

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

The June Gathering of the Friends of ST. BARBARA MONASTERY

June 30, 2019

4:00 pm Presentation:

DIGITAL ICONOCLASM

*Speaker: Rev. John Valadez
Pastor of St. Timothy Orthodox Church
Lompoc, CA*

Vespers: 5:00 PM

Potluck 6:00 PM

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.

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,



We have been hearing a lot lately about the increasing number of “nones” (people with no religious affiliation) in America and generally in the West, especially young people. Along with this trend—indeed, as part of it—we hear of the accelerating decline in numbers of those who identify as Christian. Most of the sources we have seen cite a number of contributing factors, but single out as chief the supposedly “outdated beliefs” which strain the credulity of anyone with the least knowledge of the scientific advances made in the course of the last century or so.

We Orthodox in the West likewise have noted the falling away of many within our own parishes, again particularly young members. We characteristically fault a variety of factors: 1) the emphasis on ethnicity in many parishes with the persistent use of foreign languages in worship, 2) the doubtful quality of many of our church school programs and 3) the strong influences of contemporary culture (in addition to the “scientism” mentioned above), which our children encounter in school and particularly in institutions of higher learning. What is grievous is that we have known and noted all this in our churches in America for half a century and more, but have done relatively little to deal with the issues.

This state of affairs is cause for deep grief. Heaven must be grieving! And, yes, it is cause for alarm. How will our children fare growing up in such a world! But, much more than grief or alarm, should not our response as Orthodox Christians be to “do something,” to announce to the “nones” and the whole of this generation, as our forbears did to theirs, the astonishing good news of the Gospel? After all, have we not recently experienced Pascha? And Pentecost? We have something to tell!

From time to time, conversation at our monastery turns to reflection on this topic. And the conversation always comes to pretty much the same conclusion: There are countless avenues for evangelizing and “re-evangelizing,” teaching and witnessing to the truth of the Gospel. We should neglect none of them—including such practical things as the use of English (or whatever the vernacular may be) in our churches and improving catechetical material and methods. There are also countless ways the Holy Spirit uses “to kindle the divine spark” in human beings, even when the conditions are less than optimal (e.g., no church for miles).

So, what exactly can we and should we be “doing”? The answer is actually simple. We can be and should be doing the same things as our forbears in the Faith did to announce the Gospel to their generations! Like them, all of us can be praying. Indeed, prayer must be the source from which all further action flows—prayer for our country, our society, for the “nones”—and, yes, for ourselves and all in need of God’s mercy. The Church does this in her litanies and leads us by the hand, as it were, to show us how.

And then, what? Keep in mind that prayer is a dialogue. When we remember to listen, the Lord indeed reveals the opportunities before us.

Abbess Victoria
and the sisters
of St. Barbara Monastery

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM PRESENTED AT THE MONASTERY BY THE OJAI RAPTOR CENTER



On June 18th, two staff members from the Ojai Raptor Center came to the monastery with a number of “ambassador birds” to present their fascinating educational program about raptors to the children and teachers of St. Athanasius (Santa Barbara) Summer School (led by V. Rev.

Nicholas Speier), along with groups from St. George Church in Victorville (led by Rev. Michael Rozdilsky) and St. Matthew Church in Torrance (led by Rev. John Mahfouz). About seventy children learned how the Raptor Center rehabilitates injured birds, cares for them and, when possible, returns them to the wild. Moreover, they learned what to do should they come across an injured bird. (“Never take a baby raptor home and try to care for it yourself, because it will be ‘imprinted’ and then never be able to return to the wild!”) The particular birds which were brought to the monastery included a barn owl, a barred owl, a burrowing owl, a peregrine falcon, a kite, and a red-tailed hawk (pictured below with his handler, Rio Vogt.).

Once the birds and staff members had gone on their way back to the Raptor Center, there was time for everyone to explore the monastery property, especially the creek, before the bell rang to call everyone to the chapel for the Sixth Hour served by Father Nicholas.

A tasty lunch prepared by the sisters, was enjoyed by all. Shortly afterwards, the Santa Barbara group had to set out for home, but the groups from Victorville and Torrance stayed for a few more hours of play and fellowship.



God willing, the monastery will continue hosting children for this much appreciated wildlife program and outing in the mountains every summer.

OJAI LAVENDER FESTIVAL

Once again, St. Barbara Monastery will have a booth for selling lavender products at the annual Ojai Lavender Festival. The Festival is scheduled this year for Saturday, June 29th, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM at Libbey Park in Ojai.

THE HERCULEAN 2019 WEED ABATEMENT PROJECT

Because of the record rainfall this past spring, the brush, tall grass and, indeed, all the vegetation on the monastery property grew more abundantly, densely--and beautifully, it must be said--than ever. The abundance and density, however, meant that the monastery was faced with a Herculean task to meet the June 1st deadline for brush and dry grass clearance set by the Ventura County Fire Department. We cannot express adequately our gratitude to the many friends of the monastery who participated in one or another of the work parties that came to our rescue!

Teen groups from St. Luke Church in Garden Grove and St. Mark Church in Irvine started back in April with great effect on the huge job of weeding our overgrown lavender fields and stands of mallow in the meadow. They were followed a few weeks later by the women of St. Barnabas Church in Costa Mesa, who made yet greater progress. Then came Vitaly Yefimenkov and his Russian group mostly from Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral in Los Angeles, who made an enormous contribution to the effort not only by weeding, but by cutting down tall grass in our large meadow and on the close by hillsides. Finally, on the first Saturday in June, Elias Potashov and his helpers from St. Katherine Church in Carlsbad finished dealing with the grass for all practical purposes and made a significant inroad on the huge remaining work of cutting down dead trees and branches and chipping them for mulch as well. Firemen duly arrived on our property a few days later, and we are happy to report that the monastery passed inspection!



ST. BARBARA MONASTERY AT THE CAMARILLO GREEK FESTIVAL



The monastery's booth at the annual Greek Festival in Camarillo from June 21st to 23rd, had no fresh lavender for sale! The monastery's two lavender fields are still "in recovery" from the devastating Thomas Fire of December, 2017, when all but a handful of lavender plants were burned to a crisp. Thanks to a bumper crop the previous year,

however, which produced a large quantity of oil, the sisters were able to produce plenty of their usual lavender products: lip balm, salve, hydrosol spray, sachets filled with fragrant lavender florets and the popular small bottles of essential oil. Only the usual fresh lavender bouquets and dried lavender arrangements were lacking. We heartily thank St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Camarillo for inviting us to participate once again in their annual Festival.