

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

*The April Gathering of the Friends
of
St. Barbara Monastery*

April 25th, 2010

CHRIST IS RISEN!

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 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

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



Christ is Risen! Χριστός Βοσκρεσε! Χριστός Ανέστη!

Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

On the *Day of Rejoicing*, Tuesday in the Second Week of Pascha (or another day close to this), Orthodox Christians visited the graves of the departed and prayed the paschal memorial service for them. Here at St. Barbara Monastery, we processed out to Mother Mariamne's grave and then down to the graves of the unborn babies in the clearing near the creek to proclaim *Christ is risen!* and to sing paschal hymns: *Thou didst descend into the grave, O immortal One. Thou didst destroy the power of death. . . .*

Someone asked: "What does it mean to exclaim *Thou didst destroy the power of death. . . .*, when we know bodies lie in these graves and every day people are dying and being buried?" Maybe we have all asked this question, because it is an obvious and fundamental one.

Some years ago, we attended a burial where the priest, standing at the graveside as the casket was being lowered, remarked to all of us gathered there: "This is not what God meant for us." It was a comfort to hear this reminder. Indeed, when God created us, His intention for us was life—life forever and ever more abundant. We know well the story of what happened afterwards as well as the long story of salvation history comprising the Old Testament and the New, relating what God has done to restore us to the original state in which He created us.

But, to repeat the question above, if Christ has "slain death," why are people still dying? There are various answers to this question, and the first is St. Paul's. In I Corinthians he tells us that the bodies we bury in the earth are 'seeds,' which like all seeds are sown in corruption but which God will raise in incorruption. Just as the grain of wheat rises from the earth with a new body, so will we rise from the earth with a new "resurrection body." Just as we formerly bore the image of the man of dust, Adam, so will we now bear the image of the heavenly man, Jesus Christ. A somewhat different answer is given by St. Maximos, who says the resurrection is both now and not yet. This line of thought speaks of the overlapping of the ages and the "breakthrough" of the Kingdom of God into this world. Thus we experience a foretaste of the Resurrection at Pascha, but receive it in its fullness only in the age to come—after a lifetime of preparation and labor to open ourselves to the grace of God and perhaps a time of "sleep" in the grave. And sometimes, by way of an answer, we are told that this whole subject is a mystery, and must be passed over in silence because it is inexpressible. This is essentially what St. John of Damascus says. His "answer" would be totally unsatisfying if it simply meant that such knowledge is unattainable. But what St. John means is that, to attain this knowledge is not a matter of reading the right book or finding the right teacher. Rather, one has to be *initiated*; this knowledge is derived from experience. Live the Christian life and little by little you will learn the answer by osmosis in your very being. Indeed, is it not true that when we sin, when we fall ill, when we age, we sense death at work in us? And is it not true that, when we repent, when we receive grace, when we participate in the paschal service, we feel renewed life stirring within us? Such experiences assure us in the depths of our being that we are alive in Christ and death has, indeed, been abolished. The death and dying we see around us, then, have no stranglehold on us. They are but a passage to the age to come, where God "makes all things new."

With love in the risen Christ,

Mother Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery

Mother Melania
and the community of
Holy Assumption Monastery



So who wants to pitch?

ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS ACADEMY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS VISIT

The students of St. John of Damascus Academy (SJDA) in Goleta and several of their teachers visited the monastery once again this year in Bright Week. A special treat awaited them. Reader Anthony Pluta of St. Herman Church in Oxnard, a professional baseball player in the Minor Leagues, was on hand to coach them in batting and catching technique. The children had a chance to try real baseball gloves used in professional baseball games and a real and very heavy professional bat. They also tried on Anthony's championship ring. The accompanying photo gives a glimpse of the class in progress, in this case using water balloons (not the customary choice of pro baseball players). The morning concluded with the 6th Hour prayed in the monastery chapel and a picnic provided by the sisters and barbeque-master Rassaphore Monk Lawrence.

Other activities included a musical performance by the children; a nature walk with Mother Nina, who taught identification of wild and medicinal plants on the monastery property; and the story *Pascha Transforms Wolfman Tom* read by Fr. Nicholas Speier.

Although the First and Second Graders had to return to Goleta at the end of the afternoon, the older children were able to stay for Vespers and camp out overnight. In the morning they attended Matins and then visited the ponds at Thomas Aquinas College nearby for swimming and water games.

Everyone agrees that the SJDA Bright Week visit is an established tradition.



*A post performance photo of the students
and staff of the St. John of Damascus
Academy*



Peace be unto all!

LAZARUS SATURDAY WITH BISHOP BENJAMIN

His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, has made Lazarus Saturday at the monastery a fixed event on his calendar. Always a small celebration, because most everyone is busy in their own parish church cleaning and polishing for Pascha and decorating with palms for the Great Feast of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, this is always the occasion for a more personal visit with His Grace than the December Feast of St. Barbara allows. As he sometimes does, His Grace brought his delightful father Robert Peterson along with him for the day. Following the Divine Liturgy and as festal a meal as can be had in Lent, there was plenty of time for everyone to enjoy the company of the Bishop and his father before they had to be on their way to Los Angeles for the celebration of Palm Sunday at Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral.

READER JAMES TO BE ORDAINED DEACON

Reader James Mahlke of St. Herman Church in Oxnard, a long time Friend of the monastery, is slated to be ordained to the Holy Deaconate by His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, on the Sunday of Pentecost, May 23, at Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco.

Since our Goleta days Reader James has been helping the monastery, when he and Monk Lawrence (then Larry Dibble) would come once a month to offer their hands for any heavy work that needed doing. How many times has James put up the tents and then taken them down for the monthly Friends gatherings! (We estimate 125 times!) Let us all keep our brother in Christ, the Reader James, in our prayers as he prepares for ordination.



Reader James in the early stages of his diaconal vocation studies.

NEWS FROM HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY



Sister Ann participating in the monastery catch and release program

Sister Paraskeva and our good Friend Agape Martello of Lynden, WA, took a road trip together to visit the sisters of Holy Assumption Monastery during Bright Week. The sisters there were celebrating Pascha elatedly, while being overwhelmed with problems regarding the koi. Helping with the catching and transporting of ten or so koi from the pond of Mrs. Panayiota Patiris nearby to the newly repaired monastery pond, they learned about the intricacies of keeping koi: biological stabilization of the pond environment, isolation and care for injured fish, etc. It subsequently turned out that, despite the repairs on the pond, not all the plumbing is in order. The sisters have had to postpone the return of the rest of the fish and to work hard to keep the fish they have alive, all the while dealing with leaking pipes and other unknowns in the plumbing system.



ii ESCROW CLOSING ON THE SENECA LAND !!

This very week, escrow is closing on the two adjacent acres of Seneca land that we have been trying to purchase for the past two years! Not all the bills are in yet, but so far the costs connected with this sale, beyond the purchase price of \$25,000.00, have come to \$68,786.83. Through your generosity, all these costs have been met, and one of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery has generously offered to cover the unknown amount of any remaining expenses. We extend a big "Thank You" to all of you who contributed. We have had no large donors for this purchase. Rather, the small contributions of many, many Friends of the monastery combined allowed this purchase to proceed to completion.

On April 23rd, the Feast of St. George, a Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at the monastery by our faithful Friend, V. Rev. John Finley. The Liturgy will start at 10:00 AM, preceded by the Hours at 9:40. Following the Liturgy on this day we will bless the new acreage.