



# Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – August 2018

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

A good friend of ours recently gifted us a poster entitled “Mutual Aid: In Gratitude to Those Who Responded.” The poster is a collage of the insignia of all the fire companies that battled the fires that ravaged Napa and Sonoma Counties last October. The sheer number of fire departments (177, if we counted correctly!) that responded to the emergency is hard to grasp. And that’s not counting the police departments, EMTs, etc. who also responded. Even harder to grasp is just how many individual firemen, policemen, medical people, etc. willingly laid their lives on the line for total strangers. It’s no wonder that even now we see signs on the road saying “Thank you, first responders.”

Some months after the fires, a somewhat different sign popped up, “Firemen are our heroes. Now, let’s rebuild.” You can look at that sign in a jaundiced way – as in, “Okay, enough of that. Let’s get to work!” Or in a kinder way, “Yes, firemen will always be our heroes, but now we have to turn our attention to getting our lives back together.” But there is a deeper way to look at it. Firemen and the other first responders put their lives on the line precisely so that we would be ALIVE to rebuild. So, rebuilding is a way to honor those heroes who made the rebuilding possible.

In the meantime, disasters haven’t stopped happening and the firemen and other first responders are out there now and will be out there next year and the next and the next. So, as you’re rebuilding (whether it’s your physical house or the house of your soul – which is constantly in need of major repairs), don’t forget to ask God’s blessing on those who have responded to the crises in your life. And in gratitude, keep rebuilding in order to glorify God, honor those who helped us, and be there to help others when the next disaster hits.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania  
and the community  
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

## ZOO UPDATE: special guest

Cookie (aka Crème) our newest cat received a surprise visit from Miles, the young man whose family owned her when he was a preteen and teenager. (Oops! We meant that his family were her domestic servants!) Miles has been keeping up with her progress through our newsletter (you see how important these zoo updates are!!) and emailed asking if he could come see her. We very happily said yes, although we were a bit concerned about the fact that we had changed her name from Crème to Cookie. As it turns out, her original name had been Oreo, but since she looks more like the crème center of an Oreo than a whole Oreo, she got the name Crème. So, Miles wasn’t upset, and we were all amused that we had unwittingly kept the Oreo motif. Well, not so sure if Cookie was amused, but then, there is no telling what cats are thinking!



*Of course, I'm delighted to see Miles. This is my delighted face.*



## IT'S LAVENDER HARVEST TIME AGAIN!



*Marie George & sisters  
- ready for anything -  
well, ALMOST !*



*Scruffy to Brian Durnian –  
What am I supposed to be  
looking at?*

It’s summer again and lavender harvest time. We are thankful to our friends who let us harvest their lavender and our friends who help us do so. Thanks, one and all!



*Dr. Frank and Angie  
Mueller and the sisters -  
Okay, time to get to work!*



*Daisy to Rachel Benney  
– When you cut that  
lavender, may I roll in it?*



*Fr. Philip Tolbert -  
civics can be fun!*

## ***SUMMER 2018 RETREAT – A pilgrim’s notes***

On Saturday, July 7, Fr. Philip Tolbert gave a retreat entitled *Expressing an Orthodox Christian Conscience in the Context of our American Citizenship*. The three main purposes of the talk were

1. to provide an understanding of Orthodox teaching on human freedom and the importance of that teaching for our daily lives as lived on earth
2. to understand why Orthodox Christians should be interested in the American constitutional form of limited government and how its endangerment should concern us
3. to equip and strengthen ourselves for more effective engagement with the non-Orthodox society and culture in which we live.

God created humanity free from sin and with freedom of choice. These two freedoms counterbalance each other. Freedom of choice is meant to be used in such a way so as to preserve freedom from sin, but instead it is used to lose both. The interplay of these two freedoms outlines all human life from alpha to omega!

As humans, we are composite of body and soul. Our body is to be subject to our soul, which is to be subject to God. And to the degree that we do this, we will have internal peace and there will be peace in the people and world around us. This is obvious in the saints (St. Sergius, St. Seraphim, St. Gerasimos ...) who lived at peace with lions, bears, etc.

Yet, our destiny as humans is even higher than this. As creatures, we are distinct from God in person and in kind. But in Jesus Christ, divinity (which we aren't) comes in contact with humanity (which we are) and yet each nature (divine and human) remains what it is. An ancient illustration of this is iron thrust into fire. The iron is in the fire and the fire is in the iron. Yet each remains what it is. So, by His Incarnation, Christ becomes fully human and yet remains fully divine, so that we humans might “touch” divinity or “become partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). St. Athanasius gives the classic expression of this, “God became man so that man might become god.” Obviously, we don't become god as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God. Rather, through Christ's Incarnation, our human nature is infused with His Divinity, and we can share in the life of God because He has shared in ours.

As for the second point, there are two main forms of government – limited government and absolutist government. Absolutist governments, which may be leftist (e.g. Soviet communism) or rightist (e.g. Nazi Germany), involve the exercise of unrestricted power by the ruling class. In limited government, in contrast, governmental power is restricted by law. The American form of constitutional government has high ideals but is also realistic about fallen human nature. The Framers of the US Constitution explained the value and need for limited government in this way:

*If men were angels there would be no need for government; if men were governed by angels there would be no need for limited government; but since we are talking about the government of men by men, we must limit the power of government lest it become a tyranny of the few who govern over the many who are governed. Even the best among us, given the right circumstances will choose self interest and self benefit over the interests and benefits of the whole. Because humans are fallen it is not wise to give unlimited power to any human being.*

The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Yet these rights have to be protected from power-grabbers. Thus, the constitutional checks and balances allow each branch of government to perform its own role without usurping the roles of the other two, thus protecting the people from governmental abuse. The Bill of Rights ensure specific rights – of particular interest to us are the first amendment rights of religion and freedom of speech and assembly. So, American constitutional government holds free will in high esteem and was crafted to protect it against governmental abuse.

This worldview has obvious resonance with Orthodox belief. True, even under fierce governmental persecution, it is possible freely and triumphantly to follow Christ unto death. However, our Liturgical prayer is not for martyrdom but for “A Christian ending to our lives, painless, blameless and peaceful; and a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ.” So, our constitutional government as traditionally understood is conducive to the fulfillment of this prayer. And the various court cases that have eroded or threaten to erode fundamental constitutional rights are clearly a concern to us.

So, how do we Orthodox Christians live in this pluralistic society of ours? First, we remember that our mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ leading to the salvation of those who hear. To do this, we must avoid two opposite attitudes – to try to force everyone to believe as we do or, conversely, to refuse to rock the boat out of fear of the consequences. Rather, we must take the middle path of speaking the truth in love in ways that are rational and winsome. And we must do this while striving for our own integrity (i.e. being ONE thing, not a bunch of fractured parts). Doing this, we may all enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Rom. 8:21).

**August 2018 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church**  
**Monastery contact info – (707) 942-6244; email – [sisters@holyassumptionmonastery.com](mailto:sisters@holyassumptionmonastery.com)**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	27	28	1	2	3	4 5:00pm Vigil
5 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  5:00pm Vigil	6 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  <u>Transfiguration</u>	7	8	9	10	11 5:00pm Vigil
12 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy	13	14 5:00pm Vigil followed by Lenten meal	15 8:40/9:00am Hours/ Hierarchical Divine Liturgy  <u>DORMITION</u> (Monastery's Altar Feast)	16 6:00pm Lamentations Vigil	17 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  <u>3<sup>rd</sup> Day of Dormition</u>	18 5:00pm Vigil
19 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy	20	21	22	23	24	25 5:00pm Vigil
26 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy	27	28 6:00pm Vigil	29 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy  <u>Beheading of St. John the Baptist</u>	30	31	

**NOTE: Our schedule sometimes changes unexpectedly. Please check our website or the recorded message on our telephone for last minute changes and updates on repairs at St. Simeon Parish.**