

The September Gathering of the Friends of Saint Barbara Monastery

Sunday, September 29th, 2019

4:00 pm Presentation:

THE ORTHODOX VENERATION OF SAINTS

Speaker: V. Rev. Michael Laffoon

St. Mark Orthodox Church, Irvine, CA

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 5 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,

Two months have passed since Dr. John Mark Reynolds gave his important talk here at the monastery. But, captivated by the novel avenues of thought he presented, we are still mulling it over and, to tell the truth, listening to it again and again.

Dr. Reynolds stresses that we Orthodox Christians are living in a decisive historical moment, when the culture in which we live is fatally failing. This is basically a failure of its unspoken formative ideas, and we have the opportunity (not to mention the responsibility) to offer to what remains in it that is good the lifeline of Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, it is the very failure of our culture which provides optimum conditions for it to embrace certain fundamental ways of looking at the world that we Orthodox have as our Christian inheritance.

How this exactly can be accomplished Dr. Reynolds doesn't actually tell us, suggesting that the way forward is a synthesis to be worked out as we go along. But he makes it clear that he sees education and simply striving to live the Orthodox Christian life to be key.

Discussions here at the monastery with visitors as well as among ourselves often turn to the foolish, destructive and alien thinking taking over in our culture concerning what it is to be human. This is the root of the controversy surrounding abortion. Moreover, what is being taught currently in public schools and is even supported by government regarding what it is to be male and female is surely heading towards disaster—shipwreck in our culture with many, many individual casualties (including even very young children). Thank God for voices in our Orthodox Church laying out the constant Orthodox Christian understanding of what it is to be a human being formed in the image and likeness of God!

Dr. Reynolds final word to us in the talk he gave at our monastery was to say that our great concern should be that we Orthodox Christian people are not ready, and the time for action is upon us. Let us do all we can, starting with ourselves and our own local church communities, to save what is best in our present culture and unite it with the treasure which we have ultimately from Jesus Christ and handed down to us by the Apostles, Evangelists and our other Holy Fathers and Mothers throughout the centuries.

Abbess Victoria
and the community
of St. Barbara Monastery

A SECOND VISIT FROM THE YOUNG ADULTS OF ST. MARK AND ST. LUKE CHURCHES, ORANGE COUNTY



For a second time this year, the Young Adult groups from St. Mark Church in Irvine and St. Luke Church in Garden Grove joined forces for a workday at the monastery. On Saturday, Sept. 7, led by Fr. Deacon Nicholas Mamey, the young people arrived mid-morning and, after a brief orientation, set to work. Their main task was to take emergency measures to counter the onslaught of industrious monastery spiders and take down the innumerable cobwebs these marauders had woven at every available spot on the main house, the chapel, etc. (In all of our years here—14 now, we have not seen such a spider invasion!) Not limiting themselves to this one task, the young people also pulled weeds in the lavender field, removed more tree “skeletons” that had burned a year and a half ago in the Thomas Fire, and began preparations for this Newsletter. We are more grateful for their help than we know how to express! May the Lord richly reward them with His grace!

A WORD FROM OUR LAY SISTER, IOANNA WALLERSTEDT

Once a month on Sunday afternoon, the St. Xenia Outreach team from Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral in the Silverlake area of LA heads out to meet homeless neighbors near the church.

The team drives to a nearby street and approaches one of many tents we find under an overpass. “Hello! Anyone home? We have some hygiene products for you.” We wait for an answer, which is often an enthusiastic “Yes!”

One or more people emerge from the tent, we introduce ourselves, ask their names and what else they might need. (We bring socks, food, water and/or clothing in addition to the hygiene kits.) Asking about the neighborhood and what services are available is a way to engage them and learn about local resources. After saying goodbye, we move to the next tent or to the next homeless person we see. We distribute all of our 24 hygiene kits in an hour at just this one underpass and a connecting dead-end street!

Since April 2019 when the ministry began, we have seen the population change monthly, with only one or two people who are familiar from the last visit. Sometimes these interactions don’t seem like much, with homelessness such a huge issue in Los Angeles. But the smiles, hellos, and gifts we bring are an antidote to the hostility they encounter from others daily. We do what we can to show Christian love and give encouragement.

Our main team consists of Reader Serge Liberovsky, Zoe Turton, Marie McEntire, Claudia Funke, and Subdeacon George Abuelkhar—all from the Cathedral, and Mother Paraskeva, Sister Photini and me from St. Barbara Monastery. Other folks come when they can. If you would like to hear more about this kind of outreach, or join us one Sunday, please contact me at jillwallerstedt@gmail.com.



WINNER OF THE ORTHODOX CRUISE TO ALASKA

Pictured at right is Nestan Tsiskaridze of St. Athanasius Church in Santa Barbara who was the winner of our raffle of a Cruise to Orthodox Alaska along with (left) her travel companion, Jennie Marie Miculit. The successful raffle was our initial effort to raise funds towards the building of a residential wing to our house and brought the project some \$27,000. Nestan is from Georgia (the country) and is a project scientist in computer science. She bought her raffle ticket just hours before the drawing!



She writes: “It was a profound experience to encounter Tlingit people, to learn more from Fr. Michael Oleksa about native Alaskan tribes and to encounter the depth of the spirit they carry: the humility, wisdom, dignity, respect, forgiveness, and love—for their land and language, for freedom, and for nature and the world as a whole, that they carry from generation to generation. As we were cruising through the magnificent landscapes of Alaska and observing its wildlife, we heard fascinating lectures by Fr. Michael, who led us through the history of Alaskan people, their life, culture, and the work of Orthodox missionaries there. He shared stories from the lives of missionary saints—how they discovered that the Holy Spirit had prepared the native people to receive the Gospel even before their arrival in Alaska and how they were then easily able to instruct them further. When asked how life brought him (Fr. Michael) to Alaska, we heard another captivating story. It clearly requires someone who deeply loves both Alaskan Natives and Orthodoxy to tell the unwritten stories of the Saints of Alaska like St. Jacob (Netsvetov), St. Juvenaly and his companion, and now Matushka Olga. It was also delightful to learn a bit of Native Alaskan languages from Fr. Michael and to gain a bit of insight into how interestingly the words are structured. By the time we arrived in Sitka, we had learned the Trisagion Hymn in several Native Alaskan languages and were able to chant in Tlingit with parishioners at St. Michael's Cathedral. We made new and beautiful friendships during our journey and are very grateful and blessed to have been introduced to Alaska, its people, heritage and spirituality through such a rich experience!”