

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

15799 Ojai Rd, Santa Paula, CA 93060

(805) 921-1563



*St. Barbara Monastery
October Friends' Gathering*

Sunday, October 29th, 2023

4:00 pm Presentation:

*The Gift of Our Bodies:
Man and Woman in Christ*

*Speaker: Rev. Symeon Halsell
Priest, St. Athanasius Orthodox Church
Santa Barbara, CA*

5:00 pm Vespers

6:00 pm Potluck



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

Once, a head instructor of a particular school of martial arts with Orthodox roots was asked by a student, “What is the first thing I should do if I’m about to be attacked?” Without missing a beat, the instructor answered, “Forgive.” As one might imagine, this was hardly the answer the student or others who were listening expected to hear! Interestingly, from this striking interaction and other teachings of a similar vein, not a few of the students from this school of martial arts ended up becoming Orthodox Christians.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. (Luke 6:27-28)

Does not this commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ to love, do good, bless and to pray for those who hate us and do us harm, lie at the very heart of the Gospel? Indeed this startling commandment of Jesus Christ sets the choice before all of us who profess to love Him: will I obey or not?

In the present state of this world, Christians who are willing to obey this radical command of our Lord are needed now more than ever. We might think for a moment of a person or group of people that elicits a strong negative reaction in us. Perhaps even outrage. It could be that such a person or group has harmed us, our loved ones, our church or our country and we feel completely justified in our anger towards them. We may even go around slandering and demonizing them every chance we get. After all, they are “the bad guys!” If we call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ, however, what will we do about this clear commandment which our Savior gives to us?

If we are true to our commitment to Him, we will inevitably have to admit that we must, at the very least, ask God to help us to pray a little prayer for “the bad guys.” Most of us, however, in our present state of spiritual weakness, may not yet be able to bless, do good and love our enemies as Christ and the saints did. However, most of us can begin to pray “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on X (name the person or group).” At first, as we practice this, we may find our hearts far removed from the meaning of this prayer. However, if we keep it up, God will honor our intentions and transform our anger into mourning and our outrage into compassion.

Have you ever wondered about St. Paul—previously known as Saul, persecutor *extraordinaire* of Christians: Who was praying for him before his conversion? Surely Christians, following Christ’s example, prayed for Saul and beseeched the Lord for him even as he breathed threats and murder towards them? (Acts 9:1)

In the end, we may recognize that we all share a common broken and disfigured humanity—a humanity that Christ took on Himself as God in order to heal and make whole! This is the very Gospel of Jesus Christ which we proclaim to the world. And it is Jesus Christ Who alone can help us to forgive those who hate and wrong us, Who alone can convert Saul into St. Paul.

--The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

ST. BARNABAS LADIES VISIT

At the end of September, a small group of ladies from St. Barnabas Orthodox Church (Costa Mesa, CA) joined us for a day at the monastery. They came eager to learn and to labor. As the day turned out to be quite hot, we focused on inside work. The ladies helped with labeling envelopes and worked with preparing lavender products. The ladies helped with labeling envelopes and worked with preparing lavender products. The latter included assembling small lavender bundles (“minis”), prepping lavender oil bottles, destemming lavender florets, and filling colorful organza bags with fragrant florets. These generous women also contributed a delicious potluck lunch. Lunch was followed by a bit more work and a question-and-answer time. We ended the day with an early Vespers to accommodate their 2-hour drive home. The Sisters thank the St. Barnabas ladies for all their help and a memorable day!



SNAIL MAIL OR EMAIL?

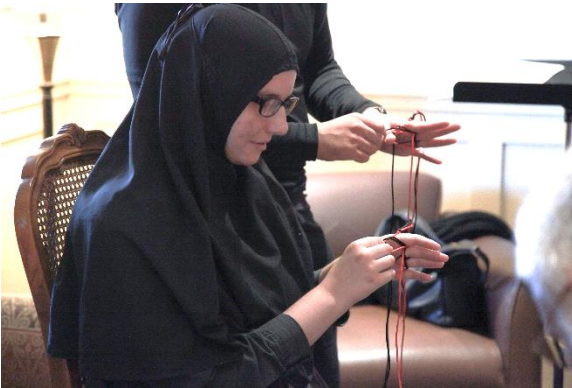
If you are currently receiving the newsletter via snail mail and wish to receive it by email instead (and save us a stamp), please email us at sbmonastery@gmail.com.

PRAYER ROPE WORKSHOP

On the weekend of Oct. 6th-8th, St. Athanasius Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara hosted a Sacred Arts Festival featuring several presentations by Fr. Turbo Qualls and workshops on iconography, prosphora baking and prayer rope making.

Sister Photini, assisted by Mother Paraskeva, taught the workshop on prayer rope making. With every knot of the prayer rope consisting of about 20 steps to form, each workshop attendee exhibited much patience and perseverance during the learning process. During the workshop, a few prayer rope knots were eventually made and quite a few more partially made knots were unmade!

As an aside, part of the process associated with teaching this class included the making of two short Youtube videos showing the steps involved in knotting and finishing a prayer rope. The videos were made in our “low tech” studio, i.e., a monastery trailer, and the sisters were not a little amused by the novelty of this new recording venture. We thank St. Athanasius Church for inviting us to participate in this Festival.



Watch me closely and do as I do...



Hmm, what's the next step again?

READERS' CORNER

The sisters have now completed their reading and group discussion of *On the Dormition of Mary*, a collection of ten patristic homilies on this feast by St. Andrew of Crete, St. John of Damascus, St. Germanus of Constantinople, and other Church Fathers. This was truly a feast of theology, entering into the salvific mysteries of our Lord's incarnation, death, resurrection, and His dealings with His people. The Fathers lead us in the praise of the woman who—wonder of wonders!—agreed to become God's Mother in lending human nature and flesh to Him. Through their living and loving relationship with her, we see how she protects us, assists us, and intercedes for us even now.

Our next reading will be *On the Mother of God*, a small collection of four poetic and scriptural homilies by a 6th C. Syriac writer, Jacob of Serug.