



HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER



Dear Friends,

The other day, I needed a picture of our new ramp, and I was in a rush. The only picture I had was one with a few leaves strewn randomly over the ramp. So, I just photoshopped them out.

Later, the obvious occurred to me. Why didn't I just go back out there, sweep the leaves away, and take a new picture? Sadly, the answer is sheer laziness 😊.

Beyond that (which is bad enough), this little episode highlights how tempting it is to "photoshop away" our imperfections. Of course, it's ALWAYS been tempting, but we never had the ability actually to do it. Now we do.

I'm not suggesting that you never photoshop a picture again. But for myself, I'm going to think twice the next time I want something to look better than it does in reality. And I might just do something shocking - actually see if I can fix it!

with love in the risen Christ,
Mother Melania & the sisters

ZOO UPDATE: Petie Takes a Stroll



One of Petie's great joys (right up there with trying to nibble on people's toes!) is strolling on the deck rail. It's not quite the equivalent of a balance beam, but he still is pretty proud of himself for traversing it and ecstatic when there is an almond waiting for him at the end!

I'd have done more to get the almond, but don't tell anyone!

ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE UPDATE - NEARLY THERE

As this is being written, we are just days away from sisters inhabiting St. Nicholas House! Construction started in mid-July 2022 and less than 11 months later, our beautiful new house is essentially done.

We wanted to have an Open House before moving in, but logistics makes that impossible. The current plan is to do the Open House in conjunction with our Dormition Feast. Also, we will be paying off the construction loan for several years. So, we will have to fundraise for a while still, and we plan one more towards the end of the year. Our thanks to all who have made this a reality and will continue to support us as we pay it off!

In the meantime, the main house has gotten a much-needed facelift, with a power-washing that makes it look like new. We're still amazed!



Finally, thanks to all who have asked about the next-door property. A few friends have offered help and advice, but we still don't have the wherewithal to buy it. Thankfully, it is still available, and God willing, we may be able to work something out. We will keep you updated.

JUNE CALENDAR

SUNDAYS - 10am Divine Liturgy

Sunday June 4 (PENTECOST) -NO SERVICE

Thursday June 29 - 9am Divine Liturgy

For the rest of our calendar, please see our website

ZOOM RETREATS

NO JULY or AUGUST ZOOM RETREAT

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MAY ZOOM TALK

Fr. Spyridon Jajeh spoke on COVID: Assessing the True Aftermath. Fr. Spyridon is uniquely qualified to speak on this topic as he was on the front lines of the pandemic both as a priest and as the chief hospital pharmacist.



As a pharmacist, Father saw firsthand the painful deaths COVID patients died and therefore understands--not only academically but viscerally--the need to protect the susceptible from such a death. And he also appreciates that at the beginning of the pandemic, there was much that was unclear. But now that the dust has settled, it's important to assess how we handled COVID so that we can do better next time. Three areas of concern kept coming up.

1. To what degree did fear for our physical safety overrule our ability to consider equally or more important concerns? Countless small businesses were destroyed. Children lost months to years of in-school learning. Deaths of despair skyrocketed. Last, but certainly not least, places of worship were closed, thus denying care of the soul in a time when it was most needed. What have been the effects of all this?

2. What has this done to our relationships? Father gave some personal examples here. The devastation of seeing somebody dying alone while their loved ones could only watch on an iPad down the hall. Being outside jogging and watching others quickly move to the other side of the jogging path to avoid contagion. The sinking realization that we started treating EACH OTHER as contagions.

3. What effect has it had on public discourse and academic inquiry? Major public health decisions were made on limited or shoddy research. For example, the original estimates of 5% mortality rates (which would have been a true public health disaster) were based on a study that looked only at mortality rates of hospitalized patients. That is information worth having (and the death of anybody worth lamenting), but had we known the true mortality rate (~0.1%), would we have chosen a different course? This is just one of many examples of legitimate questions that never got a fair hearing. Journalists who tried to bring up these concerns were labelled as purveyors of misinformation or disinformation. Medical researchers with stellar reputations were marginalized. This is the opposite of how academia--and a free public discourse--ought to work. Yes, the stakes were very high. But that is all the more reason to listen to everybody and freely debate the merits and faults of all possible courses.

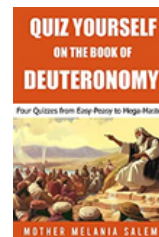
One of the most memorable moments of this talk was the story of Fr. Spyridon's great uncle Mousa, who was newly married when a cousin died in the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918. Everybody else was too scared to bury the cousin. So, Mousa did, caught the virus, and died 5 days later. He did what Christians have traditionally done - act in compassion towards others at whatever risk to oneself.

Of course, it's not that simple. Many, if not most, of us were acting out of compassion and concern for others by taking the shots, masking, distancing, etc. But how you balance concern for physical health with concern for spiritual and societal health is no easy balancing act! One thing that is clear, though, is that--if we have any hope at all of balancing the next situation better--we need to look at the bigger picture, we need to listen to each other, and we need God! May God grant us the wisdom, love, and courage to do so!

<https://holyassumptionmonastery.com/may132023covidassessingthetrueaftermath>

BOOK UPDATES

Quiz Yourself on the Book of Deuteronomy is now available as a \$0.99 Kindle book on Amazon. It will go up to \$2.99 on July 1. So, now is the time to get it. And please leave a review!



We will also be combining all 5 of the Quiz books into a paperback *Quiz Yourself on the Books of Moses*, which should be coming out by the end of the month. Many thanks for your support!

Also, please check out the June issue of Mother Melania's Monthly Missive. This month's featured book is *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle*. When Lucie goes looking for her lost handkerchiefs, she meets Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle, a hedgehog washerwoman.

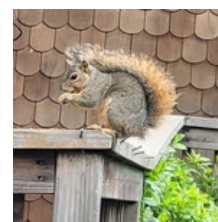
What happens then? Nothing much. But that's part of the charm of this story. Take a look and see what you think!



HERE & THERE

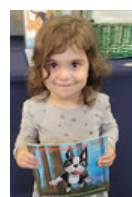


Salesmen in training or junior cookie monsters?



Petie's not the only critter who loves almonds!

Ascension Cathedral, Oakland May 19-21



Too cute not to include!



What's more satisfying? Almost selling out or only having this much to pack up?

Nativity of Christ Church, Novato May 27-28



Can you spot the nun? She's there. Honest!



No shortage of cute!