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ST. BARBARA MONASTERY FRIENDS' GATHERING

AUGUST 28th, 2022

4:00 PM Presentation:

***Reflections from a Priest
on the Situation in Ukraine***

***Speaker: V. Rev. Nazari Polataiko
Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA***

5:00 PM Vespers

6:00 PM Potluck



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

“Awake ye sluggards, lie not for ever on the ground; and ye thoughts that draw my soul towards the earth, arise and go up to the high slope of the divine ascent.” (Ikos of the Kontakion) for the Transfiguration)

Thus, we are invited to join Peter, James and John as they go with the Lord to behold His Transfiguration. This feast and the feast of the Dormition of His mother sum up the goal of the Christian’s life. In the Transfiguration, the Lord shows us our original image; in the Dormition, we see the Lord receiving His Mother, clothed in that image, into heaven’s realm. Both of these feasts reveal the hope of Christians—to have the defaced image of God in us restored to its pristine beauty and brightness; then, clothed in our wedding garment, to be joined with our Lord in His heavenly Kingdom.

All the feasts of the Church shout out the good news. How can we deepen our participation in them? How can we convince ourselves to want what they proclaim more? We cannot receive what God has for us if we do not want it—if we do not consent to it. How do we stoke our desire? How do we move our hearts out of complacency and our minds out of mental lethargy? On our own, we cannot. We need God to help us. Thank God, He does not leave us to ourselves, but sends us trials and encouragement—to get our attention, to wake us up, to help us sluggards not lie forever on the ground. He helps us see that we are a sinful people, in need of His breaking through to us.

Our failures, if we do not lose hope, can be as important as our successes. They humble us. They themselves can help turn our focus onto God, helping us truly realize that God is our Savior, not we ourselves. Trying and failing, followed by confession, and trying again—this try/fail cycle—becomes the way God leads us sinners into the grace-filled life.

But let us not use the fact that our failures are turned to our favor as an excuse to sin. As St. Paul says, *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* (Romans 6:1-2). No! As much as we fail and are humbled thereby, let us use our weakness to pray more forcefully for God’s grace to strengthen us, and not use our weakness to justify our failures. We can even use some of the tips Dr. Xenia Enke gave us in her “Friends talk” last month for establishing new habits and breaking old ones to help us learn to look to God with greater consistency and co-labor with Him with greater fervor. We have noted some of the highlights of Xenia’s talk on the following page.

Let us go with the Lord, then, to view our original image as He revealed it to His disciples and catch the vision. Then let us go to the bier of the Theotokos and ask her help in re-establishing that image in ourselves, as she herself did from her childhood. May all our failures bring us to our knees, and all our successes say, “Glory to God!”

The Sisters
of St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

SUMMARY OF LAST FRIENDS' GATHERING TALK

Dr. Xenia Enke gave us a very practical, down-to-earth talk at the last Friends' gathering on how to make and break habits. Below are some take-aways from that presentation.

Goal: To break old, destructive habits and establish new, constructive ones.

Wanting to do something—just willing it—is not enough. We must plan ahead of time how we will do something to keep us from going down the well-established path we are used to and, with focus and forethought, move in a direction we have not moved in before, bushwhacking “through the brush”, as it were. There is no path here yet. We are making that path by action, one choice at a time.

Intentionality: Making up our mind to do something about getting out of the rut of an old habit and making a path for a new habit.

Specificity: When are we going to do something? How are we going to make sure it happens? What's it going to take to make it more than a vague idea into a plan for deliberate, “for sure” action?

Reminders: To jog our memory to do the action we intend to do, i.e., attach the new behavior we want to develop to an already established habitual behavior. Xenia used an example from her own life of using brewing her coffee as a prompt to remind herself to do her morning prayers. She has also set an alarm to remind her to do something (preferably with something to remind her why she set the alarm!)

Self-honesty: Being honest with ourselves as to what we really want or intend to do. Is it a vague notion of “it might be great to do sometime when (if?) I get around to it” or is it something we intend to take action on *now*, really, with a deliberate plan of action, laid out, and with the necessary supports in place to actually make it happen.

Force yourself to pursue your intention: Once we have decided on a goal and plan of action, we can't wait until we “feel like it.” Xenia says we will never feel like it. But if it is something we really want to do (and know we should), we must force ourselves in that direction.

A MONTH OF HARVESTS

Our fruit trees (new to us, but well established by their previous owner) are producing abundantly this summer. In the last month, we have learned to harvest, clean, and store apricots, mulberries, apples, plums, and grapes. We took a large basket of the first fruits of the grapes and other home-grown fruit to the Transfiguration Liturgy at St. Innocent Church in Tarzana for Father Yousuf Rassam to bless.

Having already harvested fresh lavender at its peak for bouquets, we let the rest of the lavender mature until early August, when it was ready to be dried and processed into sachets. A couple of early mornings, before the bees and the sun are fully awake, were enough to finish off the field for the year.

Among the helpers were Don Hawkins and Alicia Ferreira from Santa Paula, Roxanne Levitskaya and Lyubov Ganchenko from Los Angeles, Jennifer Urena from Felton and Bill Ruby from Ventura. We thank them heartily for their contribution!



A Note about the Cover Photo

Pictured on the front cover is Mama, our young Easter Egger hen, who successfully hatched 11 chicks the day after the Feast of Transfiguration. These chicks enjoy riding on Mama's back, testing their flying skills and playing "grape football"—a most entertaining and high energy game!