

*St. Barbara Monastery – 15799 Santa Paula-Ojai Road – Santa Paula, CA 93060-9516
(805) 921-1563 – www.stbarbaramonastery.org*

ST. BARBARA MONASTERY

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2021





Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

We have been reading the lives of the saints rather more than usual these days, while the monastery remains “closed” due to the pandemic. We find especially interesting and helpful the lives that are written against the backdrop of the particular saint’s historical period.

The “golden age” of the early Church does not seem quite so golden when we are reminded—*reminded*, because at some level we all know this—that the earthly lives of all but one of the apostles ended in martyrdom. Indeed, neither the 1st century, nor the 2nd nor the 3rd, for that matter, was particularly welcoming to Christianity. Even after Christianity was declared the official religion of the Roman Empire, many of the saints lived significant portions of their lives in hiding or exile. (Saint Athanasius was not the only one!)

It would take too much space from this small page to summarize the difficult circumstances and persecutions Christians have endured over the centuries. But we simply cannot omit mentioning specifically the most grievous of all: the Communist persecution of Christians in the 20th century. What did it accomplish? Well, in the end it populated Heaven with untold numbers of saints—the likes of Patriarch Tikhon and Father Arseny, for example. Like all the persecutions, that’s what it did!

Suddenly the 21st century context of our own lives as Christians, not without its challenges, doesn’t appear so actively hostile. Our battle has been more against thoughts and ideas. We are constantly hearing the laments of parents over what their children are being taught in school, which is nothing short of abominable, soul-destroying. But now the attitudes and views towards Christianity that reach the larger society—from the media in the guise of information, from entertainment, from the words and behavior of public figures, and increasingly from Big Tech, and yes, legislatures—are by and large false and damaging.

As Orthodox Christians, do we not agree that we have a duty before God “to speak the truth in love” and defend our Faith? Do we not have among us Orthodox voices—pastors, theologians, scientists, medical doctors, psychologists, professionals of every kind, who could challenge, articulately and responsibly, the unfounded ideas informing these trends in our society?

Even more importantly, where is the place for each one of us to start? The saints show us the way. The place to start is with *the essential inner labor* of converting and cleansing our own hearts. In other words, let us live the Christian life ourselves. If we do that, our children will learn to do the same and so will others. To quote our beloved St. Seraphim: “Acquire peace, and a thousand people around you will be saved.”

Abbess Victoria
and the sisters
of St. Barbara Monastery

THE JANUARY COVER

This month's Newsletter cover photo was taken from Highway 150 on January 25, 2021. It shows our chapel in the aftermath of the previous week's windstorm peeking through what remains of the nearby woods along Sisar Creek. Formerly, obscured by the dense woods, our chapel was totally invisible from the Highway.

WINDSTORM DAMAGE

The severe windstorm which tore through our area non-stop on January 18th and 19th caused a complete, two-day power outage and wrecked substantial damage everywhere



PATH LEADING FROM THE INFANT CEMETERY

on the monastery property. Not only are small branches and leaves left littering the ground, huge branches of ancient oaks were torn off, and trees large and small were snapped in two, toppled or even uprooted. Thankfully, no tiles were loosened away from the belfry or chapel roofs and all of our structures remained intact (although the gazebo roof, sailed away). But our trees, which had weakened—largely due to the two previous years of drought—suffered most. Even with the help of our long-time “groundsman” Jerry Reich, who arrived to start the clean-up as soon as possible, it will surely take weeks, maybe months, to get the property back to normal—partly for lack of sufficient hands to complete the strenuous work. At another time, we would send out an S.O.S. and organize a work party to tackle the job. But, for now at least, the pandemic-related restrictions on “gatherings” preclude any such plan. The task simply will have to be accomplished s-l-o-w-l-y.

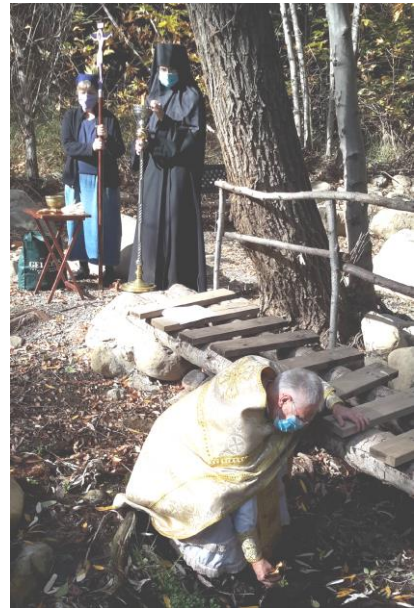
Now, one week after the wind storm, rain is falling and the weather man is predicting a major deluge. We can't help but wonder how our creek, now choked here and there with fallen tree trunks and branches, not to mention leaves, will handle the storm.

THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATER ON THEOPHANY

After the Divine Liturgy on January 6th, the Great Feast of Theophany, we blessed the water of Sisar Creek, the stream flowing through our property. Led by Sr. Ioanna (Jill)



carrying the Cross and Sr. Photini carrying the candle, we processed with our priest Father Jude down the path in the woods to the place where it meets the creek at water level. Here we held the service of blessing, singing the Troparion, reading the prayers and the Gospel, and plunging the Holy Cross three times into the cold, swiftly



flowing water. May “God protect this Holy Monastery from fire, flood, earthquake. . . .” Next year, we will remember to include “wind.” Little did we imagine that just twelve days later, wind would bring down the huge oak branch pictured on the previous page, totally blocking the very path we were using!

ICONOGRAPHY FOR OUR CHURCH DOME

We are happy to announce that Matushka Anna Kalinina, an experienced iconographer from Moscow, is expected here in mid-February to commence work on the icon of the Pantocrator for the dome of our monastery church. Her plans to begin the project have been repeatedly delayed because of the pandemic and consequent travel and quarantine restrictions. However, these restrictions have now somewhat eased up and at last everything appears to be coming together, allowing her to travel to Los Angeles from Moscow soon. Matushka Anna estimates the project, which includes the iconography for the barrel of the dome, will take about six months. We welcome her and look forward to having her with us.

