

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

The May Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery

May 30th, 2010

Topic: Lebanese Monasticism

*Speaker: Rev. Patrick O'Grady, Pastor of St. Peter the Apostle
Orthodox Church in San Dimas*

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



Dear Friends,

Our cover photo this month shows thistles blooming in our meadow. We have *a lot* this year. When we're gardening, we pull them out using our thickest gardening gloves or hack them down as the worst of thorny weeds. But when we're just enjoying the view, we appreciate them as spectacular flowers bursting with color. One of the sisters has even put the royal purple blooms in flower arrangements in our chapel a time or two.

For us, thistles carry a particular significance. We associate them with Abbess Eudoxia of blessed memory. She was the first abbess of 'The Monastery of the Veil' in France, where Mother Victoria started her monastic life. Thus, Abbess Eudoxia is, in a sense, the "grandmother" of our two communities. As a young widow in the Crimea during Communist times, she was tonsured as a stavrophore nun at a secret monastery in the mountains above Yalta. There isn't space here to recount the fascinating story of how this monastery was founded. Neither is there space to describe how, during the purges following the Second World War, it provided refuge for hundreds of monastics fleeing persecution as monastery after monastery was closed in the Soviet Republics to the north. But that monastery's "thistle connection" begs telling.

In order to keep the monastery a secret from the Soviet authorities, the sisters and their priest decided on a masquerade: they would present their community as a collective farm. There was, however, one central problem with this plan: the rocky terrain didn't allow much of anything to grow—except thistles. "Necessity is the mother of invention," the saying goes. And this monastic community was definitely inventive. They would pretend they were a "research collective," and the subject of their research would be—thistles! Mother Eudoxia related how the sisters and their priest would compose and send in "reports" to the government. The community did not wear monastic habits, and the entire daily round of services was done all at night starting with Vespers and ending with the Divine Liturgy in the wee hours of the morning. Then, during the day, the sisters pretended to be busy with their "farm." The secret monastic community survived this way for years until, inevitably, they were found out because of the large number of monks and nuns who sought refuge there. The elderly priest of the community was sent into exile, where he died. The sisters were obliged to disperse. Some went to the forests of the Caucasus, where many monastics managed to survive undetected. That area is a haven for hermits, even in our own day.

With love in Christ,

Mother Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery

Mother Melania
and the community of
Holy Assumption Monastery



John Andrew receives his hood upon graduation

GRADUATION AT THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

On May 20th, several sisters attended the commencement ceremonies at Thomas Aquinas College (TAC), next door to St. Barbara Monastery. Among the graduates were two good friends of the monastery, Jonathan Andrew Grieg of Ventura, who embraced the Orthodox Faith at St. Herman Church in Oxnard during his studies at TAC, and Rebecca Likiardopoulos of Wichita, KS, a member of the Greek Orthodox Church. We congratulate them on their brand new B.A. degrees from this fine college renowned for its excellent and rigorous classical education. We will miss having them nearby.

This is a good place to mention the cordial relationship the monastery has with the college. We have been made welcome there to use the extensive library to our heart's content, and in the past one of our sisters received regular tutorials in patristic Greek from Mr. John Nieto, one of the faculty. We and our visitors often take walks on the beautiful grounds, and the college even provides our drinking water *gratis* from their artesian well—thus offsetting what would otherwise be a significant expense.



Rebecca on the grounds of Thomas Aquinas College.



Father Deacon Gregory fields questions from the sisters and guests

A VISIT FROM DEACON GREGORY AND PATRICIA ROEBER

Our good friends (and parents of Sr. Margarete at Holy Assumption Monastery) Deacon Gregory Roeber and his wife Patricia spent the better part of a week in May visiting both the Calistoga and Santa Paula Monasteries. Deacon Gregory, Professor of Early Modern History and Religious Studies at Penn State, gave lectures at both monasteries on the subjects of religious rights and the early relations between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Protestant Reformers in the West.

... AND A VISIT FROM MEMBERS OF THE OCF AT CAL-POLY, SAN LUIS OBISPO

On Saturday, May 23rd, three Orthodox students from Cal-Poly in San Luis Obispo, together with their adviser, Dr. Stephen Lloyd-Moffett, Professor of Religious Studies at the college, visited St. Barbara Monastery for a day of work, prayer, and, as it turned out, learning. The hours of window washing and weed pulling (to help the monastery achieve the required degree of weed abatement for the routine June inspection by the County Fire Department) ended with the group's participation in Great Vespers with the monastic community. Following Vespers, everyone sat down to a hearty supper at which the conversation developed into nothing short of a lecture by Dr. Lloyd-Moffett ranging across many areas of Orthodox interest. We will long remember their visit and look forward to having the Cal-Poly Orthodox Christian Fellowship here again.

PHOTOS OF THE CHILDREN FROM THE APRIL FRIENDS GATHERING



*Salome Whittamore shares
her gracious smile*



Some of the many children dining alfresco



*Sebastian Shannon in the
monastery's subcompact car*

NEWS FROM HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY

Life at Holy Assumption Monastery continues on with new and old adventures. The sisters are still busy with the koi and constantly learning new things about plumbing, koi health, koi feeding habits, etc. Petey the African Gray Parrot has now learned to sing "Bal-loooo" in perfect imitation of Sr. Brigid, calling Ballou, our Russian Blue cat. Speaking of singing, the sisters are working on improving theirs, with the patient and expert help of Jenna Duran and Nicholas Custer.

There is a lot to do on the monastery grounds, and there will be a work party on Saturday June 5. If you're in the area, bring your work boots and join them! And if you're more sedentary, not to worry - there is still plenty for you to do!

On the July 4th weekend, Holy Assumption Monastery and St. Symeon of Verhotursk Church will be jointly holding a garage sale at the house of Irene Spiegel just across from the Napa County Fairgrounds, where thousands of visitors come every July 4th weekend. The sisters are very grateful to Irene for the invitation and for all who have offered to donate goods or to help out at the garage sale. More detailed information on both the work party and the garage sale will appear in the Holy Assumption Monastery newsletter. If you would like to get their newsletter, please phone them at 707-942-6244 or email them at sisters.holyassumptionmonastery@gmail.com.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN YOUNG ADULTS APOSTLES' FAST MINI-RETREAT

ALL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SINGLES 18-35 WELCOME

On Saturday, June 19th, there will be a mini-retreat at the St. Barbara Monastery beginning at 10am. This event will include a hike, Vespers service, bonfire and a joint discussion led by Fr. Josiah Trenham and Abbess Victoria. There is a registration fee of \$10.00 which will cover a sack lunch for the hike, dinner and s'mores, with the remainder going to the St. Barbara Building Fund. Please register by June 13th at orthodoxsingleevent@gmail.com. Please contact Liz Lyman by phone at 949-212-8196 for more information.