

St. Barbara Monastery
15799 Santa Paula Rd, Santa Paula, CA 93060
(805) 921-1563

***ST. BARBARA MONASTERY
FRIENDS' GATHERING***

September 25th, 2022

4:00 PM Presentation:

***DELIVERANCE
FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH***

***Speaker: V. Rev. Yousuf Rassam
Pastor, St. Innocent Orthodox Church
Tarzana, CA***

5:00 PM Vespers

6:00 PM Potluck



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Fr. Nicholas Speier, from St. Athanasius Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara, recently gave a talk at the monastery on the subject of death. He reminded us that the remembrance of death is necessary for a proper perspective on this life. He then went on to bring out three major points from the Orthodox Service for the Departed.

We grieve at the departure of a loved one, and so we should, for God never intended the soul to be separated from the body. Fr. Nicholas counsels us to accept moments of grief and not run away from them, but rather to turn them back to Christ. In Him, we can find comfort, in the presence of the One who came and dwelt among us. He joins us in our pain and suffering.

We ask God to forgive the one who has departed from us, for no one departs from this life free from sin. Fr. Nicholas emphasized that our heart-felt prayers on behalf of the departed are critical for their approach to the throne of God. St. John Maximovitch states, “On the 40th day a place is appointed for the soul until the resurrection of the dead. Some souls find themselves in a condition of foretasting eternal joy and others in fear of eternal torment both awaiting the Last Judgment. Until then change is possible.” Father mentioned that what he was sharing about the soul’s state after death was not dogmatic, but he stressed the point that change is possible for the soul after death. In the soul’s 40-day journey, it will mingle with other spirits and gravitate towards those with which it is more akin. It will also pass through the midst of evil spirits who will contend for it and tempt it. Through our fervent prayers, we can go shoulder-to-shoulder with our loved one in the battle the newly departed soul is waging, helping it let go of that which is holding it back from its heaven-bound journey and strengthening it in its resistance to the evil spirits.

We place our hope in Christ. Fr. Nicholas illustrated that the pre-communion prayers are some of the most hopeful prayers we have, quoting from St. Symeon the New Theologian: “I know, O Savior, that none other hath sinned against Thee as have I... But this again I know, that neither the magnitude of mine offenses nor the multitude of my sins surpasseth the abundant long-suffering of my God and His exceeding love for mankind.” This hope in a loving God allows us to see death as something for which to prepare, rather than something to be terrorized by.

Fr. Nicholas commented that he did not want to stand before the Judgment Seat and have to say, “I kind of tried”, but that “I really tried; I gave it my best effort.” The Orthodox funeral service can help motivate us—here and now—to let go of things that impede our relationship with Christ by showing us the vanity of this world’s values, by reminding us of God’s mercy and forgiveness, and by bringing us face-to-face with our own mortality. Father stressed, as we keep close to Christ and live in Him, that’s how we are moving. Then this life becomes the means of preparation for the life of the age to come.

The Sisters
of St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

ST. SIMEON PARISH VISIT

On Saturday, September 3rd, about 15 hearty souls from St. Simeon Antiochian Orthodox parish in Santa Clarita braved the *very* hot temperatures of 90+ to visit the monastery and help the sisters with a variety of tasks. Some created lavender sachets from the monastery's recent harvest, some worked on the preparing the monastery's monthly mailing and some, led by Fr. George Ajalat, pastor of St. Simeon, arranged, repaired, and secured bookcases to the walls at the monastery's second house, aka the "new red house."

Fr. George (who loves building things!) brought his own impressive tool kit, and Kh. Janine Ajalat and Kh. Jan Speier lent their sharp interior design skills to transform the central room at the "red house" into a library, living room, and workspace. Part way into the bookcase project, Fr. George discovered that they needed some lumber and special nails. Straightway, Rusty Blanski hopped into action, journeying to the local hardware store in the monastery's pickup truck and returning with the needed supplies to finish the job. Once the bookcases were in place and the furniture in this large room artfully re-arranged, another group of dedicated workers went to work, filling the shelves with books, thereby helping to ready the monastery library's new secondary location.

In between tasks, Fr. Nicholas Speier from St. Athanasius Church in Santa Barbara, gave an inspired and instructive talk (summarized on the previous page) on the meaning of death for us as Christians. Our faithful pilgrims also participated in Sixth Hour prayers and Great Vespers, served by both Fr. George and Fr. Nicholas.

The monastery cherishes its relationship with St. Simeon Church and is grateful for yet another opportunity to renew our bonds of friendship with the parish!



The ladies labor and fellowship over lavender and labels.



Listening attentively to Fr. Nicholas' talk.

IN MEMORIAM: JAMES MAHLKE, 1960-2022



One of our monastery's closest friends, James Mahlke, a member of St. Herman Church in Oxnard, passed away on September 1st, 2022. He had been ill for a year with ALS, Lou Gehrig's Disease.

James first visited St. Barbara Monastery in its early years when it was still located on Milpas St. in Santa Barbara. In no time he became a ready and reliable helper spending frequent Saturdays working at the monastery, helping us prepare for our monthly Friends' Gatherings by doing everything from raising tents and setting up tables to yardwork and painting. All this activity continued through our Goleta years and after we moved to Santa Paula, some twenty-five years in all!

Not long before we met James, he had been living in Japan, teaching at a Christian school. In Tokyo, he encountered the Orthodox Church, visiting the famous Russian Orthodox Cathedral known as Nikolai Do and getting to know its priest, Fr. John Takahashi, who catechized him. Returning to the United States and his family home in Camarillo, James immediately sought out St. Herman Orthodox Church in nearby Oxnard, where he was received into the Orthodox Church by Fr. Paul Waisanen, the pastor of St. Herman's. He soon became a pillar of that Church community.



James was employed by the Ventura County Library System. From time to time, he would be sent with the Library Bookmobile to Ojai and find himself traveling right past the monastery *en route* back to his home base at the Camarillo library. He would invariably give up his lunch hour and stop by the monastery for a whirlwind visit, asking a blessing, venerating the icons in the monastery church, and exchanging a few words with us before driving off again. How we cherished these unexpected visits!

Between his labors of love at St. Herman Church and St. Barbara Monastery, James lived an extraordinary life of prayer. His vehicle was a veritable chapel as was his room at home. When his illness incapacitated him, he moved to a nursing home where his family and many friends were able to visit him often—always coming away edified and encouraged by James' courageous endurance of his illness and firm faith in God.

MAY HIS MEMORY BE ETERNAL!