



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter - May 2014

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

One of the most sobering “lives of saints” concerns the martyr Nicephorus of Antioch and the priest Sapricius. They had been like brothers, but quarreled and became bitter enemies. Nicephorus repented and tried many times to reconcile with Sapricius, but Sapricius always refused. Finally, Sapricius was arrested and led to martyrdom. Nicephorus yet again asked Sapricius’ forgiveness, but once again was rebuffed. At that, Sapricius lost the grace that allowed him to go joyfully to martyrdom, and he denied Christ. Nicephorus pleaded with him unsuccessfully not to do such a mad thing and then gave himself up to martyrdom in the place of his one-time friend.

What brought this story to mind are the beautiful words from the Paschal stichera:

*Let us call “brother” even those who hate us. Let us forgive all by the Resurrection. And so, let us cry, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!”*

All of our petty quarrels pale in the light of Christ's Passion and Resurrection. It is helpful and necessary to remind ourselves of that when we get annoyed or angry. In the end, though, it is the Resurrected Christ Himself – the One Who IS the Resurrection – Who empowers us to live the resurrected life of forgiveness, humility, love, and joy.

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY, HE IS RISEN!

with love in Christ,

Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery

## ZOO UPDATE – goodbye to Thumper, hello to Fiver and Stickers

We are sad to announce that our little black bunny Thumper is no longer with us. He was elderly for his breed of rabbit (Lionhead – although we always thought he looked more like a schnauzer) and the day came when he just could not go on. It so happened, though, that Dr. Franquelin (our local vet, to whom we owe many thanks for his compassionate care for our zoo members) and his staff were fostering a young male Mini-Rex rabbit named Watts, after Charlie Watts of the *Rolling Stones*. Not being great *Rolling Stones* fans, we renamed him Fiver, after one of the main characters in *Watership Down*.

Also having recently joined us is a beautiful long-hair black cat named Stickers (yes, we CAN imagine how a long-haired cat got THAT name!) whose family could no longer keep her, but thought she would enjoy being a monastery kitty. She is currently getting to know Simba. It may be some time before she meets our other cats, but we have instructed them all that they are to be VERY polite!



Goodbye, Thumper.  
We'll miss you!



Fiver – leaves are all well and good, but where is my carrot?



Stickers – Hmm, nice place.  
I think I'll stay here!



Simba – and WHO gave you permission to stay in MY room??!!

## APRIL FRIENDS' MEETING

Our April Friends' meeting fell on Palm Sunday (April 13). So, the discussion started with reference to the hymns for that weekend, which focus largely on Christ's power and majesty and on His humility and love. These are apparently opposite characteristics, and may even seem incompatible. Yet, contrary perhaps to Lord Acton's quote "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," it may be truer to say that power tends to bring out the corruption that we already have. Christ, of course, has none, and therefore His power is that of the loving God Whose glory and power are revealed precisely in the quintessential act of love and humility – His freely ascending the Cross for our sake. One of the many beautiful hymns expressing this is "The Lord comes willingly as a lamb to the slaughter that He may destroy the tyranny of the wolf" (Matins Canon, 6<sup>th</sup> Friday of Lent).

The attitude of the Jewish rulers was in stark contrast. They were so concerned about keeping their earthly power that they crucified God Incarnate – thus eventually losing both this life and the next.

But what about us? Unlike Christ, we have plenty of corruption inside us. How do we heal that corruption so that it does not spiral out of control and destroy us and those around us? The answer is many-faceted, but some key aspects are evident from another passage in the above quoted service, "All ye who through abstinence and prayer made your rebellious body submissive to the Word, both monks and laity, go out and meet Christ Who rides upon a foal and comes to His Passion." Instead of fulfilling our own agenda, we subdue our rebelliousness so that we may submit ourselves to Christ as the foal submitted itself to be ridden by Him. We do this by simple means available to us all – monks and laity alike – fasting and prayer. In His love, Christ then transforms us into children of God.

Also key is repentance. Peter is a good example of this. He was the chief apostle and probably one of those who were angry with James and John when they asked to sit at Christ's right and left hands. He was sure of his own strength and devotion to Christ, only to deny Him three times. Yet he did not despair, but repented. So, Peter's low point provided him a foundation of humility and love that allowed him truly to be the chief of Christ's apostles – full of power yet not corrupted by it because of the humility and love that continued to grow in him – helped no doubt by his realization of his own weakness.



Singing for our supper!

In our culture, there is a constant focus on "empowerment." But the question we have to ask ourselves is "Empowerment to do what?" If our focus is on gaining earthly things, we may succeed – but only for eighty years or so – and we will have lost eternity. If our focus is on the Kingdom of Christ, then that empowerment comes at a cost – we must be as lambs come to slaughter. Only then can we destroy the tyranny of the wolf.

## HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA

We are grateful to God for another beautiful Holy Week and Pascha and for the friends with whom we shared this wonderful time. Below are some pictures of this wonderful season.



Great and Holy Friday –  
procession with the shroud



Great and Holy Saturday –  
all creation awaits the  
arising of Christ



Pascha –  
Christ is risen!



And all creation rejoices!

## May 2014 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	2 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>St. Athanasius the Great</u>	3 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
4 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Sunday of the Myrrbearers</u>	5	6 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	7 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>St. Alexis Toth</u>	8	9	10 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
11 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  <u>Sunday of the Paralytic</u>  4:00pm Vespers, followed by FRIENDS POTLUCK (at Monastery)	12	13 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	14 5:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Midfeast of Pentecost</u>	15	16	17 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
18 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  <u>Sunday of the Samaritan Woman</u> )	19	20	21	22	23	24 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)  <i>Visiting Clergy</i>
25 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Sunday of the Blind Man</u>  <i>Visiting Clergy</i>	26	27	28 5:00pm Reader's Vigil (at Monastery)	29 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Ascension</u>	30	31 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)

## COMING RETREATS – SAVE THE DATES!

**Saturday, June 28 – Dr. John Krentos of the Patriarch Athenagoras Institute, Berkeley, CA, will speak on *The Life in Christ according to St. Nicholas Cabasilas*.**

**Saturday, November 15 – V. Rev. Stephan Meholic, pastor of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, San Anselmo, CA, will speak on Orthodox worship.**