

*St. Barbara Monastery – 15799 Ojai Road – Santa Paula, CA 93060
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***CHRIST IS BORN!
GLORIFY HIM!***



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

For us, the celebration of the Feast of St. Barbara each year is the marker that tells us Christmas is around the corner. Filled with thoughts of this young girl—who could not have been a Christian for more than a few months when she bravely and with serene love confessed Christ in the face of brutal torture and death—we can hardly miss picking up on the essential spirit of the Church's preparations for the Great Feast of Christ's Nativity. Yes, despite the cookie baking and decorating and the impressions that come from shopping trips to *the big city* (as we fondly call Santa Paula) all decked out for Christmas sales—all of which are part of our lives, too—the spirit of the season that prevails in the monastery is what comes from the smaller liturgical celebrations appointed for the days leading up to Christmas. Most of these, it turns out, are commemorations of martyrs. Following the Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Children in the Furnace of Babylon, the Church celebrates all in a row day by day right up to Christmas the martyrs St. Sebastian, St. Boniface, St. Ignatius, St. Juliana, and St. Anastasia, then the ten Martyrs of Crete and finally on Christmas Eve the Nun Martyr Eugenia! And following the Feast, what celebrations do we find on the calendar? The Protomartyr Stephen, the 20,000 martyrs of Nicomedia, the 14,000 Holy Innocents, and the martyrs Anysia and Zoticus!

The remarkable thing about the martyrs is how joyfully they finished their lives. They are so captivated by the Gospel and by the love of Jesus Christ that they go to their deaths singing and thanking God. The other evening at table we read the following line from St. Ignatius giving thanks for the privations he was suffering, written while a prisoner on route to Rome to be put to death: . . . *many things are lacking to us so that we may not lack God* (Letter to the Trallians).

This is how the martyrs thought and this is how the Church invites us to think as we celebrate the Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ. God became man *so that we may not lack God*. He became poor, lacking everything, *so that we may not lack God*.

Sending you our Christmas greetings and wishing you peace and joy and many blessings, this is our best and most heartfelt prayer for each and every one of you: that, whatever you lack, you may not lack God.

Abbess Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery





Rev. Ephraim Alkhas, Rev. Stephen Herney, V. Rev. Catalin Mitescu, Rev. Protodeacon George Moubayed, V. Rev. Michael Laffoon, Acolyte John Butler, Rev. Deacon Michael Savko, Reader David McAtee, Rev. John Sommer, Rev. John Beal, Rev. Rares Onofrei



Elizabeth Butler and Andrew Rassam



Mother Nina reading the epistle

THE FEAST OF ST. BARBARA, DECEMBER 4th, 2010

Surely everyone who attended agrees that this year's celebration of the Feast of St. Barbara at the monastery was "over the top." Despite the fact that some of our most faithful "regulars" could not be with us this year, including His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, seven priests concelebrated with V. Rev. Michael Laffoon of St. Mark Church in Irvine as the main celebrant at the holy altar table along with two deacons and a subdeacon. (Read all their names in the photo caption above.) Many, many of the faithful came, given that the Feast fell on a Saturday this year, bringing with them their heartfelt prayers and intention to honor the Great Martyr. Singers showed up in force and—following a single, short rehearsal just prior to the Divine Liturgy—formed a choir with remarkably splendid sound. Father Paul Waisanen—the eighth priest in attendance, chaplain to the monastery—preached a sermon which serves as an example of exactly what a sermon on such an occasion should accomplish: it put all who listened in touch with the Saint.

Following the Divine Liturgy and Cross Procession a magnificent pot luck was served. Thanks to a warm, sunny afternoon, everyone was able to dine and visit together outdoors, where the children could run and play to their hearts' content. The accompanying photos tell the story:



Rev. Protodeacon George Moubayed, Rev. John Beal and Rev Deacon James Mahlke



Rev. Deacon Michael Savko, V. Rev Michael Laffoon, Rev Protodeacon George Mabayed, and Reader David McAtee during the Moleben



Anna Grace Butler, Elizabeth and Katherine Rutledge



Mother Nina orients the students for the nature walk



Monkeying around on the tire swing



Taking a lunch break



Inspecting and performing a functionality test on the swing set



Sometimes you pull the wagon... and sometimes you ride in the wagon

ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS ACADEMY VISITS THE MONASTERY

On Wednesday, December 8th, the monastery was delighted to welcome the students of St. John of Damascus Academy along with some of their parents and teachers.

After taking a little time to familiarize themselves with the monastery property and try out the famous monastery swings, the children formed a work party and labored diligently under the supervision of monk Lawrence to weed the path going down to Sisar Creek. Then, following a brown-bag lunch and a little rest, they set out on a nature walk with Mother Nina and Sister Paraskeva, identifying some of the special trees and other plants that grow on the monastery land and learning about their special medicinal uses. Leaf specimens and pertinent information were entered into special "nature walk log" books that each student could take home for continued study.



PLEASE NOTE



There is no December gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery. Expect to receive another newsletter in January announcing our next gathering, which will be on January 30th.