

St. Barbara Monastery – 15799 Ojai Road – Santa Paula, CA 93060  
(805) 921-1563 – [www.stbarbaramonastery.org](http://www.stbarbaramonastery.org)

# *The January Gathering of the Friends of St. Barbara Monastery*

*Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018*

*4:00 pm: Presentation*

## *What is Worship?*

*The Meaning of the Liturgical Services*

*Speaker: Mother Victoria*

*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.  
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.



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

This month, rather than a photo of some beautiful scene on the monastery property, we decided to use one that shows just what it looks like here now. What you see, of course, is our charred lavender field. But not only that! It is now just six weeks after the Thomas Fire tore through the monastery property and burned our lavender field and hillside to a crisp. And it is now just two weeks after the never-to-be-forgotten rain that threatened us with a mudslide (although nothing like the huge slide that came down on nearby Montecito) But already the mountain meadows—including ours—are turning a delicate green. Indeed, the weeks ahead—the Lenten spring—promise to be particularly beautiful.

Even as we take delight in the emerging green, however, we cannot stop remembering the lives lost and the lives cast into turmoil by the fire and then the mudslide. Several persons have stopped by and, with troubled hearts, raised the inevitable question with us: ‘How could our good God let this happen?’

Responses to these questions are traditionally made in the context of philosophical categories of good and evil, human freedom, mercy and justice, and so on. We won’t say these responses are unhelpful, but don’t they leave us with a sense of their inadequacy?

The saints respond differently. They respond not much from philosophical considerations and argument. Rather, balanced by love and the loving desire to follow God’s will in all things, they respond from an unutterably deep awareness of man’s inability even to comprehend the extent of his own lack of understanding and of his captivity to the passions.

St. Silouan writes: “The soul that is given over to the will of God fears nothing—neither thunder nor thieves, *nor any other thing*. Come what may, ‘Such is God’s pleasure,’ she says.”

Following the fire, when we returned from evacuation, we took the time as a community to reflect that, whether the monastery—that is, the property or we ourselves, for that matter—were to suffer loss, even loss of life, we would persevere just the same, addressing whatever setbacks might present themselves and, whether it be in this life or the life to come, giving thanks to God in all things.

Abbess Victoria  
and the sisters of  
St. Barbara Monastery

***There will be no February Friends’ Gathering, because the last Sunday in February is the Sunday of Orthodoxy. No doubt, most of the Friends of the monastery will want to attend the special services to be held in the various areas where their their parish churches are located.***

## ***THEOPHANY AND THE OUTDOOR BLESSING OF WATER***

On the Feast of Theophany, Saturday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, our good friend Rev. Arkadiusz Mironko (a priest attached to Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral in Los Angeles) celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the monastery. Following the Liturgy, everyone processed down to the creek for the Great Blessing of Water. The water level was not high since, to date, we had had no winter rain at all. However, while we were sitting down to a festive meal following the Blessing of the Water, several firemen arrived to check our property and caution us about the possibility of a mudslide on the charred hillside above us. The storm, due to reach our area in two or three days, was expected to be severe and we were advised to be ready to evacuate again.



### ***IF IT'S NOT ONE THING, IT'S ANOTHER. . . !***



To continue the story: The firemen explained that, were the rainfall to reach a rate of one inch per hour, we should immediately leave.

What we did was ask Father Arkadiusz to sprinkle the hillside with the newly blessed holy water from our creek and then rent a sort of backhoe (a Kubota). On Monday, with the rain just beginning to fall, Mitch Denny our Project Manager and Jerry Reich our handyman commenced digging out the big trench that runs across our hillside from the gully (pictured at left) above the house to the creek. If there were to be a mudslide, this is surely where it would happen. While clearing the trench of burned and broken branches as well as other debris, the men dug the trench both deeper and wider.

The storm reached its maximum strength here on the following afternoon, having caused the huge Montecito mudslide to the west of us hours earlier.



Over the next twenty four hours, we measured only 4 inches of rain; and the rainfall, although sometimes heavy, never reached the critical rate. So we remained at the monastery.

Thanks to the cleared and improved trench, the muddy water cascading down the gully did not flood the area around our house, but was duly diverted through the trench across the hillside and directly into the creek. The trench did silt up and a sizeable mound of silt built up in the creek bed as well, but not enough to block the flow of water. We will definitely have to rent a Kubota again and retrench before the next big rain. But meanwhile, all is well.

## ***CASKETS AVAILABLE FROM THE MONASTERY***

We have good news to report about our casket ministry! We have expanded our available selection of caskets to include the following options: knotty pine: \$ 950, alder: \$ 950, clear sugar pine: \$1100, and red oak: \$1100.

Each casket is skillfully crafted by our talented local Orthodox woodworkers from high quality solid wood and includes a cross, muslin mattress and pillow. The interiors are sanded to a fine finish to bring out the lovely quality of the wood. However, we do offer the option of a simple muslin lined interior for \$ 75, if desired.



We have tried to keep the cost of our caskets at a minimum without sacrificing the beauty and quality of each casket. Much prayer and many hours of labor go into turning out each casket. As we are still a small but steadily growing operation, however, we highly encourage individuals and parishes to plan ahead by pre-ordering a casket before the actual need arises. We are, nonetheless, available to assist as best we can in orders requiring immediate attention.