

# MONASTERY OF ST JOHN

of

## San Francisco

June 2018 Newsletter

Diocese of the West—OCA

### Eternity in Our Hearts

By Hieromonk Innocent

Spring has been unusually long and cool this year. Looking out the window as I write this, I see green grass and flowers everywhere. The wet, temperate weather has brought us a season to be remembered. Two weeks ago, on the feast of the Ascension, I wandered through the monastery forest, taking pictures of the wildflowers. Everything is beautiful, and I sometimes feel unworthy of this wonderful place we call earth.



Not many weeks from now, the grasses will produce their seed and die. The flowers will soon fade and disappear. All the vegetative under-story will take on a straw-yellow color, characteristic of a California summer. The conclusion seems unavoidable: life follows death, the sunrise of Spring is replaced by twilight and the darkness of night.

As I watch my loved ones age and approach death, I am reminded that I, too, am mortal. I can't help asking, "Why?". Why does Spring end? Why is flower of youth so quickly followed by decline, sickness, and death? Why must my life end when it seems to have only just begun? Are we to believe, as the famous Greek philosopher Plato taught, that life in this world is transient? Are we really just part of an eternal cyclical process? Are we forever confined to this world of change? In a word, no.

The Preacher wrote: "He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end" (Eccl. 3:11). To me, these words mean that we are supposed to see that we were meant for eternity. We were supposed to sense the dissonance of our transient life and the yearning silent conviction of life without end. Death is not natural. Body and soul, we are destined to live forever. The seasons of Pascha and Pentecost are strong reminders that God's ultimate purpose is the restoration of Paradise. This restoration must begin in our repentance. Perhaps that is why we live here and now in a world of transience, where, by God's grace there is a possibility for change.

# HOLY SPIRIT

*By St Luke of Simferopol*

Translated by Hieromonk Alexis



With every fervent prayer, with every good deed, we sense the quiet blowing of the Holy Spirit in our heart. We become peaceful, quiet, meek, and silent, ceasing to condemn others and to broadcast their sins, and through this grace-filled transformation of our spirit we discover that the Holy Spirit abides in us.

This beginning of God's Kingdom within us is similar to the faint dawning of the day, but this dawning becomes brighter and brighter to the extent that we follow Christ's commandments. In the hearts of the great saints this sun has shone in all its power, while for us it is only dawning.

But this is the same Kingdom of God within us (see Lk. 17:21). Do not think that this beginning of God's Kingdom, so similar to the dawning of the day, will develop further in our hearts on its own.

No, I tell you, my little flock! Comprehend the great words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: "...the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." (Mt. 11:12)

## Announcement:

Fr Innocent and Fr. Cosmas have started to make visits to various churches to do a "show and tell" about our monastery at coffee hour after Sunday Divine Liturgy.

If you do not have one of these visits scheduled at your church and would like one give us a call.

**(530) 474-5964**

## *Things That Make Our Monastery Special*

Monk Cosmas

Monastics, whether monks or nuns, like to learn about how other monasteries are run. I remember a visit I made years ago, along with some Greek monks, to a women's monastery on Meteora. The abbess and the other nuns grilled me with all sorts of questions. How many members of our brotherhood were ordained to the priesthood? What time was our first service of the day? How many times a week did we have Divine Liturgy? How many cooks were there? Did the obedience of cooking rotate by the day, the week, the month, or did the same monks cook all the time?

At another time, a monk I know from Mount Athos wanted to know about our monastery. Among other things, I told him that each of us meets every week with the superior of the community. "Wow!" he exclaimed, impressed but unhappy at the same time — "I don't think our abbot wants to talk to any of us. He's hardly ever even here. He spends all his time hanging out with important people, like bishops and governors and presidents and prime ministers."

When I told him that we study spiritual books together, especially writings of the monastic fathers, along with study questions, and that we write out our answers to these questions in advance of the weekly meetings so that we can be prepared to discuss them, it seemed that what I was telling him made him even more unhappy. "You're really fortunate," he told me, "there isn't even any monastery here on the Holy Mountain where they do the wonderful things you're doing at your monastery."

Up until that point, I had taken these things for granted. I don't take them for granted anymore, not after the conversation with my friend.

### *Words from the Fathers*

- The most splendid teaching of our Savior is this: "Your will be done." So if anyone says this prayer sincerely, he is dismissing his own will, and hanging everything on the will of God.  
*(Barsanuphius and John Letter 40)*
- And do not neglect your reading and prayer; little by little, you will gradually spend the day pleasing God. *(Barsanuphius and John Letter 85)*
- Humility consists in constant prayer combined with tears and suffering.  
*(Maximus the Confessor, Third Century on Love, Philokalia vol 2)*
- Stillness, prayer, love & self-control are a four-horsed chariot bearing the intellect to heaven.  
*(St Thalassios, First Century on Love, Philokalia vol 2)*





### Upcoming Events

- Feast of St. John (Sun. July 1) 7:00 pm *Vigil with Litia*
- Feast of St. John (Mon. July 2) 8:30 am *Jesus Prayer, Hours, Divine Liturgy, followed by Festal Trapeza 11:30 am ; Slide presentation of the history of the monastery 12:30 pm; Beehive demonstration to follow*
- Dormition Retreat (Fri– Sun) Aug 10-12, 2018 *“Life of the Virgin Mary”, with Fr. Innocent*

### Read more about these at:

<http://www.monasteryofstjohn.org/retreats/>

<http://stpetersmonastery.com/jekyll/update/2016/12/17/summer-youth-camp.html>

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