

***St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery***  
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***St. Barbara Monastery***  
***May 2024 Newsletter***

***NOTE:***  
***We expect***  
***the Friends of the Monastery***  
***Gatherings***  
***to resume in July***



Dear Friends of St Barbara Monastery,

*Christ is risen!* Now that the beautiful period of Great Lent and Bright Week have come and gone, we rejoice and thank God for the grace we have gathered during these holy days. However, even as the Church is still reveling in the unwaning Light of the Resurrection during this joyful Paschal season, some of us may find ourselves struggling to hold on to the abundance of grace which we have just tasted during this spiritually and liturgically rich time of year.

We may recall that St. Seraphim of Sarov used to greet all who came to him, no matter when the season, with a joyful “Christ is risen!” How did he manage to acquire and keep divine grace, even the grace of the Resurrection, day in and day out?

As we descend from the spiritual peak of Pascha into the days and weeks following it, his teaching on how to acquire and keep the grace of the Holy Spirit is simple and worth revisiting: *Do everything intentionally and deliberately for the sake of Christ!* Do this and we will acquire the grace of the Holy Spirit! And such is the very aim of our life, teaches Seraphim: to acquire the grace of the All-Holy Spirit— that is, to live always in the Spirit.

Perhaps many of us go about our days seeking to do good, to do what seems virtuous. However, perhaps fewer of us go about doing what is good— praying, attending church services, helping those around us, serving our families, parishes and the poor, doing our best at work and in school— *for the sake of Christ and to gain the grace of the Holy Spirit alone* and not for any other reason. If we are not deliberate about directing our deeds toward Christ, we often simply do good things to satisfy our own egos, out of vainglory, to gain the admiration of others, or simply for the sake of doing good without reference to Christ. Such is not the way, according to St. Seraphim.

What brings us the Spirit’s grace may also be found in rather unexpected places. Some have found that enduring humbly the disdain and injustices done against us for Christ’s sake, thanking God for unexpected trials, humbling ourselves to ask for forgiveness, even responding kindly to difficult people may bring grace in abundance.

As various things bring various measures of God’s grace to each person, St. Seraphim encourages each of us to examine for ourselves what brings us *the most grace* and to pursue that throughout our lives. If we live our lives in this simple way suggested by this God-loving saint, we will acquire and keep the grace of the Holy Spirit continuously throughout this Paschal season and beyond— this blessed grace which translates us from death to life and from earth to heaven!

—The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

## ***A VISIT OF OUR BELOVED ARCHBISHOP BENJAMIN***

Although it has been a long-standing tradition for our beloved hierarch, Archbishop BENJAMIN, to visit and serve at the monastery on Lazarus Saturday every year, these annual visits never cease to bring great encouragement to the sisters and the faithful who participate in the joy of this pre-Paschal feast! Once again, His Eminence, assisted by our monastery's priest, Fr. Jude Lepine, and Fr. John Robinson of St. Herman Church in Oxnard, served the Vigil and the Divine Liturgy to celebrate our Lord's raising of Lazarus from the dead.

In addition to attending the services, a number of faithful pilgrims joined the sisters in witnessing two special events during His Eminence's visit: the tonsure of Nicholas Evans of St. Herman Church in Oxnard, to the rank of Church Reader, and the clothing of Sister Mary, as a novice at our monastery. This was truly a day of pre-Paschal rejoicing and we thank His Eminence for his attentive pastoral care and visit!



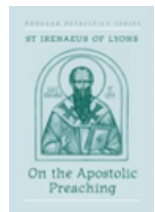
*Tonsure of Nicholas Evans to the rank of Church Reader.*



*L to R: Newly clothed Sister Mary, Mother Victoria, Archbishop BENJAMIN, and newly tonsured Reader Nicholas.*

## ***READERS' CORNER***

*The Sisters will resume our (somewhat) regular monthly book discussions next month. We will be reading and discussing St. Irenaeus of Lyons' On the Apostolic Preaching in June as we continue through the Popular Patristics Series published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. We invite you to read along with us!*





## ***HIGH SCHOOLERS & WORK PARTY FROM L.A.***

On Saturday, May 18th, the monastery hosted two separate groups: a Christian Club from SOAR High School in Lancaster and a work party of Russians and Ukrainians from Los Angeles. It was one busy day! While the Christian high school group (pictured below), led by their advisor, Ramona Blanksi, learned about the Faith and monasticism, attended the Sixth Hour service, listened to a presentation by Fr. Jude, explored the monastery grounds, and helped the monastery with some small tasks, the group from Los Angeles, led by Vitaly Efimenkov, worked tirelessly all day to beautify the grounds of the monastery's red house across the creek. Much good was accomplished on this day and we thank everyone for a truly blessed day together!



## ***AROUND THE MONASTERY...***



*Fr. Jude blesses Pascha baskets.*



*Christ is risen!  
Infant graves decorated  
with red Pascha eggs for the  
Day of Rejoicing (Radonitsa).*



*Hands down: The most helpful  
member of our community is  
Cowboy, pictured above  
assisting Mother Victoria.*