

St. Barbara Monastery – 15799 Ojai Road – Santa Paula, CA 93060
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CHRIST IS BORN!



GLORIFY HIM!



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Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

To each and every one of you we send our heartfelt wishes for a Christmas filled with God's peace and His presence. Often we hear the remark that heaven seems nearer at this season. Indeed, prayer flows more easily, not only when we are in church but wherever we are. The exquisite liturgical services of the week before Christmas are the final touch, quieting the heart and opening it to the Savior Who is coming.

Quieting the heart. . . . In the book of Genesis, we read that before God created the world silence reigned. All was still. And out of that God-filled stillness, God "spoke" our world and all that is in it into being. Moreover, we are told that later, when God was about to send His Son to earth, silence reigned again. This is not a reference merely to the "silent night" in which Christ was born. At this time in history, silence of another order had reigned in Israel for some two hundred years; the voice of prophecy had fallen silent, had ceased, for that length of time. The Church understands this silence of prophecy to have been a pregnant stillness out of which God again "spoke," this time to re-create the world through the "work" His Son would accomplish. St. Ignatius of Antioch writes: "There is one God Who manifested Himself through Jesus Christ His Son, Who is His Word, proceeding from silence. . . ." (Letter to the Magnesians, Ch. VIII, v. 2).

It is good to be still, silent of heart, peaceful in our thoughts. The Holy Fathers who teach us how to cultivate inner stillness (we call them the neptic Fathers) explain that it is in such hearts that God readily comes to dwell. Whether they lived in serene circumstances or in the midst of turmoil, the Fathers sought stillness of heart. And they teach us that achieving this, like anything, takes practice and in the end is a gift.

Our Christmas prayer, then, is that God may grant each and every one of you and us at this holy season when heaven draws close to earth, a measure of such stillness and peace of heart. May you have a truly blessed Christmas!

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

FEAST OF ST. BARBARA – DECEMBER 3/4, 2018

As we joyfully celebrated our monastery's feast day this year, we couldn't help but remember how exactly one year ago on December 4th, when all but the last guests had gone on their way, the horrific Thomas Fire broke out just a few miles down the road from us. Back then, just when we were anticipating a slow and peaceful evening, we found ourselves tapping into our reserve adrenaline and hurriedly removing the icons from the iconostas and packing them into the bed of our pick-up truck. Well before the blaze reached the monastery property, everyone here had successfully evacuated. This year, giving thanks to God that the monastery survived the conflagration unscathed, allowing us to celebrate our feast day here once again, we had the slow and peaceful evening we missed last year.



Cross Procession stops at the north doors

This year, indeed, the feast day of St. Barbara was nothing short of glorious, blessed once again with the presence of His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN and clergy from throughout Southern California. V. Rev. Josiah Trenham of St. Andrew church in Riverside, Rev. Yousuf Rassam of St. Innocent Church in Tarzana, and Fr. Michael Rozdilsky of St. George Church in Victorville assisted at the Vigil on Monday evening. Then, on Tuesday morning eight priests concelebrated with the Archbishop at the Divine Liturgy: V. Rev. Timothy Baclig, V. Rev. Lawrence Russell, V. Rev. Michael Lafoon, V. Rev. Nicholas Speier, V. Rev. Nazari Polataiko, Rev. Simeon Corona, Rev. Yousuf Rassam, Rev. Michael Rozdilsky and Rev. George Ajalat. Subdeacon Serge Liberovsky assisted in the altar and Peter Howe of Holy Annunciation Church in Santa Maria directed the choir.



Children listen to the life of St. Barbara

BUILDING FUND RAFFLE – A CRUISE TO ALASKA



First, some background: Back in 2005, when we first moved to Santa Paula, we immediately began the design process for construction of a new wing to our house. Indeed, the house wasn't large enough for even the initial group of sisters. We were just completing these architectural plans when the County of Ventura, objecting to our use of trailers for temporary housing until this new

wing could be built, informed us that the trailers had to be removed. Ten of our sisters were obliged to relocate and found a new home at Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga.

Shortly thereafter, our Archbishop BENJAMIN presented us with a totally different plan for the monastery's expansion. Build the church first, he said. Indeed, the church is the heart of every monastery and it didn't take much persuading to convince us to change gears and turn our energy to construction of the church of SS. Barbara and Eugene, which was duly completed in 2017. Now, however, if our monastery is to grow, it is essential that we turn to building the addition to our house that was envisioned so many years ago.

Prompted by this background, we have dusted off the old design plans and are in the process of updating them and beginning to apply for a building permit. Simultaneously, with this raffle of two tickets for the September, 2019, **Conference and Pilgrimage Orthodox Cruise to Alaska: the Roots of Orthodoxy in North America**, we are launching a major fund raising effort to replenish our depleted building fund.

The Cruise is scheduled to leave Seattle on September 7th to visit Glacier Bay and then Juneau, Ketchikan and Sitka, the ancient capital of Russian America and home of the historic St. Michael's Cathedral and Bishop's House where St. Innocent himself served. On board, two speakers will offer daily lectures and workshops: Fr. Michael Oleksa, an authority on Orthodoxy in Alaska, and Fr. Laurent Cleenewerck, a noted author and editor of the Eastern/Greek Orthodox Bible and forthcoming Catechism. For more information about the raffle, please check the monastery website or call the monastery at 805-921-1563.

*The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at the monastery
On Sunday, December 30th at 10:00 AM,
preceded by the 3rd and 6th Hours at 9:30 AM.
Everyone is welcome.*