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

***ST. BARBARA MONASTERY
NEWSLETTER***

APRIL – MAY 2021

CHRIST IS RISEN!



INDEED, HE IS RISEN!

Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Tuesday in the 2nd week after Pascha is called “The Day of Rejoicing.” On that day (or another close to it), Orthodox Christians visit the graves of the departed and pray the paschal memorial service for them. Here at St. Barbara Monastery, we will walk the short distance to the grave shared by two of our departed nuns, Mother Mariamne and Mother Juliana, and then continue down to the infant cemetery in the woods near the creek. In both cases, we will proclaim the paschal greeting *Christ is risen!* to the departed and sing the paschal Kontakion: *Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One! Thou didst destroy the power of death!*

Someone asked: “What does it mean to exclaim *Thou didst destroy the power of death*, when we know bodies lie in these graves and every day people die?” Maybe we have all wondered much the same thing, because this question is obvious and fundamental.

There are various answers and the first is St. Paul’s in his First Letter to the Corinthians. He tells us that the bodies we bury in the earth are “seeds,” which like all seeds are sown in corruption but which God will raise in incorruption. Just as a grain of wheat rises from the earth with a new “body,” so will we rise from the earth with a new “resurrection body.”

A somewhat different answer is given by St. Maximos the Confessor, who says the resurrection is both “now and not yet.” This line of thought speaks of the overlapping of the ages and the “breakthrough” of the Kingdom of God into this world. Thus, we experience a foretaste of the Resurrection at Pascha, but receive it in its fullness only in the age to come—after a lifetime of preparation and labor to open ourselves to the grace of God and perhaps a time of “sleep” in the grave.

And sometimes, by way of an answer, we are told that this whole subject is a great mystery to be passed over in silence because it is inexpressible. This is essentially what St. John of Damascus says. His “answer” would be totally unsatisfying if it simply meant that such knowledge is unattainable. But what St. John means is that, to attain this knowledge is not a matter of reading the right book or finding the right teacher. Rather, one has to be initiated, this knowledge is derived from experience. Live the Christian life and little by little you will learn the answer by osmosis in your very being. Indeed, is it not true that when we sin, when we fall ill, when we age, we sense death at work in us? And is it not true that, when we repent, when we receive grace, when we participate in the paschal service, we feel renewed life stirring within us? Such experiences assure us in the depths of our being that we are alive in Christ and death has, indeed, been abolished. The death and dying we see around us, then, have no stranglehold on us. They are but a passage to the age to come, where God “makes all things new.”

Abbess Victoria
and the Sisters

PASCHA AT THE MONASTERY

A year ago, because of the pandemic, we celebrated Pascha as it might be celebrated in a remote Alaskan village—that is, without a priest. The bells were duly rung, but all the appointed liturgical services were said and sung as reader’s services, and there was no Divine Liturgy. This year, in sharp contrast, we had our priest Fr. Jude Lepine with us to celebrate the full paschal services: the Midnight Office with its procession, the Matins of Pascha and the Paschal Divine Liturgy. And we were joined by a small “congregation”: Matushka Brigitte, our stalwart Thomas Aquinas College students (Aidan Garza, Joshua Moore and Esther Ruehle) and a few of their friends. Afterwards, we gathered outdoors for the traditional Paschal “Break-fast.”



ARCHBISHOP BENJAMIN VISITS



His Eminence Archbishop **BENJAMIN** visited St. Barbara Monastery for Lazarus Saturday, as was his annual custom until the pandemic prevented him from coming last year. He served the Vigil for the feast in the monastery church on Friday evening as well as the Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning before driving down to Los Angeles later in the afternoon to celebrate

Palm Sunday at Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, his home parish. Joining him for the Divine Liturgy were Rev. Jude Lepine, priest for the monastery—pictured at right with Matushka Brigitte, the Archbishop and the monastic community. We regret the photo does not include Rev. Deacon George Berni of St. George the Great Martyr Church in Victorville, who also served at the Divine Liturgy.



IS THE MONASTERY OPEN?

Not a day goes by that someone doesn’t ask us this question. The answer is “yes and no” because we are in the process of transitioning. The signs that said “Closed to Visitors” are gone. But we have not yet restored our monthly Friends’ Gatherings. If you wish to visit, we ask that you call the monastery ahead of time.

NEIGHBORING PROPERTY UP FOR SALE



Those of you who have visited St. Barbara Monastery in person, no doubt will have seen the red house that sits right across the creek from us at the lower end of our property. We've known for some time that our neighbor, Steve, had plans to retire one day to Idaho, and that he would

wish to sell the place. Well, this last year of Covid rather accelerated his plans, and he intends to move by the end of the year! In light of that, he would like to sell his property and gave the monastery an informal right of first refusal. While acquiring his property would help the monastery by giving us much needed room for more sisters, work space, etc., we feel his need for an immediate commitment makes it impossible for us at this time. (He plans to list it sometime in May). We know that through the years many have expressed a desire to live near the monastery, and so we thought we'd put the opportunity out there to you, our friends. If you are interested, or know of anyone who might be, we can get you more information or help to arrange an introduction and tour of the place.

ICON OF THE PANTOCRATOR FOR OUR CHURCH DOME

On Monday of the 6th week of Lent, our iconographer Matushka Anna Kalinina brought us the unfinished canvas icon of the Pantocrator that she has created for our church dome. We are thrilled with her beautiful work and can hardly wait to see it completed and in place. In addition, Matushka Anna will be preparing icons of angels for the barrel of the dome as well as borders in traditional designs to surround both the iconography and the windows. Some of this work will be done off site at St. Katherine Church in Carlsbad, where Fr. Andrew Cuneo has provided ideal work space for the project, but most of the remaining work will be done at the monastery.

