loved her as his own mother and would usually listen to her advice. However, in his drunken state, he did not recognize her and so he shot her. She lived an hour and her dying request was "tell Massa Manning that he must not feel bad for what he did to me, because I know that if he was in his right mind he would not hurt me any more than he would himself. Tell him that I have prayed to the Lord for him that he may be a good boy, and I want him to promise that he will be a Christian and meet me in heaven." On realizing what he did, he tried to give himself up to the authorities, only to hear "it was all right ... the old negress was his slave." When her dying words were related to him, he did repent and eventually became a preacher.



At vespers

The story served as a springboard for discussion of how to "come to the end of ourselves" or, as the saying goes, "to let go, and let God." At some level, we all know that we need to do this, but most of us make sporadic progress at best. In the case of Mamma Betty, it was probably her humble response to the life of a slave that freed her from self-reliance and made her capable of such astounding love. In Manning Brown's case, it was coming face to face with having killed the person he loved most and yet being met with love.



An ongoing conversation

But how do WE come to the end of ourselves without going through such a tragedy? As a start, here are two major patristic counsels: never to trust ourselves in anything and to trust God fearlessly. The first flies in the face of our cultural mores, but as long as we trust our own abilities to do good, we can never attain to the true Christian life that is rooted in humility. So, no matter how successful we are or are not, we must never trust in our own abilities or virtues. On the other hand, just to stop at not trusting ourselves is a sure recipe for despair. So, we must cultivate trust in and love of God. An important part of cultivating that trust and love is to remind ourselves constantly that He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving. Many people know this theoretically, but have trouble believing that God loves them. The remedy for that is cultivating thankfulness. The more we thank God for His many gifts and mercies, the more we realize His love towards us. If we do this faithfully, we may not become saints any time soon, but we'll be moving in the right direction!



WE GET BY WITH A LOT OF HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS!



The ladies from St. Mary Magdalene Mission in Merced came for a retreat and helped with fruit preparation and gardening



Although our monastery is situated on less than an acre of land, it is too labor intensive for us to tend all by ourselves. So, we are always thankful for the loving help of our friends.

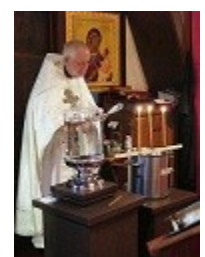


Thanks to our friend Sequoia Buck for all her help with this year's winter garden



THEOPHANY 2014

We were blessed to have Fr. James Jorgenson celebrate Theophany with us. After the service, he gave an impromptu talk on the challenges of translating the prayers and services of the Church from the Greek into the vernacular. In addition to the difficulties common to all translators, translators of Orthodox texts must balance two seemingly opposite concerns – making the service understandable to the laity and yet preserving an hieratic language (a different or at least elevated language in which we speak to God). We thank Fr. James for his words and hope to hear more on the subject at a later date!!



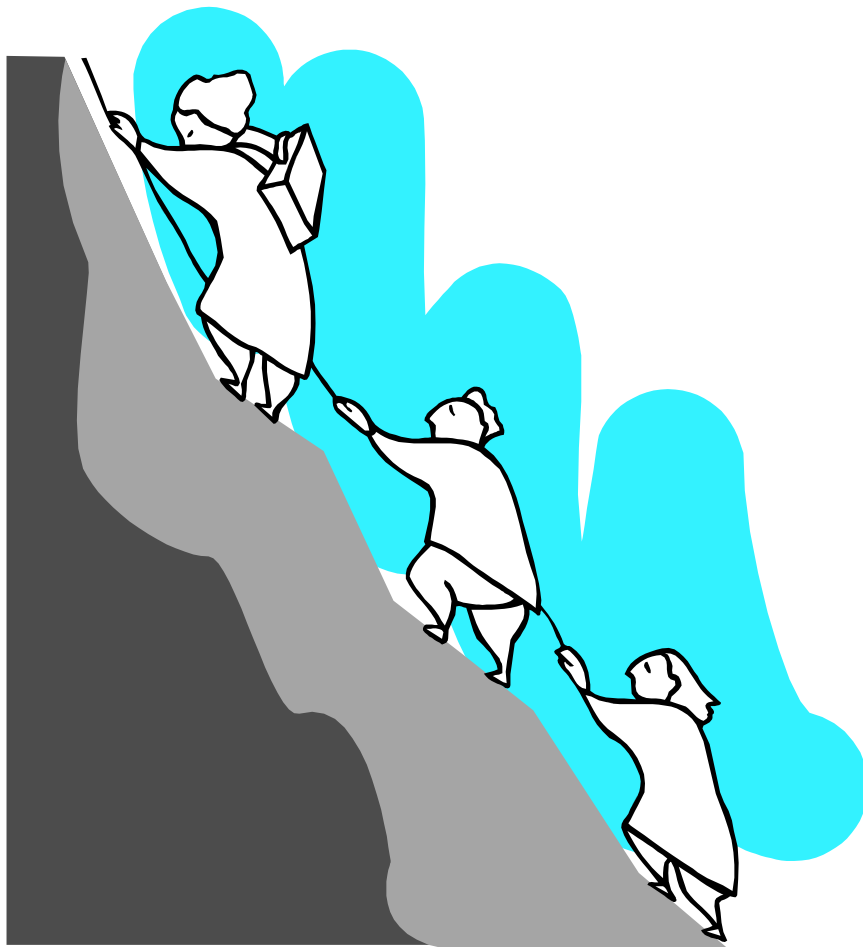
Blessing the waters

February 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>

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
2 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Meeting of the Lord (New Calendar)	3	4	5 5:00pm Readers' Vigil (at Monastery)	6 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Patriarch Photius</u>	7	8 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
9 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) 4:00pm FRIENDS MEETING (at Monastery)	10 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	11 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Martyr Victoria & Hieromartyr Blaise</u>	12	13	14 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)	15 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Meeting of the Lord (Old Calendar) 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
16 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)	17	18	19	20	21 5:00pm Readers' Vigil (at Monastery)	22 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) Soul Saturday 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
23 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish) Meat fare	24	25	26 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	27 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery) <u>Hierarch Raphael of Brooklyn</u>	28	

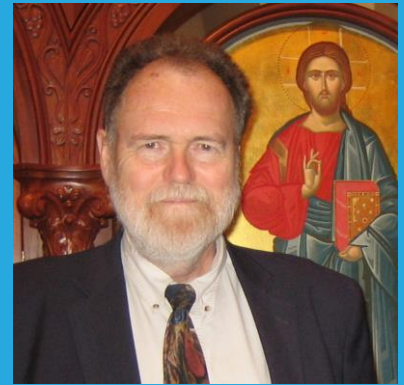


SATURDAY MARCH 15 **ADDICTION AND** **RECOVERY FROM AN** **ORTHODOX** **PERSPECTIVE**

9am – 3pm

Retreat Schedule will include lunch and Akathist service in monastery church

With Floyd Franz



OCMC missionary
Director and founder of
**St. Dimitrie Basarabov
Program**
Addiction Education and
Counseling in Romania

**No fee – freewill
offering**

**Limited capacity –
RSVP!**

**HOLY ASSUMPTION
MONASTERY**

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