

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

The March Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery

Sunday, March 29, 2009

4:00 PM Presentation:

*Christians under Islamic Law in History &
the Rise of Sharia Courts in the West Today*

*Speaker: V. Rev. Josiah Trenham
St. Andrew Church, Riverside, CA*

Vespers: 5:00 PM

Potluck: 6:00 PM

Directions to the Monastery

From Highway 101 - Exit Hwy 126 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.

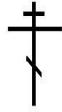
Drive across the bridge and follow the signs to the parking area.

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.



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Lent is approaching its mid-point, and the Great Feast of Annunciation is also at hand. This year the two coincide: Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent, the Week of the Cross, is March 25th, Annunciation. (This is also likely to be the day you are reading this newsletter!)

In her wisdom, the Church calls for the Holy Cross to be placed on an analogion in the center of the nave throughout this middle week of Lent so that we, who are likely at this point to be fatigued by fasting and in danger of faltering, may be encouraged and strengthened in our resolve to keep the Fast. Indeed, do we not find our fervor renewed when we gaze at the Holy Cross and venerate it singing: *Before Thy Cross, we bow down, O Master. And Thy Holy Resurrection we praise and glorify! Resurrection!* This is the key! Always, always, it is with the Resurrection in view and never by itself that we contemplate the Holy Cross, for this is where the Cross leads and what gives the Cross its meaning.

This year, for the single day of the Annunciation, the icon of this Great Feast will also be set out on an analogion in the middle of the nave for our veneration. What a remarkable combination! In the icon we see the Angel Gabriel announcing to Mary the unbelievable good news that God has chosen to enter His world and become one of us through her; and right next to the icon we see the Cross, the instrument of torture and death by means of which the world killed this very Man. Thus, the icon tells us the astonishing truth that the Creator of the universe cares about us and, more than that, loves us! And simultaneously the Cross tells us the even more astonishing truth that He loves us so much as to willingly die a brutal death for us—because that is what it takes for us to inherit life.

In the Tradition of the Church the connection between these two—the Annunciation and the Crucifixion—has long been the subject of deep reflection and mystical contemplation. In the hymnography of the Church there is a large category of stichera and troparia to the Mother of God standing at the foot of the Cross; *stavrotheotokia* they are called. They turn up in the daily services on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year. If one opens the Matins service appointed exactly for this middle day of Lent, one will find this *Stavrotheotokion* (following the *Exapostilarion*):

The all-holy Virgin Mother of God the Word cried weeping and lamenting: 'Such are the good tidings of joy that Gabriel brought me. Go forth then, Child, to fulfil the secret counsel of the divine plan of salvation.'

Abbess Victoria
and the community
of St. Barbara Monastery

THE CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Last month's Friends' presentation by Seraphima Butler of St. Athanasius Church in Goleta on "The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd" was received with exceptional interest and enthusiasm. Over the last several years, Seraphima (at the cost of numberless hours of intense labor) has adapted this Montessori-based program of catechesis or church school lessons, for use in the Orthodox Church.

The approach first of all demands a context of the church community or Orthodox Christian home, where both teacher and students are seeking to draw closer to God. It engages the whole being, body and soul, of both teacher and student in the learning process, rather than require the student merely to learn facts and be responsible for a certain body of information. The teacher is not "someone who should know all the answers" because the teacher as well as the students are learning. The students themselves bring the learning to the process when they internalize what they learn.

Seraphima pointed out that this method is extremely consonant with the Church's established way of doing things. When one enters an Orthodox Church with its icons, music, incense, Eucharist, all one's senses and spiritual faculties are engaged at whatever level one is capable of.

Parents in attendance were provided with material that could help them begin using this method at home or in their local church school programs. Anyone wishing to obtain this material may contact the monastery, preferably by Emailing your request to sbmonastery@gmail.com.



Seraphima and her wonderful charts



A VISIT FROM THE ST. NICHOLAS CATHEDRAL TEENS

The teen SOYO from St. Nicholas Cathedral along with their adviser, Reema Maalouf, spent Saturday, February 21, at the monastery. They divided their time between learning and laboring, spending the morning with Mother Melania, who talked with them about the difference between true blessedness and the world's idea of happiness. Following a short chapel service and lunch, they spent the afternoon working on the monastery grounds. They accomplished a very professional and much appreciated job of restoring the meadow path, overgrown with weeds in the aftermath of winter rains, and helped set up tents, tables, and chairs for the next day's Friends gathering. The day concluded with Vespers and a picture taking session.



Mother Nina, from LONG experience, instructs the boys in the fine art of tent raising



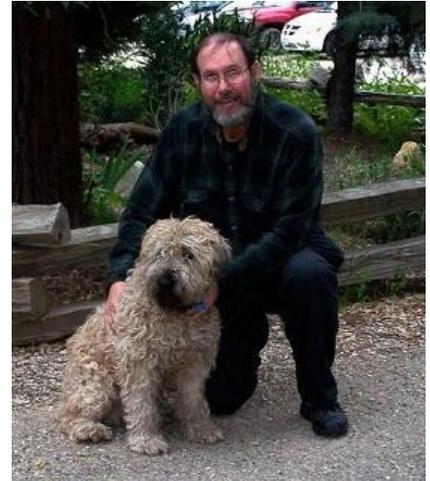
Hoe hoe hoe!!!



After a hard day's work, the smiles are still there!

GANDALF MOVES TO GOLETA

Gandalf, the wheaten terrier, who came to live with us last August, has moved once again, this time to live with Glenn Ritsema in Goleta. Because Gandalf proved to be—what shall we say? —“accident prone,” a move of some sort became necessary. As many of you who have met him know, Gandalf is a dog of many fine qualities and even, one might say, “virtues.” Our community knows him to be affectionate, happy, frequently obedient, very cuddly, and devoted to his veterinarian. So we refuse to so much as consider the accusation that he is a common thief, but cannot deny he suffers from what appears to be kleptomania (which would explain why he surreptitiously consumed two bags of M&Ms and a bottle of his own pain medication). Further evidence of this ailment was discovered in a hiding place where he had secreted a dozen muffins intended for the homeless, a bag of tortillas, and a bone legitimately intended for himself.



*Gandalf with his new owner
(or is it Glenn with HIS new owner?)*

We will miss him, but take comfort in thinking of him with his devoted new owner, Glenn, and enjoying his new circumstances. It helps that Glenn, who comes by the monastery frequently to repair our computers, plans to bring Gandalf along to visit us often.



NEW BOOK IN “OLD TESTAMENT STORIES FOR CHILDREN SERIES”

As many of you know, Mother Melania and Khouria Bonnie Gillis have been collaborating on children’s books for several years. The first series focused on the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church. It was perhaps “the wrong way ‘round” to address the Twelve Great Feasts before addressing Pascha – the Feast of Feasts. So, a second series “The Three-Day Pascha” soon followed the first. Bonnie and Mother Melania are now working on a third series “Old Testament Stories for Children.” The first two books – *Baby Moses* and *Moses’ Flight from Egypt* – have now been joined by a third, *Jonah’s Journey to the Deep*. A fourth – *Noah and the Ark of Salvation* – is due out soon.

In all three series, we have sought to present the patristic understanding of these events and texts, but in simple words that children can understand. We have been very blessed to have Bonnie as illustrator for these series. As an iconographer and a person with a great love for children and animals, she is able to draw pictures that are both reverent and sweet – a rare ability.

All these books are available from the monastery (sbmonastery@gmail.com or 805-921-1563) or from Conciliar Press (www.conciliarpress.com or 800-967-7377).

