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CHRIST IS BORN!



GLORIFY HIM!



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Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Christmas is coming! The great feast celebrating the birth of our Lord, the coming of God into the world He created, is probably still a few days away as you read this. We do well to remind ourselves, however, that the Church celebrates Christmas every single day. This is exactly what we are doing at daily Matins at the beginning of the Six Psalms, when we intone the song of the angels—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men”—and right afterwards when we joyfully sing “God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us. . . .” Thus, the Incarnation—Christmas—stands as a pillar of all that we believe and proclaim continuously in our worship of God throughout all the days of the year.

The Six Psalms--inserted right then as we proclaim the coming of God to us—are nothing less than the cry of humanity to Heaven throughout all of history, a rehearsal of the fears that torment us and of our efforts—inadequate, of course—to quiet those fears and place our hope in God. What are we human beings afraid of? The uncertain future? Loss of wealth or health or friends or status? Old age? Betrayal? Death? Yes, the list has not changed over the years.

But what is the response to our cry that Christmas gives us? To a small group of people who epitomize human fears—poor, despised, oppressed, threatened, conquered—comes God the Lord as a helpless infant. The world sees nothing in this, of course, and scoffs. But that small group of people—and we—were given hope that night when Christ was born—strong hope that can altogether cast out all fear. What are you afraid of? Christ is there! Do you fear poverty? Christ is there! Do you fear illness? Christ is there! Do you fear loneliness? Christ is there! Do you fear death? Christ is there! “Where else should Thy light have shined?” we will sing a few days after Christmas. “Except upon those who sat in darkness! Glory to Thee.” (Great Vespers of Theophany Eve).

**Abbess Victoria
and the sisters of
St. Barbara Monastery**

FEAST OF ST. BARBARA – 2016



Archbishop BENJAMIN preaches at the Liturgy.

Arkadiusz Mironko and V. Rev. Nazari Polataiko, Angeles, and Rev. Michael Rozdilski of St. George Church in Hesperia. We thank Rev. Deacon George Berni, also of St. George Church, for serving at the Liturgy and Subdeacon Stephen Butler of St. Athanasius Church, who assisted in the altar at all the services. Rev. Yousuf Rassam of St. Innocent Church in Tarzana along with Ruth Rutledge directed the choir for the Divine Liturgy. And Diana Cerritos of St. Innocent Church provided invaluable help serving the festal luncheon following the Divine Liturgy.

Although the chapel is mostly finished now, a lot of work remains, notably installation of flooring and lighting and, most importantly, the iconostas. Also, before the County of Ventura will grant “occupancy”—the driveway needs to be repaired and resurfaced. God willing, five months should be sufficient to complete everything so that the consecration can take place as scheduled on May 6th, 2017. We hope all of our Friends will plan to be with us for the great occasion! We will keep you posted on developments via this monthly Newsletter.

Although we were not able to consecrate our new chapel at this time, as we had hoped, the Feast of St. Barbara was celebrated joyfully at the monastery with many of our friends in attendance. We thank His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN, for coming once again—although his journey from San Francisco proved arduous due to high winds, which delayed his flight, and heavy traffic, which delayed his arrival from LAX. Fr. Paul Waisanen came to the rescue, serving the Vigil at a moment’s notice, when the Archbishop was delayed. At the Divine Liturgy, four priests concelebrated with His Eminence: V. Rev. Nicholas Speier of St. Athanasius Church in Santa Barbara, V. Rev.



Fr. Nicholas tells the story of St. Barbara to the children.

A VISIT FROM SR. ANASTASIA OF ST. ELIZABETH CONVENT IN MINSK, BELARUS



We were pleased to host Sister Anastasia (pictured at left, center), a lay sister from St. Elizabeth's Convent in Belarus, for two days in December. Sister Anastasia was visiting the Los Angeles area in order to acquaint local Orthodox parishes with the work of the sisterhood among the poor and disenfranchised in the city of Minsk and to make the handiwork of the community, which is an important source of financial support for all they do, available for purchase. The convent itself has over a hundred nuns, and the lay sisters, who live and work in the surrounding area, are even

more numerous. The latter carry out their activities in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities and over thirty workshops, which manufacture the items which the sisters sell in support of their various ministries. It goes without saying that our own lay sisters here were able to gather valuable information and inspiration from listening to Sr. Anastasia's descriptions of life at St. Elizabeth's Convent.

NEW LAVENDER PRODUCT

The monastery recently began producing a healing herbal salve which features the potent herb, comfrey, as well as our own home-grown calendula and lavender. This lovely salve works wonders to speed the healing of various skin irritations, scratches, bumps, bruises, bites, and minor wounds. A must-have for every medicine cabinet and survival kit, this small-sized balm travels well in a purse or pocket. \$ 5 each or 3 for \$12.99. Very limited quantity now available.



There will be no Friends' Gathering in December. The next Friends' Gathering will be on January 29th, when our speaker will be Charles Ajalat, founder of IOCC, The Orthodox Vision Foundation and FOCUS North America. His presentation is entitled *ARE WE LIVING NOW IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD?*