

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

# ***THE MARCH GATHERING OF THE FRIENDS OF ST. BARBARA MONASTERY***

***March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013***

***WORD: ENCOUNTER OR INFORMATION?***

***Speaker: V.Rev. Lawrence Russell  
Pastor of Holy Annunciation Church  
Santa Maria, CA***

***4:00 pm Presentation***

***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,

Last week, the First Week of the Great Fast, we received what at first glance appeared to be a routine note from one of the friends of the monastery wishing us a blessed Lenten season. Tacked on at the end was a single sentence: “Why does God need us to fast anyway?” This seemingly simple question was in fact a plea for help to understand what Lent is all about. The person who wrote this to us is neither young nor new to the Church, which leads us to reflect that perhaps more people have this question in the back of their minds than our pastors guess.

The first thought that came to mind by way of response was to point out that the question is false. God doesn’t need us to fast. Indeed, He needs nothing from us at all. But to say only this is to minimize unfairly the inquirer’s sincere desire to understand the meaning of fasting.

In our culture, outside the Church, probably everyone understands fasting when used as a health measure, particularly the fasting associated with weight loss. Who has not heard of the juice fast! Then there is the fasting that is in order preceding surgery or certain medical tests. But what is the connection between spiritual life and fasting? Why do we so often hear of “prayer and fasting,” even in the Gospel, as if the two are inseparable?

Those who have actually fasted and not merely dieted, that is, refrained from eating with the intention of dedicating their fast to God, know that fasting purifies the soul in addition to the body. But it is still not easy to define clearly just what the connection is.

If we listen to the hymns at the outset of the Fast, we know that the purpose of the Great Fast is to get to Pascha—not just to get there physically, but to receive an abundance of God’s grace so that we may enter deeply into the Mystery and actually *live* the Resurrection. Not just to attend Pascha or “mark” it or “observe” it, but to “live” it! By fasting we clear what gets in the way between ourselves and God and thus open the path by which we attain enormous grace.

As said above, the question, ‘Why does God need us to fast?’ is a false question. It reflects the prevailing delusion or deception of the world which we inadvertently and so easily soak up (the *prelest* or *plani* of which the Church speaks). But this is a topic for several more long paragraphs.

We wish each and every one of you a blessed journey to Pascha during the weeks that remain and a glorious celebration of the Feast of Feasts!

Abbess Victoria  
and the community of  
St. Barbara Monastery

*On the cover: The monastery property begins to look like a construction site!*

## *What a Great Idea! An Extemporaneous Day for Moms and Kids*

A few years ago, when he was ordained to the priesthood, Father Nathan Thompson of Holy Cross Church in Palmdale, promised to come and serve a Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Monastery. When the sisters happened to visit his parish one Sunday in February for the Divine Liturgy, remembering that promise, Father Nathan fixed the date with Mother Victoria—March 14<sup>th</sup>. One of Father Nathan's parishioners overheard their conversation and asked if she might come with her children—all five of them! In no time at all, the word spread among the home schooling crowd in several Southern California parishes that there would be a Divine Liturgy at the monastery where moms and their children would be especially welcome. So it was that with not much planning quite a crowd gathered on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> at the monastery for the Divine Liturgy! The kids were on their best behavior—even while cavorting on the swings, the moms appeared relaxed, the sisters were delighted, and Father Nathan beamed. There was unanimous consent when someone suggested we should do this again. . . and again. Look for an announcement for another such gathering in two or three months.



*Fr. Nathan Thompson with moms and kids gathered at the monastery*

## *Visit from the Junior High Schoolers of St. Athanasius Church*

On Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, the monastery hosted the Junior High students from St. Athanasius Church in Goleta along with their pastor Father Nicholas Speier and their leaders. The event was part of a weekend retreat that began the evening before at the Church in Goleta. After attending Vespers and listening to the first retreat talk, the whole group spent the night at the Church. Following Divine Liturgy in the morning, it was on to St. Barbara Monastery, where everyone listened to another talk presented by Father Nicholas with the wide panorama of Santa Paula Mountain spread out before them. After lunch, all walked over to Thomas Aquinas College to enjoy the famous ponds and an enthusiastic game of volleyball on the College courts before ending their time together with one final retreat talk and heading home.



*Enjoying the ponds next door*



*Gathered in the monastery chapel*

### *Please Note*

*The last Sunday in April 2013 is Palm Sunday. There will be no Friends of St. Barbara Monastery gathering on that day. The next Friends gathering will be on May 26<sup>th</sup>.*

*On Lazarus Saturday, Archbishop BENJAMIN will be with us for his annual visit. The Vigil for Lazarus Saturday will be on Friday evening, April 26<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 PM, and the Divine Liturgy on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 AM, preceded by the Hours. A luncheon will be served. Everyone is welcome!*