



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – December 2018

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

"Christ has slain Hades with love." We love this beautiful phrase that shows up every so often in our services, but it's easy to sentimentalize away its message. How, after all, does Christ slay Hades with love? As the King of Heaven who was born in a manger and hunted by a wicked earthly king. As the Creator of all things who had no place to lay his head. As the Judge of all who willingly stood before a weak and unjust judge. As the Giver of Life (and yes, Life Himself) Who took upon himself an ignominious death for our sake. So, love defeats Hades by dying to itself, loving God, and loving our neighbor.

This, in turn, sheds some light on the Scripture verse "perfect love casts out fear" (I John 4:18). If we love God perfectly, the only fear remaining is to fail to please Him. Then, free of all fear of what Hades can do to us, we can joyfully follow Christ to the Cross and into His resurrection glory.

Hades seems to be working overtime in our culture these days, and fear runs rampant. The left is scared of the right. The right is scared of the left. The middle is scared of both and utterly exhausted. In our fear, we easily mistake Hades' victims for Hades' willing minions. Then, we demonize each other, fear each other more, demonize each other yet more, and on and on. In such an impasse, what way forward remains? None – except to slay Hades with love. May Christ, Who was born in a manger and died for our salvation, perfect in us His love, that we too may slay Hades with love.

with love in Christ,

*Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

ZOO UPDATE: Ozzie joins the koi pond denizens

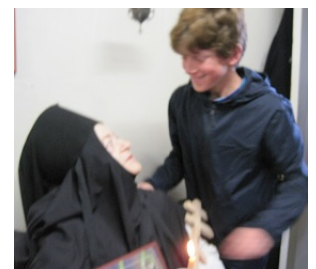


Never fear! Ozzie's here!!

Lately, our "friend" the great blue heron has been making his presence very known. A friend, in answer to this threat, sent us the perfect foil – an osprey kite dubbed Ozzie. Ozzie is a big hit with the school kids, definitely NOT a big hit with the great blue heron (yay!), and doesn't bother the koi one way or another. We're not sure whether that's because the koi are too smart to think he's real or too dense to know they should be scared of birds of prey. Considering their history with the heron, we suspect it's the latter case. Either way, Ozzie is on guard and all is right with the koi pond – for now, anyway.

OUR NEWEST NUN

On Wednesday, November 21, after the Divine Liturgy for the Entrance of the Theotokos, Archbishop BENJAMIN tonsured the former Sister Thekla as a stavrophor with the name Mother Olga (named after Matushka Olga Michael of Alaska). Please keep our new Mother in your prayers!



The newly tonsured Mother Olga and good friend and well wisher, Niko

FALL RETREAT



Fr. John Takahashi

On Saturday, November 17, Fr. John Takahashi presented a retreat entitled *Critical Junctures in 2,000 Years of Our Christian Heritage*. He split the talk into three roughly 700-year periods, with four critical junctures per period. The first critical juncture in the first period (roughly 30 to 700 AD) was the Church Council of Acts 15, in which it was decided that Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to become Christians. This council was a key step in the Christian understanding of the Hebraic tradition. The second was the embrace of Christianity by the Roman Empire, beginning with the Edict of Milan in 313, which legalized Christianity. The eventual Christianization of the Roman Empire allowed the Church to flourish in many ways, but also provided an ongoing temptation to reduce the Church to an earthly organization. The third juncture was the great migration of the Germanic Tribes into the Patriarchate of Rome (essentially, the western part of the Roman Empire, in what we now call Europe), starting in the 4th century and resulting in the sack of Rome in 410 AD. This changed the political situation in what was still nominally the western Roman Empire and started a power struggle between the Frankish kings and the Popes. This led to the fourth critical juncture, which was the gradual development of two Christian domains and histories. The west devolved into various kingdoms, united at least in theory by religious (and sometimes political) allegiance to the Patriarchate of Rome and the Pope. The other four of the original five patriarchates [New Rome (informally known as Constantinople), Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem] remained in the Eastern Roman Empire, which was now simply THE Roman Empire (the term “Byzantine Empire” was coined much later by historians, not by “the Byzantines” themselves).

The first critical juncture in the second period (roughly 700-1500) was the Triumph of Orthodoxy, within its historical context of the Muslim conquests of the 7th and 8th centuries. On a geopolitical level, these conquests put the patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem under Muslim rule, reducing the boundaries of the Roman Empire to essentially the patriarchate of Constantinople. On a theological level, Islamic reaction to religious images provoked the iconoclast controversy. The second juncture was the role of the Patriarchate of Rome as the Architect of Europe. The eventual shape of Europe and European thought would not have been possible without the Roman papacy’s role in shaping the west. (Other key factors in the formation of Europe were the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment, and Industrialization.) Third was the first fall of New Rome in 1204 during the 4th Crusade. Although many previous events had strained the unity of the papacy and the Eastern patriarchates, it was the sack of Constantinople by western Christians that sealed the division. Fourth was the second fall of New Rome to the Turks. With this fall, the four remaining original patriarchates were all under Muslim rule. So, by this point, the only ‘free’ Orthodox Church was the Church of Russia.

Due to time constraints, Fr John was able only to mention briefly the critical junctures of the third period (roughly 1500 to the present). They are 1) the Reformation and the Consequent Dawning of New Ages, 2) European Expansion and Christianity, 3) Age of Enlightenment as a Cultural Reaction against the Cultural Dominance of the Churches, and 4) the Years of Strife from the Soviet Revolution.

Throughout the talk, Father stressed that Orthodoxy is not a set of rules, but the Life that God has given us. Some of the Fathers talk about the golden chain of salvation. This chain has stretched unbroken throughout time and space, despite the various accretions and smudges that come from human failings. By knowing the history of this golden chain better, may we live this God-given Life a little better and help others to do the same.



Excuse me, Father: Was that the THIRD critical juncture in the SECOND 700-year period or the SECOND critical juncture in the THIRD 700-year period?

HERE & THERE

The traveling bookstore has been at Christmas Around the World, Sacramento & St. Seraphim Festal Christmas Bazaar & ...



We've run out of captions. Suggestions welcome 😊

A creative (and quite successful) way to encourage the school children not to litter



Grandpa!!!

Speaking of creative solutions – putting to good (and tasty) use the gifts of fruit given to us by our many good friends



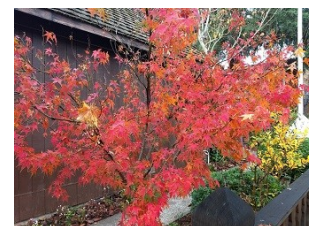
Now that this batch is done, shall we start on the ones that just came in?

Harvesting olives at St. Seraphim Cathedral, Santa Rosa



You missed one - or two or three or ...

Thanks to the unusual weather, we've been seeing the most amazing autumn colors



I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree ...

December 2018 Schedule for Holy Assumption Monastery & St. Simeon Church

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

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

NOTE – All services are at the Monastery until necessary repairs are completed at St. Simeon Church

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|---|--|---|-----|--------------------------|
| <p>NOTE: Our schedule sometimes changes unexpectedly. Please check our website or the recorded message on our telephone for last minute changes.</p> | | | | | | <p>1 5 pm Vigil</p> |
| <p>2 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy</p> | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | <p>8 5 pm Vigil</p> |
| <p>9 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy</p> | 10 | 11 | <p>12 6 pm Vigil</p> | <p>13 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy <u>St. Herman of Alaska</u></p> | 14 | <p>15 5 pm Vigil</p> |
| <p>16 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy</p> | 17 | <p>18 6 pm Vigil</p> | <p>19 8:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy <u>Martyrs Boniface & Aglais</u></p> | 20 | 21 | <p>22 5 pm Vigil</p> |
| <p>23 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy</p> | <p>24 7:00am Royal Hours 1:00pm Vesperal Liturgy 5:00pm Christmas Eve meal 9:30pm Vigil</p> | <p>25 12:00am Divine Liturgy <u>Nativity of our Lord</u></p> | 26 | 27 | 28 | <p>29 5 pm Vigil</p> |
| <p>30 9:40am Hours/ Divine Liturgy</p> | <p>31 6 pm Vigil for Feast of the Circumcision & St. Basil (Divine Liturgy – Jan. 1)</p> | | | | | |