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ST. BARBARA MONASTERY

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2020

A PRAYING MANTIS VISITS OUR MORINGA TREE



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Mark Kern of St. Athanasius Church in Goleta, CA, was one of our scheduled speakers for a Friends' Gathering here that was cancelled because of the Covid-19 "lockdown." Mark was a key member of the team, headed up by Fr. Peter Gillquist of blessed memory, which worked on the Orthodox Study Bible project. Part of that project, prepared by Mark but not included in the published volume due to space limitations, was a collection of reference notes (actually articles) intended to accompany the text of the Old Testament. From the treasure trove of his work, we have chosen to print his article on "Watchfulness," because this theme figures so prominently in Orthodox teaching on prayer. We eagerly await the day when we can hear Mark deliver in person the talk he prepared for us earlier.

WATCHFULNESS

The theme of watchfulness and guarding one's heart runs throughout the Scriptures, and Israel was continuously admonished to give heed (Deut. 4:9) and to watch themselves carefully (Deut. 4:15) lest they forget what they had seen and heard. Especially they were to remember the day they stood before the Lord at Mt. Sinai (Deut. 4:10), when He spoke to them from the midst of the fire (Deut. 4:12). There are many different aspects to watchfulness described in the Scriptures:

- **Standing Fast in the Faith:** Israel was reminded to watch lest they forget the Covenant with the Lord (Deut. 4:23), lest they forget the spectacular events of the Exodus (Deut. 4:10, 6:12), and lest they forget the Commandments, Statutes and Judgments of the Lord (Deut. 8:11). Similarly, the Church is admonished to hold fast the faithful Word (Titus 1:9, 2 Tim. 3:14) which we have heard from our fathers in the Faith (2 Tim. 1:13, 4:3-5, 1 Tim. 6:20). Moses predicted that after his death, there would be a falling away from the Faith (Deut. 31:29). The Apostle Paul warned the Church in Ephesus of a similar problem (Acts 20:29-31). The solution in both cases was to watch and to take heed regarding what had been delivered (Deut. 4:15ff, Acts 20:31ff).
- **Knowing Oneself:** Moses advised Israel to "know themselves" and to "keep their souls diligently" (Deut. 4:9). This had to do with the love for one another (Lev. 19:18) and an understanding of the Lord's mercy (Ps. 103:8). Clement of Alexandria (Stromata II, xv) stated, "By alms and faith, our sins are purged" (Ecclus. 3:29). "By the fear of the Lord, each one departs from evil" (Prov. 3:17). "And the fear of the Lord is Instruction and Wisdom" (Ecclus. 1:27). John Chrysostom compared affluence in one's life to being poised on the brink of a steep cliff where it is very easy to experience a great fall without being aware of its imminence (Homily XVI, Homily XXVII on Acts).
- **Learn to Fear and Love God:** Israel was continually reminded to fear God (Deut. 4:10), and Cyprian stated that this is the foundation and strength of faith and hope (Treatises XII, iii, 20). The festival seasons (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) were used to teach this (Deut. 14:2-27). Everyone was to learn this as they learned the Law (Deut. 31:12); even the kings of Israel were to be diligent in this area (Deut. 17:19). Just before his death, Joshua again reminded Israel, "Take diligent heed to love the Lord your God" (Deut. 23:11).

- **Avoid Being Trapped into Sin:** They were to watch carefully; they saw no form of God at Mt. Sinai, therefore they were to make no form of God as a carved image (Deut. 4:15-18, 5:8, Is. 40:18-26), or to worship the heavenly bodies (Deut. 4:19). By being vigilant and watchful, we can avoid being devoured in sin (1 Pet. 5:8, Heb. 12:1) by the snares of the devil (2 Tim. 2:26, 1 Tim. 3:7, 6:9, Jer. 5:26). This is also called awaking to righteousness (1 Cor. 15:34, Rom. 13:11).
- **Watching Out For Others:** Besides watching out for themselves, Israel was also to watch out for their children and their grandchildren (Deut. 4:9). What affected their brethren also affected them (2 Chr. 19:10), since they were all one body (Rom. 12:4). Some of the prophets were watchmen for the entire House of Israel (Ezek. 3:17ff, 33:7ff), since they kept watch and guarded the walls (Is. 62:6) in a spiritual sense. David was well known for his watches (Ps. 130:5-6), and kept the seven hours of prayer (Ps. 119:164) that are still used in the Orthodox Church today.
 - **Prepare for the Second Coming of Christ:** The Lord warned His people to keep watch, for we do not know the day or the hour of His return (Mark 13:35-37, Matt. 25:13). Those who watch are told that they will be especially blessed when their Master returns (Matt. 24:46-47, Rev. 16:15). Conversely, those who don't watch and who don't think their Lord will return anytime soon will be surprised and will be treated very harshly (Matt. 24:48-51). This age is sometimes referred to as a refining process (Zech. 13:9, Is. 48:10, Mal. 3:3) and we are encouraged to be serious and watchful in our prayers (1 Pet. 4:7).

THE ORTHODOX COLLEGE STUDENTS NEXT DOOR



As most of you know, Thomas Aquinas College is located practically next door, just one quarter of a mile from St. Barbara Monastery on State Highway 150. This traditional Catholic institution is known for its conservative values and top-notch liberal arts education.

Despite being a Catholic college, throughout the years there has been a small but steady Orthodox presence in the student population. This year, three Orthodox students are enrolled at the College: Joshua Moore from Fort Worth, TX, and Aidan Garza from Boulder Creek, CA, are freshmen; and Esther Ruehle, also from Fort Worth, has returned for her sophomore year.

Following a classical Great Books curriculum, students read the primary texts of Western civilization across the disciplines (e.g., Homer, Plato, Euclid, St. Athanasius, Galileo, etc.). The classes are intensive round-table discussions led by tutors. Through this format, students learn to think clearly and critically and to express themselves well. Students are required to write and defend a senior thesis on a faculty-approved subject of their choice in order to graduate. It is

worthwhile noting that the college also makes every effort to provide work-study opportunities for qualified students to offset their financial obligations.

Over the years, we have had opportunity to get to know some of the students from this campus. All of them have been respectful, well-mannered and well-spoken. Among them, there are always a few Orthodox Christians, who find “a home away from home” at the monastery.

It is good to know we have a faithful Orthodox presence at the college next door and look forward to its increase as the Lord grants.

INCREASING OUR WATER SUPPLY



Inasmuch as St. Barbara Monastery is located about five miles outside of Santa Paula proper, it is not supplied with city water. Originally, two storage tanks provided the monastery with ample water; but with the addition of the chapel, fire code regulations required additional reserves, which meant a large amount of our water was no longer available to us. Clearly, we needed an additional tank. As our Project Manager (or, better, “Property Development Manager” now), the task fell to Mitch Denny.

In terms of aesthetics, the logical place to put the new tank was behind the existing tanks, but this was no simple task! Mitch had to find a way to move an excavator through the narrow area around the existing tanks, then mound the uneven ground for the new one. Next, the crumbly soil needed to be made solid enough to hold the tank. The top of the pile was leveled off and stabilized with gravel.

The main obstacle, however, was how to move a 5,000-gallon tank into position! That had been the problem haunting him since the beginning of this project. Well, Mitch called in the troops to help: namely, our friends Glenn Hoppe, his son Luke and Jerry Reich (our handyman). It took the sheer brawn of all three to roll the tank over a hillock and trench, down a slope and up onto its pad. However, a key obstacle remained: How to get it upright? Try as they might, they couldn’t do it.

After some head scratching and conferring, they agreed that, if they could lasso the tank and attach the rope to the back of our pickup truck, they might be able to pull it upright. The truck revved, the men held their breath, and slowly, up it went. Keeping the weaving tank steady that it might not fall on anyone, they eased it in into its final resting place.

Thank you, Mitch and accomplices! We and our monastery fields and gardens are grateful for the new abundance of water!