



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – December 2015

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

My tablet's word-suggesting function often proposes "forgetting" in response to the word "keep." I was ruminating about how often I "keep forgetting" God in the day-to-day bustle of life, as several of us were on the way to the funeral of a dear friend.

At the funeral, the last words of Psalm 118 (119) jumped out:

*"My soul shall live and shall praise thee, and Thy judgments shall help me. I am gone astray like a sheep that is lost. Seek out Thy servant, for I have not forgotten Thy commandments."*

Perhaps there is forgetting and then there is forgetting. If we hadn't in some way forgotten God and His commandments, we wouldn't have strayed in the first place. But there is nothing like being in dangerous territory to bring back to mind the One Whom we have never completely forgotten - our loving Shepherd whose commands are given in order to preserve us from the spiritual wolf. Remembering God once again, we hasten back the best we can to seek the Shepherd of our souls. Yet, in the end, it is only because He seeks US out that we can sing with the Psalmist, "My soul shall live and shall praise Thee."

As Christmas approaches may we worship our Good Shepherd Who came to earth to gather us lost sheep, Who lay in the manger that He might feed us with His own Body and Blood, and Who died on the Cross that He might raise us up from death to life. He will never forget us. May we, by His Grace, never forget Him!

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*



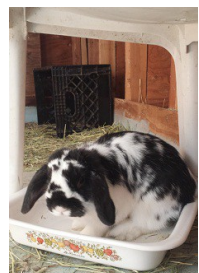
*Petie - I'm perfectly reasonable as long as I get my way.*

## ZOO UPDATE – Why can't we be friends?

We were hoping to report that Petie and Sunrise are now best friends. Our hopes were too sanguine, but at least we can say that they are still sharing the aviary without any major confrontations. This is largely due to Sunrise's peace-loving ways. But we are not without hopes that Petie will, in the long run at least, prove himself amenable to good influence!



*Sunrise - Okay, I think I'm ready to go back in.*



*Ricochet started it!!*

Ricochet and Chiquita, our two bunnies, have also not been best buddies. The fault for this rests squarely on Chiquita, whose Napoleon complex caused her to chase the far bigger Ricochet whenever the two were in the same space. Ricochet would put up with this for awhile, until he'd just had enough. So, we took Chiquita to the vet to be spayed in the hopes this would improve her temper. Later that day, we got a call from the vet's office, informing us that SHE was a HE (which goes far towards explaining why HE bullied a neutered male twice his size). After being neutered, the newly renamed CHIQUITO has come home and shows signs of getting along better with Ricochet.

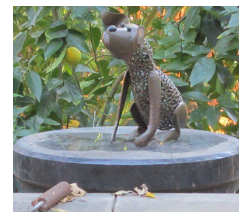


*What did I do?*



*Tin tin tin, save us from the fearsome kitty cat!!*

On quite a different note, we finally have a dog! Well, sort of. The sisters have long wanted a dog, but there always seemed to be reasons why that just wouldn't be feasible. So, a friend decided to buy us a dog that we could have no objections to – he doesn't bark, ring up large vet bills, need to eat, etc. Our new mascot, now named Tin tin tin, is firmly ensconced behind the koi pond, where he is a terror to predators (that's our story, and we're sticking to it!)



*Never fear.  
Tin tin tin is here!!!*

## NOVEMBER FRIENDS' MEETING

Our November Friends' Meeting, which focused on the Christian understanding of suffering, started with this hymn, “By Thy suffering (πάθει), O Christ, we were set free from passions (παθῶν), and by Thy Resurrection, we were delivered from destruction. Lord, glory to Thee” (Great Vespers, Saturday evening, Tone 1). The basic meaning of suffering or “pascho” (from which πάθει and παθῶν are both derived) is to have something befall one. Christ voluntarily “suffered” the pains and indignities of human existence, culminating in the Cross for love of us in order to free us from suffering. But this freedom from suffering that He offers us is not primarily release from PHYSICAL suffering. Rather it is freedom from sin and sinful inclinations so that we, too, may become free to suffer for love of others. For example, to the extent that we suffer from the passion of avarice, we cannot freely spend our time and resources to help those around us. But through Christ's Passion and Resurrection, we can repent until eventually we can love others with our whole being.

There was no suffering in Eden, nor is there suffering in the Kingdom of Heaven. But there is suffering aplenty in this fallen world, and it all comes one way or another from God – either to heal us of our sin or to perfect us in greater holiness. Recognizing this truth, we can see those who harm us as our physicians and accept suffering thankfully as a way to love others and to share in Christ's love. Christ's sufferings – freely undertaken for love of us – ARE His glory, and our sufferings freely undertaken for love of Him and others are OUR glory. In the end, then, we as Christians are called to transform our sufferings (i.e. the things that befall us) into voluntary acts of love. If we do that even a little, the world around us will be greatly transformed, too.



## GOODBYE FRIENDS MEETING, HELLO BIBLE STUDY!

After the most stalwart attenders of our Friends' meetings moved out of state, the meetings have dwindled to just a handful of people, if that. Also, at the request of some of the sisters, we have started a Sunday evening Bible Study with an emphasis on patristic commentary. So, starting in December, we are discontinuing the monthly Friends' meeting and opening up the weekly Bible Study to anybody who might be interested. Our Sunday evening schedule is now 4 PM Vespers, followed by a help-yourself meal and approximately 5:30 PM Bible study (it's quite okay to finish your meal during the Bible study!). We are currently studying the Gospel of John. Come join us!



## SPECIAL VISITS

*Mother Gabriella, Mother Melania, and Mother Christophora*



*Sunrise: As long as you keep telling me what a good bird I am, you can stay here forever!*

On October 28 & 29, Abbess Christophora (Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA) and Abbess Gabriella (Holy Dormition Monastery, Rives Junction, MI) visited our monastery after the OCA's Synaxis of Monastic Superiors, held at St. John Monastery in Manton, CA (for details of the Synaxis, see <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/monastic-superiors-conclude-synaxis-at-st.-john-monastery-manton-ca>). What a joy to have them with us, and may it be the first of many visits!

A few days later, we had a surprise visit from Abbot Tryphon (All-Merciful Savior Monastery, Vashon Island, WA) who was on his way to Santa Rosa to pick up icons for the monastery church from Matushka Ann Margitich. Thanks for stopping by!

*Abbot Tryphon with some of the sisters*



*Is it okay to say "Cheese!" on a fast day?*



## HERE & THERE

*Fundraising dinner in Oakland for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)*



*I LIKE this fireplace!*

*Storytelling at Ss Peter and Paul's Christmas Bazaar, Santa Rosa*



*Hey, Mom and Dad. Want to hear a story?*

*Thanksgiving dinner*



*We give thanks to Thee, O Christ our God*

*Members of St. John the Baptist Church, Orinda, CA and St. Nicholas Church, San Francisco, CA joined us for Liturgy and a short talk on November 21 for the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple.*



*Wait! Four more people want shots taken with THEIR cameras!*

## December 2015 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

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

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	30 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	1 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>St. Philaret the Merciful</u>	2	3 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)	4 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)  <u>Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple (OC)</u>	5 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
6 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>St. Nicholas</u>	7	8 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	9 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Conception of the All-Holy Theotokos by St. Anna</u>	10	11	12 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)
13 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>St. Herman of Alaska</u>	14	15	16 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	17 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths</u>	18	19 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
20 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	21	22	23	24 7:00am Royal Hours 1:00pm Vesperal Liturgy 5:00pm Christmas Eve meal 9:30pm Vigil (all at Monastery)	25 12:00am Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Nativity of our Lord</u>	26 5:00pm Vigil (at St Simeon Parish)
27 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at St Simeon Parish)	28	29	30	31 5:00pm Vigil (at Monastery)	1 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy (at Monastery)  <u>Circumcision of our Lord/St. Basil the Great</u>	