



HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

MARCH 2021 NEWSLETTER



Dear Friends,

The truth of things revealed thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, a model of meekness and teacher of abstinence. Wherefore thou hast won the heights through humility and riches through poverty. Beseech Christ God, O father, that our souls be saved.

The above is the general troparion for a hierarch. Although describing a holy bishop, it provides great guidance as we go into Lent.

- Are we rules (i.e. measuring sticks) of faith? Do we live out the faith once and for all delivered to the saints in a way that encourages people to do likewise?
- Are we models of meekness? Do we think, say, and do the good and loving thing, unaffected by people's praise or censure?
- Are we teachers of abstinence? Do our lives show the joy that comes from not being slaves to our stomachs, sex drives, material desires, etc.?
- Have we won the heights through humility? Do we emulate the humble King Who died for His servants?
- Have we won riches through poverty? Are we so grateful to God for all that we have that we don't crave what we don't have?

Looks like we have a lot of work to do this Lent! But be of good cheer - we have the prayers of the holy hierarchs and all the saints to help us!

With love in Christ,
Mother Melania and the sisters

ZOO UPDATE

If you visit the monastery, or if you listen to the livestream of a Sunday Divine Liturgy, chances are you will hear the birds. During a Divine Liturgy you might hear Petie in particular: if he's on the Main House deck, he will "participate" with whistles, beeps, and sometimes even words! Petie knows quite a few words, although you won't get him to "perform" them on command. He decides when to use them, but there are some predictable moments: he loves to say "hello" when the sisters go through the deck door of the refectory; he will also say "hello" over and over while his cage is being cleaned; and when his breakfast or dinner is being prepared, he encourages Mother Macrina with several phrases: "Ready? Here go! (his abbreviation of "here you go") Good work, Petie!" Yes, good work, Petie. Keep it up!



If I say 'good work,' will you give me something tastier to eat?

ZOOM RETREATS

SAT. MAR 13, 10AM-12PM - Bishop DANIEL, Lenten Lessons
SAT. APR 10, 10AM-12PM - TBA

MARCH SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS - Hours/Divine Liturgy at 9:40AM/10:00AM
for our Lenten schedule, please see our website

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February Zoom Talk with Fr. Anthony Roeber



On February 13, Fr. Anthony Roeber presented a Zoom retreat on how the preparation for the celebration of Pascha has changed over time and yet remained constant in its focus. He began with the reminder that fasting, for example, has different purposes and that the origin of Christian fasting, prayer, and alms-giving lie in the Old Testament. There was only one public, communal day mandated under the Law—the Day of Atonement. But individual fasting was common among the judges, prophets, and rulers of Israel - both as acts of repentance for sin as well as preparation for an encounter with God. The Christian understanding of preparation also combines both the focus on the communal and the personal deepening of repentance and renewal. The life of John the Baptist (the last of the prophets), Jesus' own baptism, His being led by the Spirit into the Wilderness, and His fasting in preparation for the confrontation with Satan inform the Christian understanding of preparation for a return and renewal of our deep encounter with God.

In the apostolic era and the first two centuries of the Church's history, we find only scattered remarks and information about the details of preparation for Pascha. We assume, for example, that the Church of Jerusalem, composed of Jewish converts to Christianity, continued to observe communal and individual fasting, prayer, and care for the needy through almsgiving, but we have no details on this. Because Christianity was a sometimes tolerated, sometimes persecuted minority faith in the Roman and the Persian empires, preparation for Pascha may have amounted to no more than a single day of complete, strict fasting. We have no

knowledge of a forty-day fast before the Council of Nicaea, and we cannot be certain that such a practice was universal. Only by the later 300s do more detailed descriptions of a lengthening period of preparation appear, especially in the Latin pilgrim Egeria's observations about the preparation of catechumens for baptism following the instructions of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. The faithful's fasting, praying, and almsgiving as acts of solidarity with those preparing for Illumination gradually became less obvious as Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire and adult catechesis declined. But the preparation for Pascha persisted, and with it the refreshing of memory that all Christians in baptism enter into the mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. A forty-day fast did become widespread, but with different ways of counting "forty" in the Latin West and the Greek-speaking East. In the latter tradition, Saturdays and Sundays are not Lenten but fall "within" Lent, hence the relaxation of the Fast to include wine and oil. Between the seventh and the eleventh centuries, the vesperal Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts assumed its present form. Originally offered Monday through Friday, it gradually came to be offered only on Wednesdays in the Byzantine tradition and on Wednesdays and Fridays in the Slavic. The pre-Lenten weeks of "Triodion" (Book of Three Odes) chanted during Matins from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee also emerged as part of the preparation period.

The retreat ended with a lively question and answer period. Two main points kept arising. First, the need to understand the variety of ways in which preparation for Pascha has emerged in different parts of the Church. Second, the importance of balancing communal preparation and worship of God with the personal discipline and repentance that each Christian must observe.

Once again, we are thankful to Fr. Anthony for his ever ready willingness to teach us. And as ever we look forward to the next talk!



A gardener's work is never done!



Neither is an office worker's!

We get by with a little help from our friends 😊

Special thanks to Fr. Stephen Howell and parishioners, who provided help with everything from polishing lampadas, to gardening, to putting up much needed railings on the stairs into the lower garden. We greatly appreciate your love and support!



But OUR work is almost done!



See?!