

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

The January Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery

Sunday, January 31, 2010

Speaker: V. Rev. Paul Waisanen, Pastor of St. Herman Orthodox Church in Oxnard, California

Topic: Orthodox Christian Apologetics, Part I

4:00 pm Presentation

5:00 pm Vespers

6:00 pm Potluck

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,

As you can well imagine, with two thirds of our community relocated up at Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, we are having to make many adjustments to our life at both monasteries. The obvious and immediate example is the redistribution of our work load—our “obediences,” as we monastics would say. At St. Barbara Monastery, it is our County’s insistence on proper housing for any residents and guests on the monastery property that is causing us to make the greatest adjustment and rework our vision for our daily life here, at least in the short term—which probably won’t be so short! Without the RVs and trailers that served as temporary housing for both sisters and guests, we cannot accept the women who would like to become nuns in our community, and we cannot accept overnight guests—unless they are willing to sleep on a sofa in a common area. Because our “mission,” if you will, is to bring women into the monastic life and because hospitality is so integral to Orthodox coenobitic monasticism, it is a hardship to us to have to put precisely these elements of our life on hold. At Holy Assumption Monastery, we face the same basic dilemma. Space is “maxed out,” and presently it is impossible to receive new sisters or guests.

At St. Barbara Monastery, we are investigating temporary housing of various sorts in an attempt to find a solution, but have serious doubts the County will approve this in any form—especially given the length of time (four years?) we will probably need it. And, in any case, such temporary housing represents costs we cannot afford. If any of you have suggestions, we welcome them. Meanwhile, at Calistoga, the possibility of finding additional housing seems more promising. We will keep you posted on what develops at both monasteries as we explore the options.

Acting on the principle that our new circumstances are the Lord’s will, we are accepting them and “watching” for indications of how the Lord wants us to use them. Can it be that the Lord is asking those of us at St. Barbara Monastery to embrace a quieter life and to focus more on our own repentance as we prepare for the future growth of the monastery? Construction should begin this year, and that promises to require all our attention and energy—and more! And can it be that the Lord is asking those of us at Holy Assumption Monastery to embrace the people and their needs in this small town—the people who attend the monastery church, the elderly in the nursing home up the street, etc.? At the moment, this seems to be the way life is pointing us.

We ask your prayers for discernment, confident that the Lord will guide our steps aright.

Mother Victoria
and the community
of St. Barbara Monastery

Mother Melania
and the community
of Holy Assumption Monastery

***** Should it rain on Jan. 31st, as the long-term weather forecast says is highly possible, we will have to cancel the Friends gathering. *****

THEOPHANY AT THE MONASTERY

When Father John Finley realized he would not be able to celebrate the Feast of St. Barbara on December 4th at the monastery as is his custom, he offered to console us by coming for Theophany. Meanwhile, Deacon Gregory Roeber, father of our Sister Margarete and a professor of history and religious studies at Penn State, likewise planned a visit to the monastery for this same time, offering to give us a lecture in church history, his specialty. True to their word, both arrived the day before the Feast to serve the Vespereal Liturgy and indoor Blessing of Water appointed for the Eve of Theophany. After these services and supper, soldiers that they are, they then led us through the Theophany Vigil (Matins and Great Compline).



The procession to the creek



The blessing of the water

On the morning of the Feast, our joy was increased, if that is possible, by the arrival of dear friends of many years, Father Nicholas and Malvi Neyman. Father Nicholas concelebrated the festal Divine Liturgy with Father John, after which all present processed down to the creek for the outdoor Blessing of Water.



Rev. Dn. Gregory gives his lecture

Since our numbers were few, Father Deacon Gregory presented his lecture to us at the table as we concluded dinner. He is a superb teacher, and our attention simply could not wander as we listened to his presentation about the origins of the Feasts of

Christmas and Theophany. (We

learned, among other things, that it is not true that the date of Christmas was chosen to counter the celebration of a feast of the sun god. And, no, it is not true that Christmas and Theophany were originally a single celebration. The dates of these feasts ultimately have more connection with Pascha and the Jewish calendar.



Sisar Creek two weeks later

The blessing of Sisar Creek was just in time. A week later the winter rains came, and in five days we received twenty-two inches of rain . . . and counting. What was a little rivulet when it was blessed quickly became a swollen, raging torrent.

UPDATE FROM HOLY ASSUMPTION MONASTERY



The sisterhood in front of the Calistoga chapel

Mother Melania and the sisters who went to Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga report that things continue to go well there. On December 28th, the sisters held an Open House, which was attended by roughly one hundred people—including the mayor of the city, the former mayor and former fire chief. Many of the “parishioners” of the monastery church also attended and contributed various delicious goodies for the table. The general consensus was that the Open House was a success and worthy of making an annual event.

On January 9th, the sisters were finally able to return the hospitality of Father Joakim and the community of St. Simeon Church nearby (ROCOR). As they follow the Old Julian Calendar, it was still the Christmas season for them, but the Theophany season for the sisters. A wonderful “compromise” was found for the opening and closing prayers at the meal: the Christmas troparion and kontakion were sung in Slavonic and the troparion and kontakion for

Theophany in English. Nobody minded celebrating both feasts at the same time!



Ashley the much adored Calistoga cat

Since arriving in Calistoga, the sisters have been visiting the nursing home just a short walk up the block from the monastery and have developed a warm relationship with the staff and residents there. It is a humbling thing to be in the presence of elderly people who, not by their own choice, live a harder ascetic life than most of us do and yet accept their lot with grace and thankfulness. In addition to working with the people at the nursing home, the sisters are beginning to work with the Calistoga Family Center to increase their outreach to the larger community.



Sr Brigid gathering persimmons

On the income-producing side, the sisters are looking at various alternatives with the expert and kind help of George Barsi, who is working with them to crystallize a vision for supporting themselves in a manner compatible with the monastic lifestyle. Another new friend, Lydia Henrickson (who is not only a chef, but an instructor of chefs) has been donating both her wonderful food and her teaching abilities to the sisters in the hope of making them even more proficient cooks than they are.



Lydia in the kitchen

In short, the sisters are settling in well at their new monastic home. They keep the same horarium or schedule of services as the sisters at St. Barbara Monastery, but have begun to adopt activities appropriate to their new urban environment and the needs of the townspeople there.