



## Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – April 2018

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

Some of you may be familiar with Candace Owens, a young black woman who has taken a lot of flak for becoming a conservative. In response to being called an “Uncle Tom,” she says, “Uncle Tom was the hero of the novel!” Actually, Owens understates the case. Uncle Tom is not just the hero of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, but as stunning a portrayal of a Christian martyr as you will ever meet in a work of fiction. Far from being the servile lackey we now associate with his name, Uncle Tom is a powerful man who loves and forgives the men who beat him to death – and perhaps even harder to do, freely and humbly loves those who treat him more as a beloved pet than as a man.

Uncle Tom in fact is a model of meekness – yet another watered-down term. Biblical meekness is the gentleness of a strong, self-controlled person. This is seen first and foremost in Christ Himself. He could have come down from the Cross at any time. Yet, He meekly stayed there out of love for the very people who were killing Him (and whom He Himself created!). His saints do likewise – and while Uncle Tom is a fictional character, countless saints have TRUE stories that are even more amazing than his.

How did Uncle Tom go from martyr to lackey? The problem isn’t him – it’s us. We’re much too self-absorbed to have any idea of Biblical meekness. We’re far too enslaved by our passions to have any comprehension of Uncle Tom – enslaved by men, but triumphantly free to love even the worst of them.

Thanks be to God, we don’t have to stay this way. We can follow Christ to His Cross, meekly stay there no matter how we are treated, and be resurrected with Him. And then our whole life will reflect the Paschal verses, “Let us call ‘brothers’ even those who hate us, and 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 tomb, bestowing life.’”

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

### ***ZOO UPDATE: Petie & Sunrise – Friends at Last!***

As you may remember, we adopted Sunrise the African Grey, almost 3 years ago because a) he needed a home and b) Petie, our own African Grey, needed a friend. Well, it soon became obvious that PETIE didn’t think he needed a friend – or at least not the friend that we found for him. So, the two of them entered a cold war of sorts, but with the rules set by Petie. In short, Petie had HIS area and Sunrise had HIS, except for when Petie found reason to go into Sunrise’s territory. Sunrise ignored Petie’s incursions for a long time, till at last Sunrise exerted some dominance of his own.

Not long after Sunrise decided enough was enough, we were very happily amazed to see them sitting together on a perch. Since then, they are rapidly becoming fast friends. So, it appears that birds of a feather DO flock together – at least, eventually!



*Petie - Sunrise just THINKS I've conceded dominance!*

## MARCH RETREAT



*Mother Melania - Now, what was I saying?*

On Saturday, March 3, Mother Melania gave a retreat entitled *Marriage, Love, and Sexuality: A Cultural Crossroads*. She started by looking at the changing American definitions of marriage, love, and sex from the original 1828 Webster dictionary to the current unabridged Merriam Webster Dictionary. For example, the 1828 definition of marriage included “a contract both civil and religious, by which the parties engage to live together in mutual affection and fidelity, till death shall separate them. *Marriage* was instituted by God himself for the purpose of preventing the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, for promoting domestic felicity, and for securing the maintenance and education of children ... In a scriptural sense, the union between Christ and his church by the covenant of grace.” Contrast this with the first two definitions in the current online edition – 1. a) (1) the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife, (2) the state of being united to a person of the same sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage <same-sex marriage>. Missing from these definitions are references to God (let alone Christ and His Church!), expectations of life-long union, and stated purposes of marriage.

With all these gone, little that is normative about marriage remains except a union that is sexual in some way – entered into for the sake of “domestic felicity.” We then looked at some aspects of marriage that are stressed in the Orthodox tradition. First, marriage is an icon of Christ and His Church. For both husband and wife, marriage is understood as a joyful martyrdom, in which the woman loves, respects, and obeys her husband as head, leader and protector, and the husband loves her with the love of Christ (and if we think that the husband has the more enviable role, that’s because we’ve forgotten that Christ’s Cross, endured for those who hated Him, is the measure of His Love). Last, marriage is a sacrament, in which God makes the biological life-producing act productive of eternal life.



*Too cute for words!*

Similar looks at definitions of love and sex showed that the uniting principle in the Orthodox view of marriage, love, and sex is the joyful, self-sacrificial, life-giving love of Christ, Who “for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross” (Heb 12:2); whereas the uniting principle in our current secular view is pleasure. This is not to say that we Americans don’t VALUE joyful self-sacrifice, children, etc. But it IS to say that our focus on pleasure greatly decreases the likelihood of marriages in which the husband and wife can live out joyful self-sacrifice and model it successfully for their children. The problem isn’t with pleasure *per se* – after all, “at [God’s] right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps 15/16:11) – but with pleasure as a guiding principle. To illustrate this, Mother Melania used the patristic concept of the three powers of the soul – the nous (eye of the soul), the incensive (angering) power and the appetitive (desiring) power. If you envision the soul as a chariot, the nous is the charioteer and the angering and desiring powers are the horses. To focus on pleasure is to put the desiring ‘horse’ in charge of the chariot with the angering ‘horse’ running with him in lockstep – definitely a bad idea!

This focus on pleasure has plagued our culture for many decades now, and we’ve all bought into it to one degree or another. It’s the road of least resistance and seems to offer happiness, but in the end it leaves our lives in ruins. The road of joyful self-sacrifice, on the other hand, is much more difficult – and NOT all that joyful when we start out! In the end, it will cost us everything we have, but it’s the only life worth living. So, we ended by contemplating which one we wanted and, if we wanted the life of joyful self-sacrifice, what next step we need to take to get there.



*Everyone's still awake. That's encouraging!*



## THE PERILS OF PHOTOSHOP



*Simba – This is NOT funny!*



*Cookie (aka Creme) - The better to hear you with, my dear.*



*Philly - I don't care WHAT you do as long as you feed me.*



*Balou - Being made fun of is thirsty work!*

## ***RETREAT/WORK PARTY***

On Saturday March 10, we had a combined retreat/work party consisting mainly of parishioners from Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Ben Lomond and St. Timothy Church in Fairfield, with various friends from elsewhere – especially Fr. Ian MacKinnon and other members of Fr. John Christianson's *Stylite Tree Trimmers* (oh, and not to forget Fr. John's yellow lab, Beemer). As you can imagine, one of the main things accomplished by the work party was tree trimming. But there was plenty of work of other varieties, too, from weeding to kitchen help to preparing inserts for wine-shipping cartons. You just never know what work you're going to get pressed into when you visit the monastery!



*NOT your Home Depot version of a chipper!*



*Fr. John – a different take on tree hugging!*



*Fr Ian - a priest's work is never done!*



*Beemer - Just let me know when you're ready for me to help!*



*Folding wine carton inserts - it's all in the wrist*



*And this wasn't everybody!*



*See? We TOLD you that wasn't everybody!*



## ***ICON FOR KOI POND!***

Christina DeMichele's beautiful icon of Christ creating the visible world (notably animals, and especially FISH!) is finally gracing our koi pond. Our thanks go to Christina and everyone else who made this possible – in particular, Dale Liid, who built the frame; Sergei Moroz, who skillfully corrected for our mistakes in measurement and who helped install it; and Bud Pochini, welder extraordinaire, who made the brackets for attaching the frame to the pedestal. Thank you one and all!



*Sergei & Bud - we don't think it goes this way!*



*Not sure who got the least enviable job here!*



*I think that will do it!*



*Glory to God and thanks to our good friends!*

## April 2018 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

Monastery contact info – (707) 942-6244; email – [sisters@holyassumptionmonastery.com](mailto:sisters@holyassumptionmonastery.com);

[website – http://www.holyassumptionmonastery.com](http://www.holyassumptionmonastery.com)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  6pm Bridegroom Matins  <u>Palm Sunday</u>	<b>2</b> 9am Vespers & Great Compline  6pm Bridegroom Matins  <u>Great and Holy            Monday</u>	<b>3</b> 9am Vespers & Great Compline  6pm Bridegroom Matins  <u>Great and Holy            Tuesday</u>	<b>4</b> 9am Presanctified Liturgy  6pm Matins of Holy Thursday  <u>Great and Holy            Wednesday</u>	<b>5</b> 9am Vesperal Liturgy  6pm Matins w/ 12 Passion Gospels  <u>Great and Holy            Thursday</u>	<b>6</b> 7am Royal Hours  1pm Vespers  6pm Lamentations Matins  <u>Great and Holy            Friday</u>	<b>7</b> 9am Vesperal Liturgy  11:30pm Midnight Office  <u>Great and Holy            Saturday</u>
<b>8</b> 12am Paschal Matins/Divine Liturgy  11:00am Agape Vespers (Macedonian Park)  <u>Pascha</u>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 9:00am Paschal Matins/Divine Liturgy  (Tentative)  <u>Bright Friday</u>	<b>14</b> 5:00pm Vigil
<b>15</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  <u>Thomas Sunday</u>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 6:00pm Vigil	<b>19</b> 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  (Tentative)  <u>St. Matrona of            Moscow</u>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 5:00pm Vigil
<b>22</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  5:00pm Vigil  <u>Myrrhbearers'            Sunday</u>	<b>23</b> 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  (Tentative)  <u>Great Martyr            George</u>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 5:00pm Vigil
<b>29</b> 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  <u>Sunday of the            Paralytic</u>	<b>30</b>	Due to major repairs at St. Simeon Church, all services are at the Monastery until further notice.				