



HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER



Dear Friends,

At the beginning of 2020, various writers expressed the hope that it would be the year of 20/20 vision. It seems, though, that 2020 has proven to be the year of the failed vision test. So many questions have been raised that we have done a poor job answering. What matters more: physical safety or community and love? Who are we first: Democrats or Republicans? Americans? Global citizens? Christians? Without clear vision, how can we answer these questions? The good news is that Christ Himself is our vision, and this truth is expressed beautifully in the ancient Irish hymn "Be Thou My Vision."

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Not be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best thought by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom and Thou my true Word,
I ever with Thee and Thou with me Lord
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son.
Thou ever with me and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise.
Thou mine inheritance now and always.
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun.
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

As we enter 2021, may we take these words to heart and may God grant us clear vision of Him!

with love in Christ,

Mother Melania and the sisters

ZOO UPDATE - Squirrels & Voles



Do I hear a nun opening the walnut jar?

One of the joys of life around the monastery is watching the antics of our squirrels. They love to chase each other, chatter away, and endlessly amuse themselves and us. They're also shameless beggars - and choosey ones, too! Walnuts are their nut of choice, for now, anyway. As for tomorrow, who knows?

Speaking of critters looking for treats, it seems that everyone's been munching on our persimmons, including the little vole to the right. We can't say we're always on the best terms with our voles, but we don't begrudge him his treat. After all, WE get to snack on persimmons, too!



Yum! Persimmons for dessert!!!

Christmas 2020

We considered entitling this "COVID Christmas," but COVID cannot limit Christmas any more than any other calamity over the millenia could. So, while this was a DIFFERENT Christmas for us, the important thing remains the same - CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!



Communion during the Christmas Vespers Liturgy



The light of our newborn King shines no matter what!

December Zoom Talk with Bishop DANIEL



His Grace, Bishop DANIEL

On Saturday December 12, we were honored to have Bishop DANIEL, the auxiliary bishop of our diocese, give a 2-hour Zoom retreat entitled *Walking to Bethlehem*. He compared our 40-day Nativity Fast (Christmas Lent) to a seekers' journey - a spiritual journey, but also a

journey of practical, hands-on preparation as well. In this journey, we seek shelter in the presence of the Savior whose birth we prepare to celebrate. After going through the scriptural infancy narratives and explaining where some of the extra-biblical details come from, His Grace focused on the journeys that the Theotokos, St. Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men took to Bethlehem.

The Theotokos, the central character in these narratives, exemplifies obedience to the will of God throughout her entire life. In this particular narrative, we see her walking 100 miles on a difficult, dangerous journey while nine months pregnant. So, she is our example of trust and obedience in difficult and perilous circumstances.

St. Joseph walked that 100 miles with her, but his journey had its own characteristics and challenges. He chose to believe the angel's incredible tale and act as protector for Mary and her Son. This must have taken great strength. Notably, he is SILENT - he never says one word in Scripture. His obedience is shown entirely in actions. He is an example for us of the humility of saints who gladly keep a low profile and desire only to obey and glorify God.

The shepherds' journey was only about two miles, but the amazing thing is that the angels proclaimed Christ's birth to them at all. The shepherds were Jews, and thus of the chosen people. Even so, they were not only low on the social scale, but were considered untrustworthy and basically outsiders. Yet these fringe characters RUSHED to see the newborn King and then told others what they had seen, thus becoming in a sense the first apostles. So, they are reminders to us that God often calls the marginalized and then speaks through them. But are we humble enough to listen?

The wise men's journey was the longest, the most side-tracked, the most intrigue-filled and the most dangerous. Pagans though they were, they sought the Truth by following the star and reading the ancient prophecies. They obeyed the voice of the angel who told them not to return to Herod. They bowed down in worship before the Infant Savior. They gave precious gifts as an act of devotion and worship.

Thus, they are examples for us of perseverance, discernment, and true worship.

The Theotokos, St. Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men had different journeys, but they all shared the same destination - Bethlehem, the City of Bread - where Christ the newborn King and the Bread of Heaven lay. We also have our own journeys to that same destination. So, His Grace finished by encouraging us, as we travel on our own Lenten journeys to Bethlehem, to ask the Lord's help in opening our hearts and minds to the many graces that He has showered upon us during these challenging times.

St Nicholas House Update

Dear Friends, we were astonished at your generosity on Giving Tuesday. We did not want to ask too much of our extended community, knowing what a difficult year this has been. We thought it might take us most of December to reach our \$10,000 goal -- and then you matched it in mere hours! Not only matched it, but far surpassed the goal, eventually reaching nearly \$20,000 and putting our total near \$260,000. We thank God for you, and for His love that surrounds us all!



CALENDAR

SUNDAYS - Hours/Divine Liturgy at 9:40AM/10:00AM

TUESDAY JAN 05 (Theophany Eve - Tentative) - Royal Hours 7:00AM; Vespertal Liturgy 1:00PM; Vigil 6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY JAN 06 (Theophany) - Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

ZOOM RETREATS

SAT. JAN 9, 10AM-12PM - Fr. Spyridon Jajeh, *Killing of the Innocents - Herod & Abortion*

SAT. FEB 13, 10AM-12PM - Fr. Anthony Roeber, *From One Day to More than 40: Preparing for Pascha*