



Holy Assumption Monastery Newsletter – August 2020

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Dear Friends of Holy Assumption Monastery,

On July 23, we were celebrating one of the Feasts of the Pochaev Icon of the Theotokos, which commemorates the deliverance of the Pochaev monastery and its neighbors from invasion by Tatars and Turks. After a verse glorifying God and the Theotokos for this deliverance, THIS verse appears,

Therefore, even in years to come, save us, O Mistress, from deadly contagion and civil strife, from famine and fiery conflagration; for lacking strength in our souls, we, uncomprehending, are filled with despair and tribulations.

My first thought was, “Wow! This was written for US!” That IS true, but on the other hand, this was also written for almost any people in any era. No nation has been spared great trials for any great length of time, and now is OUR time. So, what do we do? Well, the service tells us that, too –

“Behold, the time is come for help from the all-holy Theotokos, as pitfalls increase in number! Lo! Now is the time for us to sigh unto her, O brethren! Let us therefore say from the depths of our heart: O Mistress, O Mistress, help thy people!”

We cannot save ourselves. We never could, you know. But our merciful Lord came to bring salvation, and we have His mother and all His saints interceding for us. So, when we have despaired of our own selves, let us all the more run to Christ, His Mother, and all His saints!

with love in Christ,
*Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery*

JOY IN A TIME OF SORROW – Two Baptisms

No matter what is going on around us, the joy of the Life in Christ goes on. This was particularly evident on Saturday, July 25, when our dear brother and sister Javier and Rachelle were baptized as James (the Brother of the Lord) and Mary (Magdalene) – outside and with social distancing! One of the sisters remarked that, although we did have the blessing of having the Paschal Liturgy (but without the presence of our ‘parish’), we experienced Pascha in a particularly special way on this day. That makes perfect sense. Christ died and rose again so that we may die and rise with Him in baptism and throughout our whole lives. It was a great privilege and joy to be with James and Mary as they started this blessed journey. Many years to you both, and, whatever darkness is around us, may we all shine gloriously together with the Light of Christ!



*Grant unto me a robe of light, O Thou Who
clothest Thyself with Light as with a garment*



ZOO UPDATE – Cats in the Belfry

Balou, our Russian Blue, has recently decided to extend his musical repertoire from meows to bells. This past Sunday, he decided to join our bell-ringing sister for the post-Liturgy bell peal. He was focusing his attention on playing the foot pedals, which made it a little more difficult for the human member of the pair to do HER part. He was patient with her, however, and all went well. Since then, he has been continuing to spend time in the belfry, no doubt getting ready for NEXT Sunday. It will be interesting to see what he comes up with!



Balou the Bell Kitty

ZOOM 1.1 – Fr. Spyridon Jajeh Speaks Again on COVID & Bioethics

On Sunday July 5th, Fr. Spyridon Jajeh gave the second of an ongoing series on COVID and bioethics and the life in Christ in general. Once again, we started by pondering some questions:



Fr. Spyridon Jajeh

1. Why do we get sick? Why do we die? Is this natural?
2. Is there a connection between Sin and sickness? Does one cause the other? Are they interrelated? What is the relationship between healing and forgiveness of sins? We know of psychosomatic interaction and affect. Does Sin cause sickness or do they just mutually affect each other—is it causative or correlational?
3. Does GOD cause sickness, pain and death? If so, why does He allow it?
4. Is God punishing us or just “persuading” us to repentance when calamities occur?

We started by trying to understand what kind of sickness sin is. In the Orthodox view, sin is viewed primarily as a condition of spiritual sickness. This is largely opposed to a western emphasis on sin as a breach of law, resulting in a state of guilt deserving of punishment. As physical illnesses left unchecked lead to physical death (the separation of soul and body), this spiritual illness called sin can also be terminal, resulting in spiritual death (the complete disruption of communion with God). Sin distorts the whole human being as created by God and corrupts the Image of God inherent in us all. It diminishes the divine likeness within us, causing a distorted and delusional understanding of the world. Thus, the person is distracted from fulfilling his natural potential to become deified, i.e. to live in communion with the Triune God.

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve experienced the beauty and joy of pure communion with GOD. They spoke together, were in each other’s presence, and collaboratively worked together... As in the eternal Kingdom of God, so in Paradise there was “no sickness, sorrow, or distress.” We were created to live in HEALTH, both of body and soul with our Creator who fashioned us in this wise.

However, our first parents began to look inward and not God-ward and used their God-Given free will each to become the center of their own life. From this tragic choice, illness of both body and soul ensued. The natural flow of conversation and communion with the Divine ceased and our relationship with God and each other was torn asunder. This state of confusion is what the Orthodox Church generally calls the state of sin. We inherited and continue to pass down a human nature that is inverted, upside down, distorted, delusional and misdirected.

In a right-side-up world, God is our primary focus (both personally and as a community), and all else is secondary. Instead, we seek things first and then God second, or third, just when we need something, or not at all. We all have a difficult time being attracted to spiritual things, praying, and hearing the Voice of God, who is always calling us and exhorting us, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33). These words are both a challenge and a medicine – a challenge because we see how little we obey Christ’s commands, but a medicine because He will heal us as we do indeed start to seek Him first.

As is par for our course, we ran out of time. We look to continue the conversation on a regular basis and pray these engagements are profitable to all of you, also.

JOIN US for another Zoom retreat, Sunday August 2 at 1 pm, as we delve further into living in Christ.



AUGUST CALENDAR & PLANS FOR DORMITION

All Divine Liturgies are open to the parish, but with continued social distancing, masks, etc. Sadly, parishioners cannot yet join us for meals.

- Sunday Hours/Divine Liturgy – 9:40 AM/10:00 AM
- Sunday August 2 – 1:00 PM Continuation of Zoom talk on bioethics
- Thursday August 6, Transfiguration Hours/Divine Liturgy – 8:40 AM/9:00 AM
- Saturday August 15, Dormition Hours/Divine Liturgy – 8:40 AM/9:00 AM

Due to the continuing COVID restrictions, we will not have a feast for Dormition. Instead, we invite you to join us for

A ZOOM TALK ON THE DORMITION – from its history to its day-to-day application in our lives

with Fr. Anthony Roeber and Mother Melania

SATURDAY AUGUST 15 – 1 to 3 PM



St Nicholas House Project

Dear Friends,

Since March 2020, when shelter-in-place orders took effect in California, all efforts toward raising funds for the St. Nicholas House Rebuild have been on hold. Our immediate concern has been for the safety and well-being of our community and neighbors, whose lives and livelihoods have been imperiled.

While much uncertainty remains, many people have encouraged us to resume the work of bringing a new building to the monastery. We trust that by God's grace this project will one day come to fruition, and it is time to begin moving forward again.

**To reinitiate the St Nicholas House Project, we are announcing
the August 2020 RELAUNCH**

\$10,000 Matching-Donation Campaign

**Every donation, up to \$10,000,
will be DOUBLED in the month of August.**

**Help us raise \$10,000 this month,
and put \$20,000 in the St. Nicholas House Building Fund!**

This project remains a critical part of providing better accommodations and work spaces for sisters and guests in the immediate future and for the next generation of monastics and pilgrims.

Help make the new St. Nicholas House a reality!

Thank you for your support!