



HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

FEBRUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER



Dear Friends,

Recently, a sister did a kindness to one of our friends, who replied "That made my day!" It's an interesting expression.

What does it mean, exactly? That was the nicest thing that has happened to me so far today? It has changed the character of my day from bad (or at least BLAH!) to good?

So, who or what has made my day? God, because He created it and me. The people who are being kind to me, or simply quietly doing what they're supposed to be doing. The animals, plants, ground, and sky that God created. And me, too, when I accept all these gifts with thanks.

But then, there is "That ruined my day!" Here, I mean something like "My day has been UNMADE!" When my heart is in that state, I easily blame my problems on God, people, life, etc. In the end, though, I'm the only one who can ruin my own day. Look at the martyrs. They rejoiced in their sufferings.

Sadly, I'm doing well when I manage not to grumble at others for my problems.

So, no matter how my day has played out, it lies in me either to accept it as good or to grumble at it as ruined. A large part of my choice is whether or not I'm thankful to God and others. So, let's go on a treasure hunt of thankfulness and we may just find ourselves saying all day, "that made my day!"

with love in Christ,

Mother Melania and the sisters

ZOO UPDATE - Special Guest



Okay, so we don't actually know this sheep, but we decided it was fair game for the Zoo Update because we were right behind this trailer on our travels one day AND you'd be hard pressed to find a funnier caption on a trailer with a sheep than "Eat Beef." Full disclosure: we had to photoshop "Eat Beef" a little because it wasn't easy to get a picture while moving, and the best we could get was "Eat Bee," which is funny in its own right, but we don't recommend it!



Look, Ma, one hand!

ST NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE

As 2022 came to a close, we were within \$3K of meeting our \$100K matching grant. We exceeded that goal by over \$2K and have now raised over \$900K of the needed \$1.4 million! The bulk of the remaining \$500k will be supplied by a \$450K loan obtained through Orthodox Church Capital Improvement Fund (OCCIF). So, we will continue fundraising to raise the remaining \$50k and to repay the \$450K loan. In the meantime, work continues apace on the new house. Our deepest thanks to all who are making this a reality!

CALENDAR

SUNDAYS - Divine Liturgy or Typika, 10AM

February 2 (Meeting of the LORD) - Divine Liturgy, 9AM

For other services, please see our website.

ZOOM RETREATS

February 4 (NOTE CHANGED DATE!) - Fr Anthony Roerber, St. Valentine and Other Witnesses Ancient and Modern

March 11 - Archbishop DANIEL, Crucified with Christ: The Cross in the Christian Life

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ST. PETER THE ALEUT RESUMES HIS TRAVELS

For about six years, our monastery has been blessed with a unique icon of the Holy Martyr, St. Peter the Aleut. Innokentia (Robin) Wellman - who worked many years at Fort Ross - is committed in telling the story of the people who lived and died there, and most importantly to tell the story of the saints that lived and walked in that holy place. Part of the reason for Innokentia's commitment is this very icon. During her last months at Fort Ross, Innokentia was walking on beach when she spotted the corner of something colorful. After removing sand, she realized it was an icon of St. Peter the Aleut. He had returned to Fort Ross - his last home before his martyrdom.



Singing St. Peter out as he resumes his travels

Saint Peter's story is one of faith and honor. He refused to become Catholic, staying true to his Orthodox faith, even as he knew he would be killed. St. Peter, whose birth name was Chukagnak, was not actually an Aleut. Rather, he was a native of the village of Kaguyak, Kodiak Island, Alaska. He worked for the Russian American Company as a sea mammal hunter, arriving at Settlement Ross in California in 1815. With a hunting party in the summer of 1815, Peter traveled to southern California on the ship Ilmena to hunt sea otters. On or about September 17 the boat that Boris Tarasov (overseer) was in sprang a leak in the San Pedro Bay near the Channel Islands. The entire group of 24 hunters and Tarasov put ashore while the baidara was being repaired. After a few days, 20 Spanish soldiers on horseback attacked the group, committing inhuman acts. Chukagnak (St Peter) had his head split with an axe. All of the prisoners were taken to Mission San Pedro (most likely Mission San Gabriel Archangel as there was no Mission in San Pedro with this name). Boris Tarasov and 22 Kodiaks were transferred to Santa Barbara Mission, but Kyglaya and Chukagnak remained in custody at the San Gabriel Mission. These two were given the offer of accepting Catholicism, which they repeatedly refused. Eventually, Kyglaya and Chukagnak were brought out of jail by a group of Indians and a clergyman. The clergyman ordered the Indians to chop off Chukagnak's fingers, and then both hands; then they disemboweled the dying Chukagnak. During his martyrdom, St. Peter said only "I am a Christian. I will not betray my faith." At the moment of the martyr's death, the clergyman was given a paper, with orders to desist from torturing the prisoners. Thus, at the moment of his own death, Peter successfully interceded for the lives of his fellows. After reading the orders, the clergyman ordered Chukagnak's body to be buried and Kyglaya to be returned to his cell. A few days later Kyglaya was sent to the Presidio Santa Barbara. Eventually, he made his way back to Fort Ross and recounted the story of St. Peter's martyrdom.

Two hundred years later, St. Peter also returned to Fort Ross. The mystery of how his icon got there was solved, when Chris - the artist of the painting/icon - heard that St. Peter was at the monastery and contacted us. Chris' ancestors are from Kaguyak, St. Peter's own village. In accord with the traditions of his people, Chris intended to burn his work, but the panel with St. Peter on it refused to burn. So, Chris committed him to the bay, where he stayed till Innokentia found him months later.

When others heard of this story, they asked if they could host the icon. Then, for the first time, St. Peter left our monastery and touched the hearts of many people. One of these is Peter (James) Navarro. Peter belongs to the Native California Chumash tribe whose ancestors lived at the mission where Peter was held captive. In a story too long to tell here, St. Peter had been working in James' life for years. So, when James, who was not yet Orthodox, learned St. Peter's story and his own connection with him, it became clear that St. Peter had chosen to be his heavenly patron.

So, now that it is time for St. Peter to travel again, Innokentia, Peter and other friends joined us for a meal before we all gathered to sing St. Peter out on his latest journey, where he will no doubt continue to touch many hearts. St. Peter, pray to God for us!

KIDS' BOOK SALE!!!

When we started publishing my books, we set the price at \$7.99. Later, we raised the price of new books to \$9.99, intending to raise the price of the others to \$9.99 also. We plan to do that on March 1.

But **FIRST**, we're **running a sale**. All my \$7.99 and \$9.99 books are available at our bookstore from Feb 1-28 for \$7.50 (including tax, but not shipping).



mothermelaniaskidsbooks.com

For more info on our kids' books, please see [Mother Melania's Monthly Missives](#) page on our website.



RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY



No, that's not the ocean. It's our lower garden when the Napa River overflowed its banks earlier this month.

Thank God, we sustained no flood damage, but the roof of St. Barbara House (one of the small cottages) developed a major leak, and the house will require a new roof. Oh, well, at least the building is still standing!