



March 2002
No. 3

SAINT MICHAEL

Messenger

SAINT MICHAEL SCHOOL
Santa Rosa, California

Greetings in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

St. Theophan the Recluse describes the heart as “the capability of tasting and feeling satisfaction,” and a “yearning and love for the beautiful.” He notes that before the Fall, man found his satisfaction in his union with God. He found delight in “divine and sacred things by the grace of God.” However, in our fallen state, we have a strong tendency to seek delight and satisfaction in more sensual and earthly things. It is the function of our heart to discern between that which will lead us to God and that which will lead us away from Him.

How does our heart learn to discern in this way? An interesting passage in the book of Isaiah gives us a clue. Isaiah 7:14-15 reads, “*Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.*” We are all familiar with the first verse, but it is the less familiar second verse which helps to answer our question.

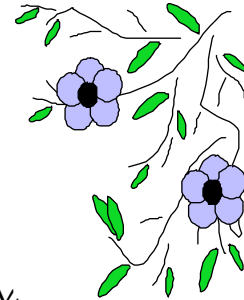
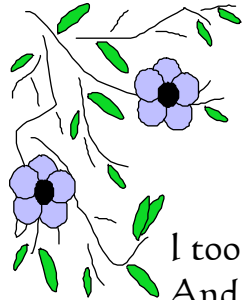


**Helena Woolums, Santa Lucia
Procession, December 2001**

From our earliest days we develop tastes, not only for foods, but for a multitude of other things. “Butter and honey” refer to the influences in a young child’s life that tend to determine these tastes and thus form the soul. We become accustomed to the level of prominence that God has in our life, to a certain quality of relationship with others, to a degree of orderliness or disorderliness in our surroundings, as well as to certain types of literature, music and art. That for which we develop tastes in our youth becomes what feels “natural” when we are older.

As St. Theophan writes, “the most effective means for the education of true taste in the heart is a church-centered life.” Given that the Church is the center, what do we place around it? Is the worldview and values a child absorbs in church supported by the other influences in his life? In earlier times, the Church was at least somewhat supported by the prevailing culture. Modern society, however, often does not give that support, but rather promotes views that undermine the Church and its teachings.

An antidote can be found in a close-knit community of believers which deliberately provides a Christian culture. Such a community acts as a buffer for children, giving them a chance to develop a worldview in a Christian environment and thus prepare them to confront the world when they are mature. If their schooling (whether at home or in a school) is within this Christian culture, there are a multitude of opportunities to help form the soul in a Christian way. A child deliberately exposed to “butter and honey” in school in the form of prayer and study of the Scriptures, an emphasis on courtesy, respect and service for others, orderliness, wholesome literature, uplifting music, and beautiful art, will be helped to develop tastes for those qualities and activities which will lead him to God and distaste for that which will lead him away from God. +

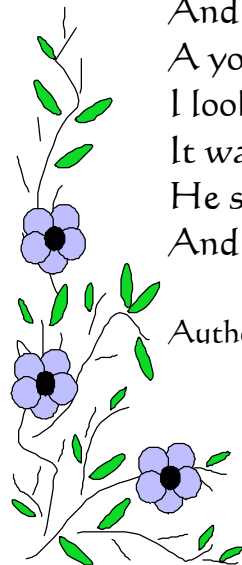


The Teacher

I took a piece of plastic clay
And idly fashioned it one day,
And as my fingers pressed it, still
It moved and yielded to my will.
I came again when days were past
The bit of clay was hard at last,
The form I gave it, still it bore,
But I could change that form no more.

I took a piece of living clay
And gently formed it day by day,
And molded it with power and art,
A young child's soft and yielding heart.
I looked again when years were gone,
It was a man I looked upon,
He still that early impress bore
And I could change that form no more.

Author Unknown





High LIGHTS

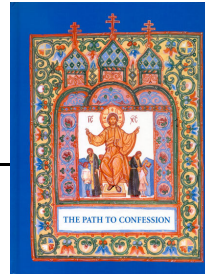
SAINT JOHN OF KRONSTADT ON EDUCATION OF THE HEART

In educating, it is extremely dangerous to only develop the understanding and intellect, and not pay attention to the heart. We must, above all pay attention to the heart, for the heart is life, but life corrupted by sin. It is necessary to purify this source of life, to kindle in it the pure flame of life, so that it should burn and not be extinguished and should direct all the thoughts, desires, and tendencies of the man through all his life. Society is corrupted precisely through the want of Christian education.

From *My Life in Christ*



High LIGHTS



Tea With Fr. Michael



St. Michael's is blessed to share a close and special relationship with our pastor, Fr. Michael Oyer. His participation helps to set the spiritual tone and atmosphere of the school. Once a month, we invite Fr. Michael to come for tea and speak with us about developing our spiritual life. Recently, we have been reading, chapter by chapter, Fr. Artemy Vladimirov's book for children, *The Path to Confession*. This lovely book, written in an endearing conversational style, addresses the many temptations to which a child might fall prey, and the spiritual tools or weapons needed to be armed against them. The photographs on these pages were taken at one of these teas.



High LIGHTS

Literature in the School Day

In the course of the school day, the children are surrounded by literature and poetry which provide sound nourishment for mind, heart and soul. Stories are told and read aloud, poetry recited, and independent reading time provided daily.

During lunchtime, we read aloud to the children from a book chosen for its literary quality, content, and delight. We look forward to this reading, and lunch usually ends with sighs for more of the story. The children are also read to during their knitting and handwork classes, and the younger children have their own special story time as well. We have read several books over the years and include here a partial listing of favorite read-aloud books.

Each day after lunchtime recess, we have a fifteen-minute period of independent reading called "Silent Reading." Everyone has a book to read, and this is a quiet, peaceful time enjoyed by all.



Rebekah Steineck reads to the handwork class.

High LIGHTS



Listening to a good story at lunchtime

Favorite Read-Aloud Books

Swallows and Amazons, Swallowdale, and Peter Duck,
Arthur Ransome

Little Men, Louisa May Alcott

Pinocchio, Collodi

*Cottage at Bantry Bay, Francie on the Run, Pegeen, and
Andries,* Hilda van Stockum

Dobry, Monica Shannon

Vinzi, Moni, and Mazli and others by Johanna Spyri (This author of the well-known *Heidi* has written many other wonderful books—well worth the search.)

The Secret Garden, A Little Princess, Frances Hodgson
Burnett

Books by Thornton Burgess



High LIGHTS

Poetry Tea

One cold, rainy day, a large stack of poetry books sat on a teacher's desk. The children were coming in from recess outdoors, and a pot of hot tea with honey seemed in order. Soon the children were sprawled on the floor, each with a poetry book and a cup of tea. For the next two hours the children were absorbed in the books and taking turns reciting poems as they found them. Thus was born our first "Poetry Tea."

Now "Poetry Teas" are a regular and favorite event. We stack books of poetry on the tables, sip tea, and read poems until we find one we wish to share aloud with everyone. Even the youngest students are anxious for their turn and stand to properly deliver their poem.



Theodore Killinger, Rebekah Tolbert, and Alicia Krueger search for a poem to share aloud.

High LIGHTS



Juliana Woolums shares a poem.



Louis Woolums stands to read his selection.

Student Report

COMMUNITY

By Mary Christine Williamson



I feel privileged to be a part of the Holy Dormition community. In Latin, one of the meanings of community (*communitas*) is the following: sharing, fellowship, linking, uniting, and so forth. This community I live in, has, I think, really obtained the sense of the meaning of community; and I'm sure there are many others out there like this one. Glory be to God!

It's perfectly fine to do things by yourself, but if you have a community, you really get to experience the fullness of God's blessings with brothers and sisters in Christ. A community is like a haven of rest away from the turmoil and temptation of the world. You feel like you have support in struggling to live a spiritual life.

The Holy Dormition community isn't the biggest or richest place, but it provides more important unearthly gifts, which outshine all the earthly beauties. Sometimes living so closely together can cause emotions of anger or joy, but through it all relationships becomes established with God and each other.

A few times a year we have big events in our community, besides Church feast days, where everyone, including guests, come together. It is so amazing how in these events we all participate in things whether big or small, and we have active fellowship. Some of these events are as follows: the Fourth of July Parade, the Celtic Festival, the Harvest Fair, and the Santa Lucia Festival. The Santa Lucia Festival was re-established by Mara McLeester and others. What was an inspiration of a few became a successful annual event of a community. So this was truly a work of faith.

I will end with a wonderful quote from a Church Father. It is something like this: "Picture a wheel—the center is God and the spokes are the people. The closer you come to God, the closer you are to the people."

So you see how God in his infinite wisdom creates community between brothers and sisters, so that we all together might become closer to Him!!!



**Mary Williamson, Santa Lucia
Procession, December 2000**



**Musical performance at Harvest Fair,
“The Wee Cucubric Centipede”**



**Drama students’ production of a scene
from Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice***



**Santa Lucia Festival,
Woodworking Booth**

Whatsoever things are true,
whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things
are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, what-
soever things are of good report; if there be
any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on
these things.

Philippians 4:8



**February 1/14 celebration of St. Valentine,
St. Brigid of Kildare, and St. Tryphon**

ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL is a ministry of the Holy Dormition Orthodox Church, Santa Rosa, CA, under the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church, and His Very Most Reverend Metropolitan Joseph of the Bulgarian Diocese of U.S.A., Canada, and Australia. Fr. Dcn. James Hughes, Headmaster, Tel. (707) 545-0861, e-mail: jkhughes@infostations.com.