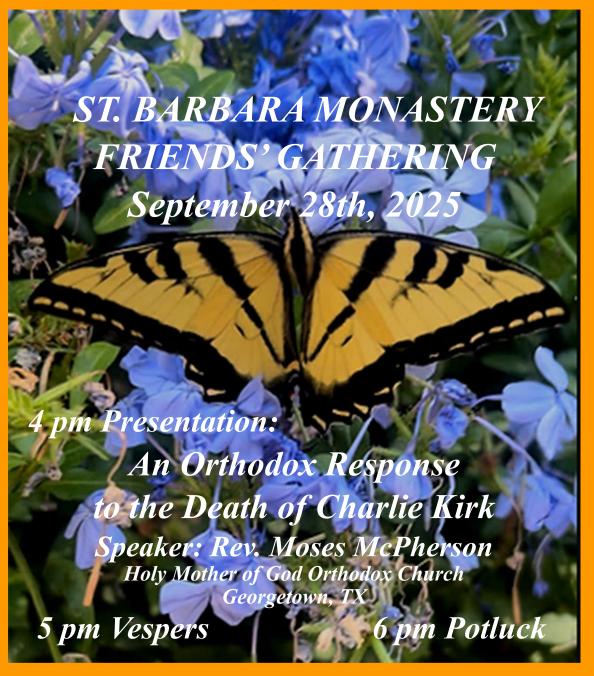
St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

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Dear Friends of St Barbara Monastery,

How do we make a positive difference in a world that seems to be spinning out of control? What is the best thing we can do to help those around us? What is the most loving thing we can do for each other? How can we shine as lights in a darkening world?

A wise friend once said, "The most loving thing you can do for another is to repent and work on yourself." This seems to be the uniquely Christian answer to all of the above questions.

Why is this so? It is so because as Christians we know that humans are, in our very nature, *relational* beings, uniquely made in the image of God. We know that God Himself is an eternal Communion of three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the eternally existing Being of loving communion—and that we are meant to reflect that loving communion in our own lives. Thus, our very identity, who we are, is in part constituted by those with whom we share communion. A real consequence of that is that even what we do in secret affects all those around us, for better or for worse. How then can we affect a positive change in the world around us? With God's help, by first working on changing ourselves!

As Orthodox Christians, we know that repentance begins with a literal "change of mind" (lit. *metanoia*), a deep change of mind born from humility, that allows us to stand before God in our hearts and to own up to our sins, naming and confessing them before Him. This process of standing before a loving God in prayer, vulnerable, transparent and exposed, as it were, and calling out those broken tendencies of thought and behaviors that act like a cancer within us, is the first step in the process of repentance which ultimately flowers into receiving forgiveness and healing grace which transforms us. Receiving such divine grace through forgiveness, we are then able to bear real fruits of repentance by exercising ourselves in the virtues directly opposed to our sins. Are we slothful? Let us repent and apply ourselves in diligence. Are we prone to remembrance of wrongs? Let us work to extend forgiveness to others, remembering our own sins. Are we quick to anger? Let us intentionally pursue meekness and gentleness. And such efforts will be successful and sustainable only by divine grace.

Human beings are "contagious," for better or for worse! That is why the best and most loving first thing we can do for each other and for the world is to lead a life of perpetual personal transformation, i.e. continual repentance.

—The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

CHANGING OF THE SEASONS

To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. —Ecclesiastes 3:1

Autumn is near. We feel it in the air, in the darkness that falls sooner each night, in the final gathering in of the harvests. Having watched the baby deer grow steadily since their first wobbly steps in spring, we now find ourselves in late September, as the majestic bucks make their first appearances, signaling the beginning of rutting season where they will court the female deer for a few weeks.

On the harvest side of things, we recently completed our last major lavender harvest, one of five full harvests for lavender essential oil and hydrosol over the last two months. We estimate bringing in approximately 325 pounds of lavender in total with the help of volunteers. We managed the last major harvest just before the coming of the first rains (a rarity in September) and we think we have just one partial harvest ahead of us to finish all our fields before pruning the entire lavender field back for the winter. We have also finished our fruit tree harvesting, our final apple harvest helped by hungry deer and, we suspect, an opportunistic squirrel. Our small garden is still producing, especially a good crop of tomatoes.

We thank God for this "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness." (John Keats)

CENTENNIAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Most people will never have the pleasure of celebrating their 100th birthday.



However, one of our friends from the Red Hatters, a society of local seniors who cultivate friendships through regular activities and service, turned 100 on September 5th. This was certainly an occasion to celebrate! The birthday girl was Annie Losito (pic-

tured left), a Red Hatter, former WWII Army nurse and later a Ventura County public health nurse. She looked forward to donning a red hat and enjoying a

special birthday luncheon with her friends at the monastery earlier this month but, alas, she woke up unwell and unable to get out of bed that morning!

Fortunately, 10 of her fellow Red Hatters celebrated on her behalf with a lasagna



A blessed gathering of red hats and black habits.

luncheon provided by the sisters, not neglecting to record a robust singing of "Happy Birthday" to her, and delivering to her a generous piece of cake along with gifts later on. Happy 100th, Annie. May God grant you many more blessed years!

MEMORY ETERNAL!

Many Christians are still processing the recent, unexpected and violent death of Charlie Kirk, a bright light in our American cultural discourse, who was firstly a follower of Jesus Christ, the true Light, before all else, and who shared many of our Orthodox Christian values, though himself not Orthodox. (Interestingly, less than a month before his death, Charlie interviewed OCA Orthodox priest, Fr. John Strickland, to find out more about Orthodox Christianity.)

Many words have already been poured out over his death, its implications, and what our response should be. What more can we add? For the Christian, our mandate from our Lord Jesus Christ is clear: *Love* your enemies, *bless* those who curse you, *do good* and *pray* for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, *forgive* your enemies, do not return evil for evil, but return evil with good. To be sure, pray for Charlie's soul, for his grieving family and friends (who grieve but not as those without hope!). But perhaps more importantly, difficult as it may be, *pray* fervently for his murderer, Tyler Robinson, co-opted by evil to snuff out a life, that God would visit him with life-giving repentance. Pray for this young man's family and friends, and forgive him from the depths of your heart, just as Christ has forgiven us and gave Himself up for the life of the world. Cling to our Lord Jesus Christ, walk in the Spirit, and in all things, let us commit ourselves to love and peace, not hatred and violence.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. — John 1:4-5

A NOTE ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Rev. Moses McPherson is a priest at Holy Mother of God Orthodox Church (ROCOR) in Georgetown, TX, a popular Youtuber with 177K subscribers, and an avid power-lifter. He and his wife, Matushka Ruth, have been blessed with five boys and are expecting their sixth child, a girl, shortly. A graduate of St. Tikhon's Seminary, Fr. Moses



and Matushka Ruth have been friends of St. Barbara Monastery even before their entrance into the Orthodox Church at St. Demetrios Church in Camarillo, CA.

READERS' CORNER

We have added a couple of new titles to the small-but-growing Spanish section of our bookstore:

El misterio de la fe. A catechism by Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev). \$40

El prólogo de Ohrid: Vida de los santos, himnos, reflexiones y homilías para cada día del año by St. Nikolai of Zica. Many of us know how important this book is for beginning and maintaining one's spiritual life. \$160, 4 volumes.

We also carry the Prayer Book in Spanish, the writings of St. Silouan, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, and the life of Fr. Arseny, a wonderworking confessor forged in a Soviet gulag, among other titles.