

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

15799 Ojai Rd, Santa Paula, CA 93060

(805) 921-1563

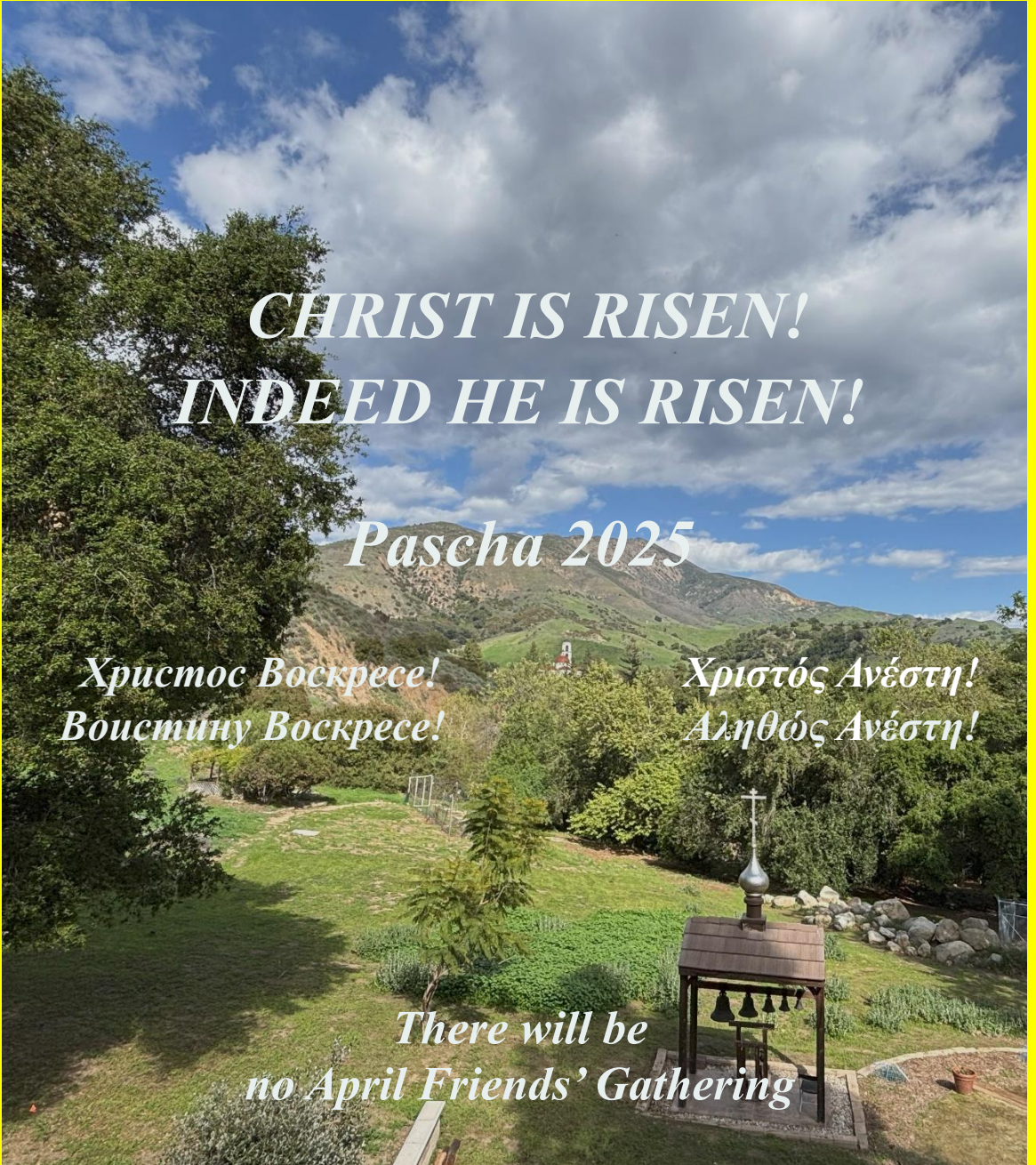
***CHRIST IS RISEN!
INDEED HE IS RISEN!***

Pascha 2025

***Χριστος Воскресе!
Βουστινυ Воскресе!***

***Χριστός Ανέστη!
Αληθώς Ανέστη!***

***There will be
no April Friends' Gathering***





Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen! The whole of Christianity—indeed, all of the meaning of life—is summed up in this single life-giving phrase with which we Orthodox Christians greet each other for forty days after Pascha. In these words, repeated all over the world, the reality of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ flashes forth like grace-bearing fire throughout the entire universe and in every believing heart that looks to Him with hope.

Not only in cozy homes, beautifully adorned churches, and in the grind of the secular workplace, but also in the dark trenches of war thick with the smell of fear and death, these words are whispered, wafting like heavenly incense from the lips of those who have put their trust in the Vanquisher of Death.

And what death has He vanquished? Now the tombs and graves that still lie about us are filled with those asleep in the Lord to be resurrected on the Last Day and even the saints whose incorrupt bodies testify—indeed announce—the certitude of the coming general resurrection. Bodily death—that alien intrusion into His creation—has become but a mere sowing of seed into the ground, awaiting to be raised as incorruptible and immortal in the universal Resurrection. Furthermore, spiritual death—the death which is our separation and alienation from Love incarnate Himself because of sin, evil, malice, hatred—has been conquered. Greater love has no man than this, than a Man lay down His life for His friends (John 15:13). This Man of Love is the God-Man, our Risen Lord, Who has trampled down death by His death. Now is the way opened up for us again to intimate communion with God the Holy Trinity—the one source and eternal fountain of Love. Now is the Kingdom of God opened again unto us. Now are the royal doors thrown wide open and the gates of Paradise unlocked.

The devil and his demons are defeated before their Conqueror, the Risen Christ, and His followers. The satanic stronghold of sins over souls has been destroyed and He bestows power on us—through union with Him—to pursue the passions that war against our souls and to overcome them by the power of His Resurrection.

For forty days, we the faithful have fasted, labored, struggled and warred against all that keeps us away from Life in order to prepare ourselves to receive this Life that vanquishes Death at Pascha. This Lenten journey is an icon of our whole lives; this celebration of Pascha is an icon of the Unwaning Day of the Resurrection in the Kingdom of God. If in this life, as in the exile of Great Lent, we continue to fight and defeat within ourselves all that keeps us away from our Risen Lord and each other, then hearing the battle cry “Christ is risen!” resounding in our hearts, in the fullness of time we shall surely enter through the gates of Paradise which our eternal Pascha has opened unto us! Christ is risen!

—The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

A VISIT FROM ST. BARNABAS CHURCH LADIES

We truly enjoyed the recent visit of twenty women from St. Barnabas Church, Costa Mesa. They came with smiles, welcome energy, and eagerness to help. After everyone arrived, Mother Victoria gave an orientation and asked for volunteers for the main tasks at hand: weeding the lavender field, cleaning bay leaves to fill orders from churches, and preparing envelopes for a mailing. Everyone chose a task and got to work.



It was a productive morning of labor and fellowship. We were rewarded for our efforts by an amazing array of Lenten food the women provided for our luncheon. The food was delicious and abundant: thank you, cooks! Mother Victoria then gave a talk on what happens when life interferes with your spiritual plans for Lent: get back to the spirit of your baptismal vows. Everyone enjoyed some free time, Vespers and a quick bite to eat before departure.

Thank you to each person who took time to come and spend the day with us. Your work and your loving spirits didn't go unnoticed.



PASCHA BEAR

At mid-day on Pascha, some of our pilgrims spotted a hefty bear (pictured right) chasing our chickens through the forest. By the time the sisters found the bear, it had one of our beloved hens (pictured left) in its grasp. Pilgrims and sisters watched in strange amazement, transfixed, as the bear crossed over to the far bank of the creek and proceeded to consume its prey and then refresh itself with a cool dip in the creek.



As much as it was difficult to watch what happened, the majesty of this mesmerizing beast of the forest was undeniable! May God hasten the day when all shall be at peace and the lion shall lie down softly with the lamb.

LAZARUS SATURDAY WITH HIS EMINENCE

Lazarus Saturday this year saw yet another visit from our beloved Archbishop Benjamin. It has been a long-standing tradition for His Eminence to join us for the vigil on Friday afternoon and the Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday. And this year, beyond all expectation, he blessed us again with his presence. At a recent visit, he fell on his knees before the icon on the analogion in the center of the church, then commented, "I didn't mean to do that." Perhaps not. But that inadvertent stumble, caused by his on-going illness (Parkinson's disease), expresses how he seems to handle his bishopric— on his knees before God.

It was a beautiful day this Lazarus Saturday and, after the Liturgy, all of our visitors joined His Eminence on the lawn for lunch. The Archbishop, with his usual sense of humor, kept his interlocutors entertained. But the sisters have come to know that this is just one side of him. During a previous visit, one of the sisters was watering some plants rather roughly with a spray of water, and he, walking by, remarked, "Gentle, gentle." His own sensitive spirit corrected, but also gently. The sisters could regale you, our dear readers, with many stories about His Eminence, but perhaps that may have to happen someday around the fireplace in our living room.



One of the sisters expressed how much she had been encouraged by his example of serving his flock with such joy and love despite his own struggles with Parkinson's disease. With his plans to retire in July, we do not expect to see His Eminence again at the monastery in any official capacity; however, he has made a permanent home in our hearts.

HOLY WEEK & PASCHA



Above: Holy Friday tomb
Middle: Procession at Pascha
Far Right: Paschal homily