

***St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery***  
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***April 2024 Newsletter***

***Celebrate  
Lazarus Saturday  
at St. Barbara Monastery:  
Archbishop BENJAMIN presiding***

***April 26th & 27th, 2024  
(see back cover for details)***





Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Everyone knows what the Church will relive during the final days of Holy Week: the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, the Crucifixion on Holy Friday, and the mysterious Descent into Hell as Jesus lies in the tomb on Holy Saturday. But what about the first three days? The Gospel tells us that, after his triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday, Jesus returned to Bethany; but it remains silent about what exactly happened during the following three days.

What the Church does liturgically during Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week is read—in the course of the usual order of services—all four Gospels in their entirety. Moreover, she gives these days themes: the barren fig tree, the Parable of the Talents, and the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

What is the Church doing when she directs our focus to the Gospels and to these Gospel passages in particular, drawing out their deep meaning in the stichera and troparia appointed to be sung with unusual repetition? Is this material simply “filler” for otherwise “empty” days?

In a word, No! During these first three days of Holy Week, the Church is reviewing with us who she is and what the Christian life is. In this manner, she is encouraging us to review our own understanding and grasp of our Faith as well as our practice of it. Unfortunately, we—at least we of the present generation—are slow learners, even when it comes to liturgical texts composed expressly to spell out Her teaching.

It turns out that our beloved St. Seraphim of Sarov near the end of his life provided a wonderful key to understanding and appreciating what the Church is giving us precisely during the first three days of Holy Week. In his *Conversation With Motovilov*—which he stresses contains the most important teaching he has to impart—it is clear that this master of the spiritual life in drawing out with great exactitude nothing less than the meaning of the particular Gospel texts and the hymnography belonging to the first three days of Holy Week!

*(The Conversation of St. Seraphim With Motovilov can be found in most of the several biographies of St. Seraphim which are available in English as well as by itself in pamphlet form.)*

We wish each and every one of you a blessed Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday and Holy Week, and a most glorious Feast of Feasts!

—The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

## ***CAL-POLY COLLEGE STUDENTS VISIT***

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, a group of twelve religious studies students from Cal-Poly San Luis Obispo came with Dr. Stephen Lloyd-Moffett, their professor and friend of the monastery, for a brief visit. They spent a few hours with the sisters, attending their first Orthodox Vespers service and engaging in discussion during supper. This was followed by an informal fireside chat and Q & A time.

That evening, they camped at nearby Dennison Park, and were gratefully spared rain that had been predicted (which came the next day). The students were part of a Religious Studies class that takes such field trips periodically. We pray that this visit was a blessing to them as it was for us and may God use it to bear good spiritual fruit in their lives!



## ***ALL THE BUZZ: BEES FIND A NEW HOME***

Over the course of the last year or so, a large colony of honey bees formed under the eaves of the roof of our main house (photo: below left). We watched this beautiful hive grow as the months went by and wondered what to do with it, knowing it would soon collapse if left alone to grow. This past month, Abbot Dionysie of Holy Resurrection Monastery in Temecula, heard that that our bees needed a new home. The next day, he and Hieromonk Theoctiste (photo: below right) made the 4-hour trip from their monastery to ours, donned their bees suits and, just as the sun was setting, climbed up the roof armed with a smoker, a jimmy-rigged “bee bucket” and a scythe. With some acrobatics and ingenuity, they happily collected most of this colony of bees, including the queen bee, and whisked them off to their new home at Holy Resurrection Monastery. The monks tell us that the bees are doing very well, thank God!



## ***MUDSLIDE UPDATE***

As some of you may know, due to powerful storms earlier this year, a giant mudslide the length of half a football field is now blocking access to the monastery on the main road (SR150/ Ojai Rd) from the city of Santa Paula. A detour route to access the monastery is available through the city of Ojai.

Although the main mudslide occurred on February 21st (there have been subsequent smaller slides at the location), no plan of action to begin tackling the “hill on the highway” could be implemented until the final geotechnical lab results from core soil samples were in hand. Thankfully, as of this week, Caltrans has received their long-awaited lab results and will begin the process of installing a massive primary retaining wall up to the slope of the mudslide as an preliminary step to moving any earth. Part of this process will involve building an access road for heavy equipment to transport and install the giant vertical piles and horizontal laggings of this permanent retaining wall. Following the installation of the first retaining wall which includes three phases, God willing, work on removal of dirt will begin.

Another wrinkle in this process is the fact that the mudslide is still saturated and “leaking” in certain spots as Caltrans actively pumps away pools of water and monitors any other potential earth movement. They have warned residents that the “slide is still alive”! Thankfully, no heavy rains are predicted for the next few weeks.

May God protect and bless all who are working to move this mountain of mud We know that faith can move mountains, so we will simply pray!



## ***LAZARUS SATURDAY WITH HIS EMINENCE***

*Join us at the end of this month as His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN, visits the monastery to celebrate Lazarus Saturday. The Vigil on Friday, April 26th, will commence at 4 pm and the Divine Liturgy will be served on Saturday, April 27th, at 10 am preceded the Hours at 9:30 am.*