

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

15799 Ojai Road, Santa Paula, CA 93060

805-921-1563

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

Pascha 2022

*Χριστός Воскресе!
Восстину Воскресе!*

*Χριστός Ανέστη!
Αληθώς Ανέστη!*



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



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

At our March Friends' Gathering, Fr. Nicholas (Speier) spoke to us about the passage from St. Paul's epistle to the Romans: *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31). In his talk, Fr. Nicholas sought to show us, with the aid of St. John Chrysostom's commentary, how powerful this statement truly is. This passage ought to astound us! Nothing can be against us? Nothing? If God is with me, I am someone against whom nothing and no one can prevail? How differently might I live if I were to fully grasp the truth of that statement?

But this passage for some may be confusing and hard to believe at first glance. As Chrysostom notes, "Why, it may be said, who is there that is not against us?" That is, doesn't it seem as though people stand against us all the time? Doesn't it seem that people can absolutely crush us? Doesn't it seem like all manner of obstacles stand between us and peace? Fr Nicholas, however, draws our attention to Chrysostom's inspiring revelation:

"Yet these that be against us, so far are they from thwarting us at all, that even without their will, they become to us the causes of crowns, and procurers of countless blessings, in that God's wisdom turneth their plots unto our salvation and glory."

God has turned those who would do us harm into the very instruments of our salvation! Thus Father says, "Never ask God 'Why is this happening to me?', only ask, 'How does God want me to respond to this?'". The question "Why is this happening?" only ever has one answer: *for your salvation*. Let us therefore ask God for wisdom as to how to *lean into* our sufferings and the uncomfortable trials of life so that He may use them to purify us and to draw us nearer to Him.

Father then reminds us of the Apostle Peter, who walked across violent waves to be with his Lord. St. Peter only began to sink when he regarded the waves as a problem. As long as he had his focus on Christ, the waves were not only not a problem, they were *the very means* by which he approached Christ! Lest we forget, St. Peter did not merely hover over the source of his affliction-- *he walked on top of it*. How might we do the same with our own sufferings? How might our sufferings and difficulties carry us to Christ?

We have, as Father reminds us, a tendency to run away from our sufferings. Father's simple response to this tendency: "No! Don't do that!". To avoid our sufferings is to avoid Christ Himself who has permitted these sufferings for our salvation. It is precisely *in* these difficult situations that Christ meets us.

What encouragement the Apostle has given us in his epistle! What a clarifying revelation Chrysostom has granted us in his commentary. May the words of these holy men give us courage so that we may draw nearer to our Lord come what may.

The Sisters
of St. Barbara Monastery

A DAY WITH LADIES FROM ST. BARNABAS

On an overcast Saturday, April 2nd, ten ladies from St. Barnabas Orthodox Church, Costa Mesa, made a two-hour drive to the monastery for a Lenten day trip.

Though the weather outside was not the best for outdoor work, there was no lack of indoor tasks for their willing hands. Our friends from St Barnabas rolled up their sleeves and went to work helping the sisters clean laurel bay leaves to fill the numerous orders received for Holy Saturday. They also labored happily at the fragrant task of filling lavender sachets to be sold at forthcoming Lavender and Greek Festivals.

At noon, they prayed the Sixth Hour with the sisters in the chapel, following which all partook of a lovely potluck lunch and a brief tour, led by Sister Ioanna, of the monastery's newly acquired house next door.

What a joy it was to fellowship once again with faithful friends— many of whom we have not seen in years!— and to make the acquaintance of new ones. We look forward to their return in the not-so-distant future!



Visit us at the following upcoming Festivals:

June 24th – 26th: Ventura County Greek Festival in Camarillo, CA

June 25th: Ojai Lavender Festival in Ojai, CA

LOCAL GARDEN CLUB VISITS

On April 5th, sixteen people from the Ventura County Garden Club visited the monastery for a talk on lavender by Mother Nina. Alicia Ferreira, our monastery's loyal friend, member of the Garden Club and Santa Paula local, arranged for this gathering many months in advance.

After a brief business meeting, we launched into the presentation. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and those who expressed interest were given a short tour of the monastery chapel. (For most, this was their very first time visiting an Orthodox church, not to mention a monastery.)



A few fun facts from the presentation:

- Lavender is antimicrobial and an astringent (drawing soft tissues like the skin together), and thus was used in mummification by the ancient Egyptians.
- In 16th century Europe, glove makers who used lavender to scent their products escaped cholera.
- Lavender comes from the Latin verb, *lavare*, “to wash.” Hence, French women in Medieval and Renaissance times who washed for hire were called “lavenders”. They used lavender in their washing and hung their wash on lavender bushes to dry.



LAZARUS SATURDAY WITH HIS EMINENCE

On Friday, April 15th, we were blessed with the presence of Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West, who served an abbreviated Vigil for Lazarus Saturday with the community. His Eminence returned the next day—on Lazarus Saturday—and, together with Fr. Jude Lepine and Fr. John Robinson, celebrated the Divine Liturgy.

We were also joined by a number of the faithful-- some who sang in the choir and all who later enjoyed a beautiful meal outside in the sunshine with the sisterhood. It is always a blessing to spend time with His Eminence. We look forward to the next visit of our beloved Archbishop!

