

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery
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*There will be
NO JUNE GATHERING
of the Friends
of St. Barbara Monastery
Sunday, June 25th, 2023*

See you in July.



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Not long ago, a priest who is a close friend of our monastery preached a sermon on the Samaritan woman and her encounter with our Lord at Jacob's Well (John 4). He drew our attention to one particular verse of this passage from St. John's gospel:

If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.

--John 4:10

If you knew the gift of God... What a striking phrase! Imagine God Himself saying this to each one of us. Could it be that Heaven itself is trying to break through to us, waiting only for our hearts to be attuned to Him? Indeed, our Heavenly King is the ultimate Treasury of blessings and "every good and perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights..." (James 1:17) As our heavenly Father who loves us, He desires to give us good gifts! Yet, may God forgive us: How is it that we, His children, go about our daily lives in a kind of tunnel vision—an *earthbound* tunnel vision, as this priest reminded us—so that, sadly, we overlook His precious gifts for us in the moment?

The gift of God's grace, the subtle working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, comes to us in a multitude of forms. This time of year at the monastery, the wildlife around us seems to make more of an appearance than at other seasons: a couple of wide-eyed fawn—still with their spots—venture curiously toward the sisters, then dash off to their calling mother, racing through rows of lavender; a busy squirrel dashes haltingly up a mountain of mulch to collect an acorn; a hummingbird flits around flowering fruit trees, coming close enough for us to observe its exquisitely fashioned body and to hear the fan-like buzzing of its tireless little wings. Witnessing these small, unexpected graces, we feel ourselves catch our breath, a lump rise in our throats, and cannot help but remember that God's gifts are, in fact, all around us—at every moment of every day.

All is gift! Not simply the general gift of His marvelous creation, but He bestows on us countless other specific gifts too: the unexpected gift of seeing our own hidden sins, the tears of repentance that wash us anew, a phrase from Holy Scripture that grips our minds, a sudden insight that illumines our heart, even the hard gifts of His grace that come through our painful failures and, yes, even the tragedies He allows in our lives. If only we had eyes to perceive truly, perhaps we would realize that, in the end, "all is gift."

Is there a gift that God wishes to give to me in this moment that I'm not aware of? If so, what is it? Turning our hearts to God throughout the day, let us wait on Him with due attention and be open to receiving His—perhaps startling!—answer.

The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

SUMMER SEMINARIAN INTERN

The monastery is pleased to welcome the seminarian and newly ordained Deacon



Benjamin Garcia and his young family for a two month stay at the monastery this summer. Having completed his second year at St. Tikhon's Seminary in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, Deacon Benjamin will be serving our nearby OCA mission parish in Oxnard, St. Herman of Alaska Church, as a summer intern, as well as assisting the monastery as a deacon during his stay. Notably, his first Divine Liturgy at St. Herman Church was served on the feast of All Saints of North America—which also happened to be Father's Day! True to his new role as deacon, he wasted no time in lending a hand to the monastery church with some needed polishing of the holy chalice. We wish Deacon Benjamin, Matushka Marina and their two children a memorable and grace-filled summer with us.

A VISIT FROM OLD FRIENDS

It is always a joy when old friends stop by the monastery unexpectedly and our monastery was blessed to have Fr. John Reimann (pastor of St. Anthony Antiochian Orthodox Church, San Diego), Khouria Christina and their daughter, Elizabeth, drop by for a visit this month. It's been a while since we've last seen them and not only did Father John give us a boost by serving Vespers and Small Compline (the sisters are only used to doing "readers' services" without a priest for the daily liturgical round), but he and his family graciously helped prepare lavender products for an upcoming Greek festival by filling bottles with lavender hydrosol and preparing fragrant lavender sachets. What can we say? Fr. John and his family bring the fragrance of Christ with them wherever they go!



Fr. John Reimann and family (right) along with monastery pilgrims, James and Christian (left).

SUMMER HARVEST

This spring has been fruitful at the monastery, quite literally. The generous winter rainfall soaked everything deeply, including the roots of our approximately 60 fruit trees and vines. At the main monastery grounds, young cherry trees are fruiting with a decent crop for the first time since they were planted. Likewise, our young Santa Barbara peach and Santa Rosa plum trees will probably be ready for harvest in late July. At the red house property, an older cherry tree that has never borne fruit has fruited for the first time, and the cherries were eaten by the sisters as quickly as they ripened! We are now overrun by mulberries, enjoying apples and have a bountiful crop of nectarines waiting to be eaten. The plums and table grapes are just forming while our loquat and lemons are almost ripe. We are enjoying the bounty fresh, baked, and blended, as well as freezing and sharing our harvest. Truly God has



Pictured behind Sr. Ioanna and Cody is an enormous "fruit net."

blessed the fruits of the season!

AROUND THE MONASTERY



Left: Cody and Leila with summer haircuts. **Above:** 5-week old chicks recently "weaned" from Mama hen.



Look! We've "caught" some mulberries!

READERS' CORNER

The sisters continue to make their way through the St. Vladimir's Seminary Press Popular Patristics Series. In July, we will be reading and discussing *On the Unity of Christ*, by St. Cyril of Alexandria. We invite you to read along each month with us and hold your own discussions with friends on these beautiful writings of the Church Fathers.