

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

The July Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery

Sunday, July 27th, 2014

4:00 pm Presentation:

THE EIGHTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL: EXPECTATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

*Speaker: V. Rev. Arkadiusz Mironko
Priest at Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, Los Angeles*

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,

The monastery receives many visitors. Whatever inspires them to come, most seem to arrive with questions on their minds—often concerning their practice of the Orthodox Faith, especially prayer.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of confusion about prayer, especially on the part of people who have picked up and read patristic texts on the subject. The confusion largely arises because the reader assumes that the context in which the piece was written (perhaps a desert hermitage) and the identity of the intended audience (perhaps other hermits) are irrelevant. The assumption is: “This text is written by a saint. What he writes is important and true. I should read this and put his teaching into practice.” However, things are not so simple.

For example, we meet people who have picked up the *Philokalia* and read in its pages that for pure prayer one must rid the mind of thoughts and images. So, they assume this instruction is meant for themselves—and meant for themselves in their present circumstances. So, they become frustrated because they cannot manage to do this! The fact of the matter is that this instruction is meant precisely for hesychasts, that is, for monks who are living the life of stillness—and not even for monks living in a monastic community. Indeed, the latter are most likely immersing themselves in the round of liturgical services usual to monasteries—all of which abound in thoughts and images and take place in the midst of even more images, i.e., the holy icons!

To our visitors who ask about all this, we find it helpful to point out that these writers (often called *the neptic fathers*) do not particularly have in mind people at worship during a Divine Liturgy or even people saying a rule of prayer at home. Indeed, these writers would not likely even use the word *prayer* when referring to the liturgical services or to occasional services such as an akathist or memorial (*panikhida*) or to the recitation of one’s individual rule. Rather, they reserve the word *prayer* for what is beyond words.

This is not to say we should avoid such writings on pure prayer. Not at all. But we do well to have someone guide us in our reading. Even while appreciating that a certain writing is not intended for oneself, it remains of great benefit to know that such prayer exists, that there are people who receive the gift, and that even we may aspire to it and strive for it.

Indeed, the path that leads to the pure prayer that is beyond words starts with words—notably the words that we refer to as ‘The Trisagion Prayers’ and which end with the blessed words given us by our Lord Himself, the *Our Father*. The path continues with words, that is, said prayers, both the repetition of the Jesus Prayer and the prayers and services appointed for different times of the day. This is the path, tried and true, which the Church provides, and which may—as God wills—lead us little by little to that measure of pure prayer which He in His loving kindness and mercy deigns to give us.

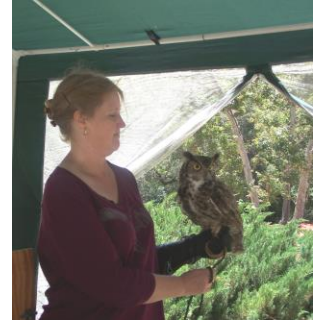
Abbess Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery

RETURN OF THE RAPTORS

Once again, on June 26th, we invited the Ojai Raptor Center to give a program at the monastery to the St. Athanasius Summer School students and their teachers from Goleta as well as to the many



friends of the monastery who are homeschoolers. A record crowd of children and parents turned out for what has become an annual event. The group was introduced to various owls, hawks and



falcons currently in residence or in rehab at the Center, and was even joined by a pair of turkey vultures observing the event from their vantage point in the sky (while simultaneously engaging in a little hunting). The program was followed by the Sixth Hour in the chapel and a luncheon prepared by the sisters with contributions from several moms who attended. Everyone is already looking forward to next year's program!

VISIT FROM THE TEENS OF ST. ANDREW CHURCH

The annual, week-long summer retreat of the teens of St. Andrew Church, Riverside,



started off the first weekend in July with a two-day stay at Steckel Park, just a couple of miles from



the monastery. Saturday afternoon, July 5th, was spent at the monastery, where the teens and their chaperones lent their hands—and sometimes their backs—for much needed work on the grounds as well as for lighter tasks such as filling sachets with lavender, polishing brass and labeling envelopes. The work stopped only when the bell rang for Vespers. Sunday morning, their pastor V. Rev. Josiah Trenham celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the monastery chapel. And Sunday afternoon was spent at the beach prior to one more night of camping at Steckel Park before the group moved on to more distant destinations

LAVENDER HARVEST FOR OIL COMMENCES

On July 17th, one of our lavender fields was declared ready to harvest for oil. This is done at a point when the lavender is just past its prime and has begun to dry out on the stem. The following day, we cut some seventy pounds and took it to a neighboring ranch, Rivendell Farm, for distillation. (Seventy pounds is the amount that can be handled in one batch by the distillation machinery.) Another one hundred and forty pounds was harvested on July 21st with the help of Nataliya Tinyayeva of Santa Barbara along with her son Nikolai and mother Galina. Mother Nina estimates that we can easily harvest another three hundred and fifty pounds over the next ten days or so. Of course, we will leave some in the field for the hundreds—no, thousands—of bees that have arrived to feast on the lavender florets. (We may be offering a prize to the person who discovers the location of their hive.)



Nataliya Tinyayeva with her son, Nikolai, and Mother Paraskeva.

FUNDS FOR ETHIOPIA

The monastery is collecting funds on behalf of our good friend Tsige Romani Gobezie for her charitable work among indigent children and the indigent aged of Adwa, Ethiopia. Tsige was not able to be with us for the last Friends of St. Barbara Monastery gathering in June, but the V. Rev. Lawrence Russell gave a slide presentation at that time concerning her selfless and effective work there.

Every penny collected goes to the large numbers of children she is helping receive an elementary education and the disabled aged she is helping by providing housing and medical attention. We appeal to the Friends of the Monastery to send donations for her most worthy undertakings either to the monastery (with “Ethiopia” on the check’s memo line) or directly to her American address: Gobezie Goshu Home, P.O. Box 7533, Santa Maria, CA 93456. All contributions are tax deductible. A gift of \$50 provides schooling for a child for one academic year. A gift of \$30 supports one elderly person for one month. For more information or to donate via PayPal, go to www.gghe.org.

On July 31st, a Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at the monastery at 10:00 AM, preceded by the Hours at 9:40 AM. All are welcome!