

St. Barbara Monastery – 15799 Ojai Road – Santa Paula, CA 93060
(805) 921-1563 – www.stbarbaramonastery.org

*The January Gathering of the Friends
of St. Barbara Monastery
Sunday, January 29th, 2017*

4:00 pm: Presentation:

***ARE WE LIVING NOW IN THE
KINGDOM OF GOD?***

*Speaker: Charles Ajalat
Founder of IOCC, FOCUS North America,
and The Orthodox Vision Foundation*

5:00 pm Vespers

6:00 pm Potluck

DIRECTIONS TO THE MONASTERY

From Highway 101 – Exit Hwy 126 East at Ventura.

Travel 11 miles east along Hwy 126 and exit 10th St/Hwy 150 at Santa Paula.

Turn left from the exit ramp and follow 10th St/Hwy 150 through Santa Paula.

Bear right at the fork in the road. This is Ojai Rd/Hwy 150.

Travel about five miles (1/4 mile past Thomas Aquinas College) to 15799 Ojai Road.

The monastery driveway is on the right just past our mailbox at Highway Marker 2830.

Drive across the bridge and follow the signs to the parking area.

From Highway 5 – Exit Hwy 126 West at Santa Clarita.

Travel 27 miles to Santa Paula, and exit at 10th St/Hwy 150.

Turn right from the exit ramp and follow 10th St/Hwy 150 through Santa Paula.

Bear right at the fork in the road. This is Ojai Rd/Hwy 150.

Continue as directed above.



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

How is strong faith acquired? Desiring strong faith, we tend to imagine it would take some unusual and miraculous experience to attain it: healing from an incurable illness, for example, or a vision, which would give us a glimpse of the reality of heaven. We tell ourselves that, were we to have such an experience, our faith would instantly be strong. Any weakness or lukewarmness in our faith would disappear on the spot. We listen with rapt interest to anecdotes about others who have had miraculous experiences, wishing that something like that would happen to us. The truth, however, is that even people who have been blessed with such experiences have to make efforts to keep their faith strong.

Meanwhile, by simply living in ordinary society, the influences surrounding us are busy diluting and tearing down what measure of faith we do have. For example, we are advised to avoid discussing our religious faith in the workplace. Okay. But too often, this is extended to mean *setting aside* our faith. Then, all around us in the media and in popular culture, faith—particularly Christian faith—is mocked and derided.

A couple of us from the monastery were recently with young Orthodox college students and heard them express not mere discomfort but fear to acknowledge commitment to their faith while in the company of their peers—particularly fear that they would lose their friends. And we heard them describe how the attitudes and incessant rhetoric—never mind the serious teaching—at their various colleges and universities has shaken and even destroyed the faith of some among them.

Well, while this appears to be an increasing trend in our society, we do well to remember that it has been no mere trend elsewhere. Let us not forget the conditions of outright persecution under which many lived during seventy years of Communism in the 20th century and, indeed, on and off throughout the centuries. Many Christians lapsed, of course, but many managed to hold on, kindling their faith into flame. How did they do this? How can we do this in our circumstances? The same way that the saints—our best guides in these matters—kindled theirs: by actively laboring at the task.

How did they labor? Deliberately, and in a multitude of ways that “cost” them: By making sometimes heroic efforts to forgive their enemies, by participating in the Liturgy, by feeding the poor and caring for the sick, by preaching the Gospel and building churches, by getting up every morning and saying their prayers, . . . and the list goes on. Did they have miraculous experiences to reinforce and confirm their faith? Indeed, through God’s mercy, they did—but not always! What they did always have was the increasing grace of God within themselves. *The Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17: 21).*

Abbess Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery

THEOPHANY BLESSING OF THE MONASTERY, 2017



On Saturday, January 21st, Father John Finley celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the monastery. Afterwards, as is customary in the days following the Feast of Theophany, he blessed our house and the whole monastery property with the newly blessed “waters of the Jordan,” including the “tiny house” and the trailer, the new water pump house, the infant cemetery, the tire swing, and our dormant lavender fields and vegetable garden. Here he

is, pictured with a few of us on our bridge, about to bless Sisar Creek—once again rushing by after several years of drought. The orange stuff is construction fencing, which is still to be found all over our property.

Mention of the drought reminds us of our biggest news: **THE DROUGHT IN THESE PARTS IS OVER!** We are writing this to the sound of rain—and hail—pounding on the roof, with snow visible at the top of Santa Paula Mountain and creek water rushing by and even flooding the lower part of our property around the tire swing. Besides all this, in every direction we see vibrant green meadows and hillsides in place of the desert-like brown of our December landscape.



CHAPEL CONSECRATION: CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Planning for the consecration of our new chapel, scheduled for May 6th, has already begun in earnest. Many of you have mentioned your willingness to be of help with the celebration, and now the time has come. We need assistance with a long list of tasks--everything from pounding nails and cooking food to labeling envelopes and polishing brass. Please call (805-921-1563) or send a message (sbmonastery@gmail.com) to the monastery to remind us of your skills and let us know when you are available.

CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

We all agree that the new chapel looks better with lots of green in the foreground!

Now that our new electrical service has been installed on the street side of the monastery property by Southern California Edison, our Project Manager Mitch Denny tells us that our volunteer electricians are getting ready to come and hook up the new power to our chapel, garage, fire pump, and house.



Also, we are beginning to lay the flooring in the altar area, so that work can begin on iconostas installation. Meanwhile, we have begun the process of ordering what we need in order to furnish the interior fully. Finally, once the new driveway has been laid, the County building inspectors can come and make their inspection sometime around the beginning of March in order to grant us our official building occupancy permit. Please pray for us!



BOOKSTORE CLEARANCE SALE

Over time, many books in our bookstore have become slightly dog-eared and worn. We are putting these books on sale in a marked section of our bookstore at significantly reduced prices. If you are unable to come to the monastery bookstore in person to see what is available, please inquire online at sbmonasterystore@gmail.com and we will forward you a list.

***There will be a Divine Liturgy at the monastery
celebrated by Rev. Arkadiusz Mironko of Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, Los Angeles,
on Saturday, February 11th, at 10:00 AM
preceded by the Hours at 9:30 AM.
Everyone is welcome.***