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***ST. BARBARA MONASTERY***  
***FRIENDS' GATHERING***  
***AUGUST 29th, 2021***

***4:00 PM***

***Presentation:***

***“THE BEATITUDES AND  
THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS”***

***Speaker: Abbess Melania***

***Of Holy Assumption Monastery, Calistoga, CA***

***5:00 PM Vespers***

***6:00 PM Potluck***



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Like any monastic community, we often receive requests for prayer. People phone or write to ask for prayer for themselves or their loved ones, because they are ill or in trouble or facing an important moment in their lives or to ask for prayer for someone who has departed this life. We welcome such requests and fulfilling them is an important part of our life. But in addition to such requests, we have noticed something a little different: an unusual number of requests for prayer from people who tell us that they find themselves unable to pray. What could possibly be the reason for this?

There is a delightful anecdote going back some thirty or forty years of an Orthodox bishop from the Republic of Georgia who happened to be sent to a World Council of Churches meeting. He listened attentively to the principal speaker at one of the sessions, who presented a paper entitled *Modern Man Does Not Know How to Pray*. When the speaker concluded his presentation, the meeting was opened to questions and comments from the floor. Our Georgian bishop stood up and addressed the assembly, expressing distress at having learned that modern man does not know how to pray. Then he continued: “I will tell you how to do it. Just get up in the morning and make the sign of the Cross and say ‘In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. . . .’”

He was wonderfully right, of course. That’s all it takes. Our God is, as we never tire of exclaiming, “a God Who loves mankind.” We barely take a step towards Him, and He responds, running swiftly to meet us. What could ‘disable’ us so severely that we could not or would forget how to take such a tiny step as ‘getting up in the morning and saying “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!”’

A prayer recited at the Third Hour reminds us of one answer. It reads: “Seeing that we have no boldness on account of our many sins, do thou, O Virgin Theotokos, entreat Thy Son and our God that He may have mercy on us.” If we (or ‘modern man’) find ourselves unable to pray, it is likely because of our sins. Indeed, given our condition, we may falter and wonder how we could possibly utter a word of prayer or even raise our eyes! But look what this prayer says: This is not the hopeless end of the matter. There is a second opportunity, a resource, a reserve strategy, as it were: the Mother of God.

We have just concluded the eight-day Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, when we sing in the troparion the words: “In falling asleep thou didst not forsake the world, O Theotokos.” Anyone who cannot pray—for whatever reason—can fall back upon her unailing help.

Abbess Victoria  
and the sisters  
of St. Barbara Monastery

*In conformity with the Ventura County regulations regarding the Covid pandemic, we ask our visitors, whether vaccinated or not, to wear masks inside the church.*

## ***MITCH DENNY ACCEPTS NEW POSITION***

Following one of our Friends' Gatherings back in the Spring of 2014, Mitch Denny happened to ask us if he might use our campsite down by the creek overnight before setting out on a major backpacking sojourn in the nearby Los Padres National Forest. We agreed and, as the saying goes, "the rest is history." Mitch noticed we were planning to put some shelving in the garage. Accomplished wood worker that he is, he offered to stay a few extra days and build the shelving for us. One thing led to another, and we asked Mitch to consider staying on and helping us with the big project before us: building our church.



At the time, we were just waiting (and then waiting some more) for Ventura County to issue our building permit. How Mitch managed to get that permit for us in record time is a story in itself. But get it he did and then proceeded to supervise the construction of the chapel over the next three years. He even set about raising money when the project had to pause for lack of funds! Meanwhile, he built caskets for the monastery's casket business, helped us add a purification system for our well water, oversaw the production of design plans for our proposed new residential wing, built our belfry, remodeled our trailer, and completed numerous smaller tasks.

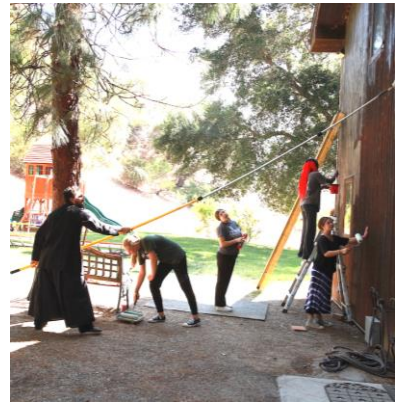
Mitch married his bride Mary in 2020 and moved to Santa Barbara, but continued to work for the monastery on a reduced schedule. In 2021 he became the father of Levi (born in May). Now in August he has accepted a new position—teaching woodshop to Jr. Highschool students in the Santa Barbara School District. We still expect to see him here at the monastery, where he is looking forward to finishing up a few smaller projects—notably the chandelier to be hung in our church dome once the iconography is completed.

We wish Mitch and his young family "Many Years!"

## ***WORKDAY WITH ST. ATHANASIUS CHURCH TEENS***



This section of our Newsletter could just as well have been headed “Mitch’s last workday at the monastery.” On July 30<sup>th</sup>, a



work party organized by Asia Ballew and comprised of ten teenagers from St. Athanasius Church in Santa Barbara, accompanied by their priest, Rev. Symeon Halsell, worked under Mitch’s direction to put a coat of preservative on the exterior of our house. Although the ambitious task took most of the day, there was time to attend the Sixth Hour service and sit down to a hearty lunch as well as visit with the sisters. Our monastic community thanks them all for their hard work—accomplished with much enthusiasm and good cheer.

## ***BRINGING IN THE LAVENDER***

As lavender harvesting time rolled around this year, we were faced with an unexpected challenge. The lavender farm where we usually bring our crop for steam distillation was unable to accommodate us this year. The challenge was now to locate another local farm that would process our fresh lavender into essential oil and hydrosol. Thankfully, we found a willing and relatively nearby farm with the proper equipment. The new farm’s equipment, however, only functions well with closely cropped lavender with barely any stem attached, so we were faced with a more labor intensive and time-consuming job in our harvesting. But, thanks be to God, the Lord sent laborers for the harvest! We received unexpected help from Basim Shaktah, Chris Burke, and Sarah Schoenberger, who came up from Los Angeles for the day, and from Jennifer Urena from Felton, who was with us for the weekend. Between their help and the labors of the nuns, we managed to harvest exactly the amount we needed for one full distillation. It might interest you to know that it takes about 80 pounds of freshly harvested lavender to produce one quart of oil. That comes out to about 4 ounces of lavender for each small 5ml bottle of lavender oil. In other words, this oil is liquid gold! If you buy some, remember to enjoy each drop!