TheAugust Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery

Sunday, August 31st, 2014

4:00 pm Presentation:

THREE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Speaker: V. Rev. Michael Laffoon
Pastor of St. Mark Orthodox Church, Irvine, CA

5:00 pm Vespers   6:00 pm Potluck

DIRECTIONS TO THE MONASTERY

From Highway 101 – Exit Hwy 126 East at Ventura.
Travel 11 miles east along Hwy 126 and exit 10th St/Hwy 150 at Santa Paula.
Turn left from the exit ramp and follow 10th St/Hwy 150 through Santa Paula.
Bear right at the fork in the road. This is Ojai Rd/Hwy 150.
Travel about five miles (1/4 mile past Thomas Aquinas College) to 15799 Ojai Road.
The monastery driveway is on the right just past our mailbox at Highway Marker 2830.
Drive across the bridge and follow the signs to the parking area.

From Highway 5 – Exit Hwy 126 West at Santa Clarita.
Travel 27 miles to Santa Paula, and exit at 10th St/Hwy 150.
Turn right from the exit ramp and follow 10th St/Hwy 150 through Santa Paula.
Bear right at the fork in the road. This is Ojai Rd/Hwy 150.
Continue as directed above.

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Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Last month's words on the subject of prayer in this column of our newsletter prompted further questions from our readers. One of them wrote: "The thoughts and images that flood my mind when I pick up my Prayer Book are not the thoughts and images that come from the prayers I'm reading or the icons in front of me, but rather my worries and other distracting thoughts and images from my daily life. How can I put them to rest?"

The advice of our Holy Fathers and Mothers is simple and direct, but probably too difficult for us to use all at once without practice. They remind us that worries are temptations and that, when beset by worries and troubles of all kinds, we should as Christians give them over to the Lord and do this as quickly as possible. How? Not by some extraordinary feat of concentration whereby we might herd our thoughts into a box and seal them away! Not at all! Rather, when we cannot simply turn away from them, we do this by making our worries the very subject of our prayers. The only sure way to put our worries to rest is to ask the Lord—not neglecting to employ the intercessions of His saints—to resolve whatever is troubling us in whatever way he deems best, thus surrendering the outcome into His hands. Our Holy Fathers and Mothers lived their daily lives on this exalted and most simple plane. Not only do such prayers resolve the difficulties themselves causing our worry. They bring peace of heart, purify, correct and illumine our thoughts, and lead us to repentance and pure prayer—the prayer that is beyond words.

However, to repeat what was said above, to live and pray this way takes practice. As with anything else, at first one must remind oneself that there *is* a way to be rid of the burden of worry, and the way is Christ. Then, one must make the effort to turn to Him, to pour out one's worries and troubles to Him, and to give the burden of them to Him. Over time, one finds oneself referring to this pattern more and more readily in the face of whatever comes until it is simply second nature.

Abbess Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Construction of our chapel continues following a significant "slow-down" while the contractor awaited delivery of materials. In mid-August, at long last, the four upper windows arrived and were duly installed. Meanwhile, during the "slow-down," the building crew devoted themselves to less important but nonetheless necessary tasks. They relocated the staircase at the back of our house to allow extra space for the future walkway around the chapel. In addition, they worked on the structure's two porches—one in the front leading to the narthex and one on the north side, leading from what will be a large paved area, designed to accommodate an overflow crowd, to wide folding doors that will open into the nave.

Funding the chapel construction to the point of "occupancy" promises to be a huge challenge. However, the presence of the building, even at its present stage of completion, inspires us with confidence that the Lord is building this house of prayer, and *with God all things are possible*. Indeed, various Friends of the monastery have already come forward with excellent ideas for generating the necessary funds. In the coming weeks, look for information in your mailbox (snail mail or email) regarding the ways and means the monastery adopts.
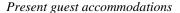
It is in order to mention here our gratitude to our contractor, Anderson Construction, Inc., of Camarillo, for the company's willingness to work longer or shorter hours on this particular project to give us the freedom to raise funds without undue pressure.

Meanwhile, we fervently ask the continued prayers of all of our Friends that the necessary funds may be found and construction may proceed to completion with as little interruption as possible.

On Sunday, August 31st, the same day as the forthcoming Friends gathering, Father John Finley will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the monastery at 10:00 AM, preceded by the Hours at 9:40 AM. Everyone is welcome.

MONASTERY GUEST ACCOMMODATIONS

Present guest accommodations

New guest facility under construction

The monastery has hosted numerous guests this past August, and quite a number of them have made use of our campsite next to the creek. Others, however, have opted to spend only their days at the monastery, while overnighting at the Santa Paula Inn in town. Certain unidentified parties, probably finding our present guest accommodations deficient, devoted themselves to construction of a new guest facility in the area of our tire swing near the creek. Completion is projected for the fall (based on statistical analysis of the monastery guest records).

UPDATE ON OUR FEATHERED AND FURRY VISITORS

The unusual birds you may spot if you visit the monastery soon are the neighbor's peacocks *without* their tail feathers. The good news is that, after the annual molting, they have already begun growing their glorious feathers once again.

Probably because of the current drought, the deer remain convinced that the compost bin next to our vegetable garden is a feeding trough provided specifically for their use. Who is to blame them?