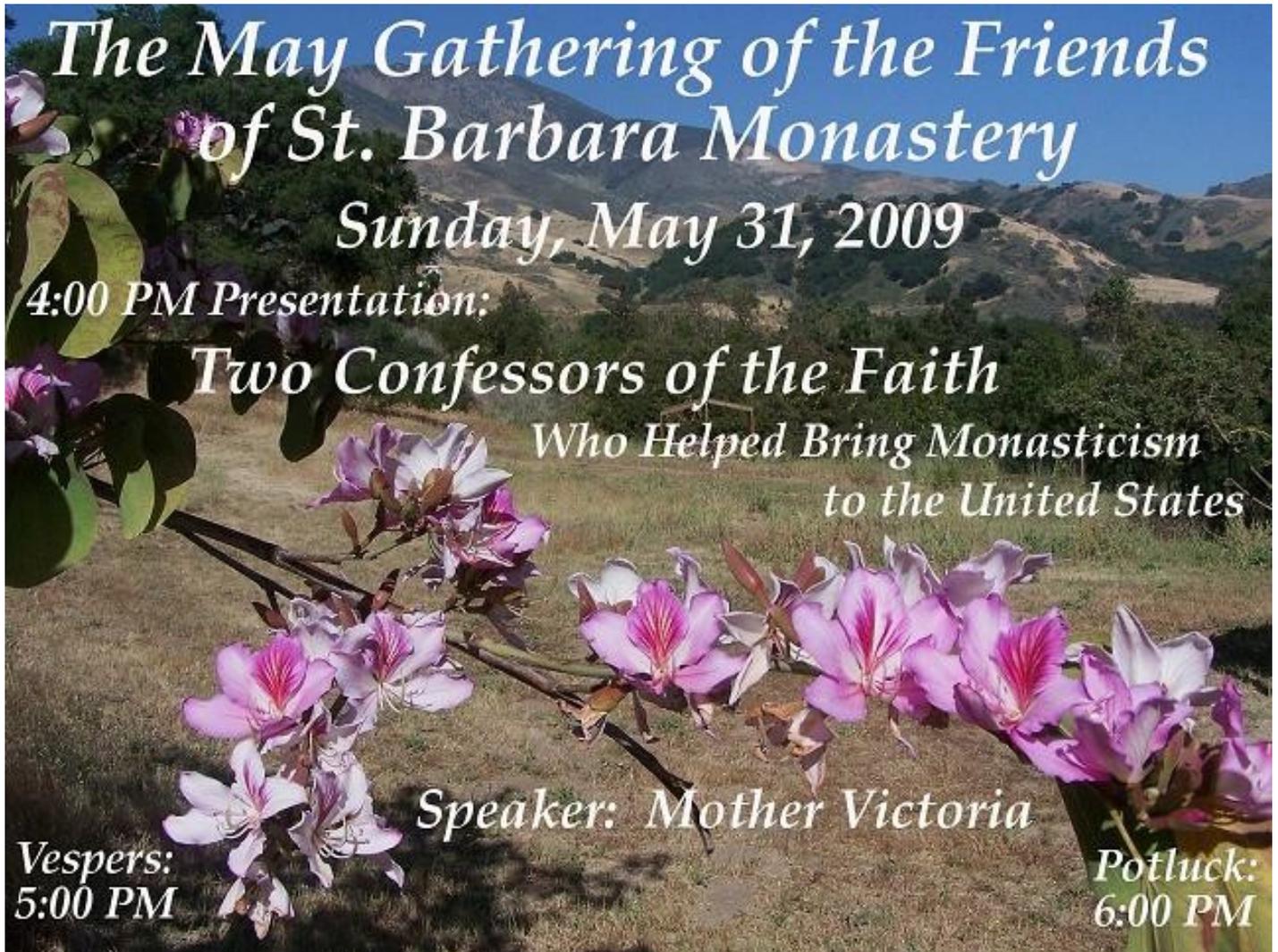


*St. Barbara Monastery – 15799 Ojai Road – Santa Paula, CA 93060 – (805) 921-1563*



*The May Gathering of the Friends  
of St. Barbara Monastery  
Sunday, May 31, 2009  
4:00 PM Presentation:  
Two Confessors of the Faith  
Who Helped Bring Monasticism  
to the United States  
Speaker: Mother Victoria  
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 10<sup>th</sup> St./Hwy 150 at Santa Paula.  
Turn left from the exit ramp and follow 10<sup>th</sup> St/Hwy 150 through Santa Paula.**

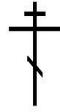
**Bear right at the fork in the road. This is Ojai Rd/Hwy 150.**

**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 10<sup>th</sup> St./Hwy 150.**

**Turn right from the exit ramp and follow 10<sup>th</sup> 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!*

Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

What's important? And what's not?

It's fire season in California again (never mind that we haven't reached the official date of June 1st). The "refugees" from the big Santa Barbara wildfire last week who came and stayed at the monastery were none other than the Butlers—Stephen, pictured on the next page, who a few days earlier was receiving accolades for his *Resurrection Oratorio*; Seraphima, his wife, who a couple of months ago gave the Friends presentation on *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* to an intensely interested audience; and their five children--the youngest, Maria, having just arrived in this world twenty days earlier. While there was no telling if their house was going up in flames, we were sitting at lunch and together felt the jolt of a 4.2 earthquake centered in Ojai, ten miles away. We are Californians, so we continued with lunch.

Were this happening somewhere else in the world, we probably would have risen up from the table and immediately begun prayers of supplication. This doesn't mean that nobody was praying. Not at all! And not far from conscious thought we were most likely entertaining questions such as, precisely: 'What's important? And what's not?' But we in these parts do tend to accept as a given the unstable earth beneath our feet and the very, very dry land all around us in the long months of fire season. In other words, we accept a certain feeling of insecurity as normal.

Is this good? As long as we keep our sense of insecurity balanced with trust in the Lord, yes! Because it provides us with a dose of reality that brings us to our senses and helps keep us aware of 'what's important and what's not.' Human life is fragile, fleeting, uncertain, and full of tempting illusions; and security is surely one of the greatest, spiritually debilitating illusions there are. Were our house and property to be reduced to rubble, were we to suffer injury, or even to lose one another or our own lives, what would we then consider important? That's the question ever near at hand. We hope that, no matter in what circumstances we might find ourselves, we would continue to glorify God and live by His grace. *Indeed, He is risen!*

Abbess Victoria  
and the community of  
St. Barbara Monastery

## WORLD PREMIERE OF RESURRECTION ORATORIO

Last month, on the afternoon of St Thomas Sunday, the sisters were privileged to attend the world premiere of Subdeacon Stephen Butler's *Resurrection Oratorio*, performed by the Westmont College Choir, the Westmont College Orchestra, and four soloists. We experienced an exquisite 80-minute musical meditation on the supreme reality of our Faith: *Christ is risen!*

Subdeacon Stephen, chair of Westmont College's Music Department, notable composer and close Friend of the monastery, outdid himself in this grand yet unpretentious *Oratorio* that takes its libretto entirely from Scripture, setting forth musically the complete cycle of eleven resurrection Gospel readings appointed in rotation for Sunday Matins. The work itself consists of eleven movements each made up of one Gospel reading plus a twelfth and final movement consisting of the Paschal Liturgy reading from the opening chapter of St John's Gospel. All of this was bound together by that gloriously golden theme – the Paschal troparion – recurring in various and sometimes unexpected moments throughout the work. This leitmotif, *Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing Life*, treated in various musical configurations, seemed to evoke every possible mood from hushed wonder to ebullient joy!



*Stephen Butler*

With the subtle skills of a loving craftsman, Subdeacon Stephen has put forth an artistic effort worthy of his subject, deploying masterfully the tools of his musical trade to illumine these sacred Gospel readings. Using various orchestral, rhythmical, textural, and tonal techniques to bring forth the text, he makes the point of this *Oratorio* abundantly clear – to celebrate the simple but life-transforming message of Christ's resurrection.

For instance, certain key textual phrases are highlighted via vocal fugues and instrumental interludes, the latter serving as a sort of musical 'selah,' inviting one to reflect on the preceding passage. Surprises along the way include the novel use of guitar, harp, and some interesting percussive effects achieved through xylophone, what sounded like marimbas and, perhaps not so surprising, bells!

This premiere of the *Resurrection Oratorio*, an obvious labor of love and a true musical gem worthy of wide recognition, was a much-welcomed post-Pascha treat for the sisters. It was, after all, yet one more priceless opportunity to embrace anew the profundity of that glorious mystery of our Faith. *Christ is risen!*



## DEACON RICO PAUL MONGE SPEAKS ON CHRISTIANITY & ATHEISM

The sisters and Friends were blessed with another fine talk last month. Speaking on *Christianity & Atheism: Active Engagement or Reactive Resentment*, Dn. Rico Paul spoke mainly about Nietzsche and his rejection of Christianity largely on the grounds that he had never seen anybody live it. The implications for us are simple – we need to live the lives of Christian joy that enabled the martyrs to go singing to their death. If we do this, we will have something powerful to say to atheists. Not everyone will accept this testimony, but it is almost impossible to ignore. To obtain a recording of this talk, email the monastery at [sbmonastery@gmail.com](mailto:sbmonastery@gmail.com) or call (805) 921-1563.



*Dn. Rico Paul Monge*

## SAINT JOHN OF DAMASCUS ACADEMY VISITS THE MONASTERY

For the third year in a row, students and faculty from St. John of Damascus Academy in Goleta spent a couple of days in Bright Week at the monastery. They assisted with the reading and singing at the daily chapel services, had lessons with their teachers, listened to (and acted out) a new Pascha story by Mother Melania, presented a musical program for the sisters with selections from Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* (which they recently performed for the public), and hunted for Easter eggs on the monastery grounds. Meals were all enjoyed "picnic style" in the fresh mountain air. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders camped overnight and stayed for an extra day of instruction with Fr. Nicholas Speier and exploration of Sisar Creek, which runs through the monastery grounds, with their teacher, Michael Wilds.

Everyone agreed that these visits to the monastery should become more frequent!



*A satisfied lunch crowd!*



*I need an egg carton for all these eggs!*



*Homemade root beer floats – you can't beat them!*



*A trek through Sisar Creek*



## EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT

Another Eagle Scout Project is underway at St. Barbara Monastery. Stephen Coler of Boy Scout Troop # 808 from St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Camarillo has chosen to put in some raised garden beds as his special project. Stephen began planning construction of the beds early in the year, carefully examining ideas for protecting the beds from gophers and deer. With assistance from his dad Brad Coler, his Scout Advisor Dennis Perry, fellow scouts from the troop, and a few other dads, Steven began the initial leveling of the project site in April, near the end of the rainy season. The boxes, lined with chicken wire, and surrounded by deer fence were installed in May. As of this writing, the beds still have to be filled with topsoil and the deer fence completed. But the first planting is expected to go in before the month ends. What vegetables will be planted? The real "head" of the community, Punkin the cat, has suggested catnip, and Mother Victoria and the sisters are not likely to object. (They reason that, if the catnip is planted *right* at the entrance, he'll never get any farther to notice the basil beyond – or the onions, beans, peas, etc.)



*Left – Stephen Coler (second from left) and his able helpers digging the foundations for the raised beds*



*Right - nearly finished, but feeling a little bit fenced in*