

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

The January Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery

Sunday, January 27th, 2019

4:00 pm Presentation:

IN THE STEPS OF ST. NIKOLAI

Speaker: Very Rev. John Finley

*Dept. of Missions and Evangelism
of the Antiochian Orthodox Church*

5:00 pm Vespers

6:00 pm Potluck

DIRECTIONS TO THE MONASTERY

From Highway 101 – Exit Hwy 126 East at Ventura.

Travel 11 miles east along Hwy 126 and exit 10th St/Hwy 150 at Santa Paula.

Turn left from the exit ramp and follow 10th St/Hwy 150 through Santa Paula.

Bear right at the fork in the road. This is Ojai Rd/Hwy 150.

Travel about five miles (1/4 mile past Thomas Aquinas College) to 15799 Ojai Road.

The monastery driveway is on the right just past our mailbox at Highway Marker 2830.

Drive across the bridge and follow the signs to the parking area.

From Highway 5 – Exit Hwy 126 West at Santa Clarita.

Travel 27 miles to Santa Paula, and exit at 10th St/Hwy 150.

Turn right from the exit ramp and follow 10th St/Hwy 150 through Santa Paula.

Bear right at the fork in the road. This is Ojai Rd/Hwy 150.

Continue as directed above.



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

In place of the usual message at this spot in our monthly Newsletter, we want to write a few words about our speaker, Fr. John Finley, and his topic for this month's Friends' Gathering.

A lot of you may be unfamiliar with St. Nikolai Velimirovich. We call him one of our American saints, because he lived and labored in America during the last decade of his life. But his actual title both during and before his years in America was "Bishop of Zica," and Zica in Serbia was his assigned see both before and during his years in this country.

Not only well-known, but even popular, among his own Serbian people during his lifetime, St. Nikolai became even more familiar to them through his wonderful writings. And now, ever since the English translation of *The Prologue of Ohrid* was published, his name has become increasingly well-known in the West. Countless newcomers to the Orthodox Faith have found the *Prologue*, published as a set of four volumes, an invaluable guide to the Orthodox Faith and to Orthodox daily life. Indeed, when two volumes of his Homilies were published in English translation a few years later, there was need of a second printing in no time at all!

Father John Finley is one of those blessed to have discovered all these important books early on. Having made St. Nikolai a daily companion and friend, so to speak, Fr. John then researched the places where this saintly man had lived his long and prolific life—in Serbia, in England and in America, not to mention the difficult period when he was arrested by the Nazis during World War II and imprisoned for a time at Dachau, the notorious death camp.

At last this past Fall, Father John was able to make the pilgrimage of his dreams and visit the places in Serbia and elsewhere where St. Nikolai had sojourned. It is his account of this valuable pilgrimage that we hope to hear from Fr. John this coming Sunday at the January Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery.

Abbess Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery

RAFFLE DRAWING

At the upcoming January Friends' Gathering, we will hold the raffle drawing for the winner of the prize: passage for two on the **September Orthodox Cruise to Alaska**. You may purchase tickets for the raffle online through the monastery's website up until noon on Sunday, January 27. Proceeds from the raffle are for the monastery's Building Fund.

MINISTRY TO THE HOMELESS



Recently, thanks be to God, two doors have opened for our lay sister, Jill Wallerstedt, to offer her extensive experience and skills in working with the homeless.

First, the director of Santa Paula's Christian outreach to the poor and homeless—Kay Wilson-Bolton—invited her to be a Street Outreach Worker in Santa Paula. Besides actively seeking out the homeless in the streets of Santa Paula, Jill is connecting them to services available to them in Ventura County through a central database. Through the collaboration of many organizations in this County database, the process of finding shelter, financial aid, medical care, housing and other services has been improved for our homeless neighbors.

Moreover, a Winter Shelter in Santa Paula opened recently at a local church—a clear answer to prayer! Every night until March 31, homeless men, women and families – and their dogs – will be able to get a healthy meal, a warm bed and loving hospitality there. Jill has been making the acquaintance of the homeless in our city through this shelter as she warmly receives them as guests, signs them in and begins the process of connecting them to the services they need.

Second, in Los Angeles parishioners of Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral (Silver Lake), have opened their generous hearts to their homeless neighbors by visiting them where they live, offering friendship, prayer and material help. Just within a few miles of the cathedral, many men and women live in tents or barely adequate cardboard shelters under overpasses and on sidewalks. Jill has begun to venture forth monthly with her fellow volunteers where she shares her knowledge of how to interact with and befriend people on the streets. This committed team has gone out three times thus far and has distributed about 70 hygiene packs as well as socks, feminine hygiene products, clothing and water to those in need. A list of those they have encountered is then compiled and passed on to the sisters for prayer. In early February, this outreach team will meet with Fr. Nazari Polataiko, the Cathedral's priest, to discuss the future of the ministry and to hone in on what direction it might take.



Homeless 'camp' under Hwy 101 at Silver Lake.

VISITORS TO THE MONASTERY

Many of you have asked us about visitors to St. Barbara Monastery: Why do they come? On average, how many visitors do you have? And so on. We haven't kept records, but here is a general answer:

Orthodox monasteries are, first of all, houses of prayer, that is, churches. They are not “parish churches” with congregations, but they are churches. And like any church, a monastery is God's house. Thus, we never know whom He might invite. We, of course, for planning purposes, like to know in advance when people might be coming, but that is not always possible. When God diverts people from where they thought they were heading and brings them to the monastery instead, well, we set more places at the table and add more food to the platter.

People journey to visit us in groups, as families or individually, and for a variety of reasons. The largest group comes for the Friends' Gatherings on the last Sunday of every month and ranges anywhere from 40 to 100 people. Sometimes Orthodox parishes in the area visit for retreats or work parties (or a combination of the two)—and sometimes specific age groups come: teens, or young adults or seniors. We have hosted monks from Mount Athos, pilgrims from Russia, immigrants from Ukraine and the Middle East. One day, we had seventeen Russians, who were touring American monasteries, come across our bridge unannounced. After tea, cookies and lots of picture-taking, they were on their way.

Individual women have recently visited from Canada and the East Coast to spend a few days. And we have had Orthodox guests who have come for longer stays, for instance refugees from the Katrina disaster in Louisiana. Additionally, we average about 30 visitors a month, who come announced or unannounced, to pray, to spend some time quietly on the grounds, to talk with the sisters or just to spend part of a day here joining us in whatever we happen to be doing. Often this includes joining us for a service and a meal.

For the last several years, we have had an annual children's wildlife presentation, usually given by the Ojai Raptors Society, attended by about 50 children and adults. Last year, we opened this event up to a local home-schooling group and hosted approximately 100 people that day. The local Red Hat Society came to visit us for one of their field trips, and we continue to be in contact with individuals from that group. Students from college religious studies classes and their professors have visited the monastery to attend a service and to engage in question and answer sessions with the sisters while other students from nearby schools drop in periodically for a meal, service or a visit to our bookstore.

We have had visitors stop by because of articles in the local media about the monastery. Others come having met us at festivals where we have offered our lavender and other products produced by our sisters. God brings seekers to our door through the internet or just by noticing our sign serendipitously as they drive by on Hwy 150. Some we never see again, while others become frequent visitors. Some, indeed, eventually join of the Orthodox Church.

In short, although we have very limited accommodations for overnight guests—just one guest room really—and are at present a very small community, we see quite a cross-section of people that God draws here, and for as many reasons as there are people He brings.