

St. Barbara Monastery – 15799 Santa Paula - Ojai Road – Santa Paula, CA 93060-9516
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***THERE WILL BE
NO JULY GATHERING
OF THE FRIENDS
OF ST. BARBARA MONASTERY***

SUNDAY, JULY 26th, 2020

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.



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

We are quickly approaching the feasts of midsummer, in particular the final Great Feasts of the liturgical year: namely, the Transfiguration of Christ on August 6th and the Dormition of the Theotokos on August 15th. These Great Feasts offer us rich gifts: a wealth of theology and—potentially, at least—a wealth of God’s grace. May none of us miss them, even if—because of the unusual circumstances deriving from the Coronavirus pandemic—we cannot be in church!

Yes, it’s extremely difficult to enter deeply into church celebrations when one has to rely on a computer screen to “attend” the Divine Liturgy and the other services. But the Lord knows the obstacles we face and He knows the thirst of our hearts. He doesn’t hesitate to circumvent the barriers, be they circumstantial or technical, and fill us with His grace as long as we do our part and make the effort. The effort we make brings its own spiritual reward!

Consider getting the texts of these two festal services if you don’t have them--if not online, then from your parish church or even from our monastery. Reading the texts prayerfully even at home and even outside the services (including the online ones) brings rich rewards. One finds oneself refreshed spiritually and pondering new insights that formerly escaped notice.

Consider, too, a small, extra home observance. On the Feast of Transfiguration, the Church tradition is to bless grapes and other fruit. This can be done at home, sprinkling holy water on the fruit in the Name of the Holy Trinity. And on the Feast of Dormition the tradition is to bless herbs—for example basil, oregano, rosemary, bay, and even roses and lavender—in exactly the same way. This is how our ancestors for centuries, year in and year out, in thanksgiving offered back to our Lord and Creator the first fruits of nature.

Wishing all of you a healthy and happy remainder of summer and wonderful celebrations of the forthcoming Great Feasts!

Abbess Victoria
and the sisters
of St. Barbara Monastery

*Because the monastery remains closed and we ourselves continue to “shelter in place” due to the pandemic, we have practically no news to put in this newsletter! The projects that we think our Friends might like to know about are all on hold—like construction, for example, or our application to the County to have a cemetery here. “So, what are you doing there now?” our Friends ask us. With an eye to the future, what we have been doing is planting various kinds of fruit and nut trees. So, **think of this as the “agricultural issue” of our newsletter!***

OUR FRUIT TREE PROJECT

Due to marauding gophers and deer, the few fruit trees growing on this property when we moved here fifteen years ago, as well as most of the ones we planted ourselves early on, have perished! So, little by little, we have planted something like twenty-five fruit trees: apple, cherry, pear, peach, plum, avocado, fig, pomegranate, kumquat, orange, and tangerine, not to mention pineapple guava, nuts and moringa. “Moringa” you ask? What is a moringa tree? Read on! And meanwhile, just imagine what a blessing of fruit we will be able to have, God willing, on the Feast of Transfiguration in a few years! And just imagine what a spread we will be able to place on the table at the Friends’ Gatherings a couple of years from now!

THE MORINGA TREE



The latest tree to join our young plantings is a moringa tree. A native of India, it now grows around the world. We learned the hard way that it is not a well-known tree among local tree nurseries, and the nursery where we were at last successful in acquiring one had not heard of it before and had to search for the tree. But it is definitely a tree worth having in one’s backyard.

All of it is edible: the young fruit (pods), the leaves and their stems, even the root! Gram for gram, the leaves have 7 times the vitamin C of oranges, 4 times the vitamin A of carrots, 4 times the calcium of milk, 3 times the potassium of bananas, and 2 times the protein of yogurt (source: “Nutritive Value of Indian Foods”, by C. Gopalan). It can handle poor soil and can be grown from seeds or cuttings. However, what it cannot handle is too much water, as we found out trying to grow it from seed. The old “grow the bean in wet cotton” science project you may have done in grade school only succeeded to turn the seeds moldy. The moringa needs sandy, light soil rather than heavy clay soil, so we will have to amend our soil to take care of our new resident. It also has small, tender leaves that the deer would love. (And they would be oh so healthy!) But since we would like to have some too, fencing will go up around it as soon as we get it out of its pot and into the ground!



THE LAVENDER

We regret that we have had to end our sale of fresh lavender for this year so soon. Having shipped out quite a number of bouquets during the first three weeks of July, we have discovered that the recent, exceedingly hot weather has prematurely caused our lavender to begin turning brown. The remaining lavender in our fields is by no means lost because of this. Soon the individual florets on each stem will begin to form tiny drops of oil. Sparkling in the sun, they will announce that it is time for the final harvest. For several days, as soon as the light of dawn peeks over Santa Paula Mountain and before the bees are awake and ready to compete with us, we will be out in our fields with scythes cutting enormous quantities of lavender stems. These we will take to a neighboring lavender ranch where, using a distillation process, each harvest of perhaps 75 pounds will yield about a liter of the precious, fragrant oil. While the yield may be relatively small, we have been told the oil from our lavender fields is of the finest quality.



OUR CALIFORNIA BAY LAUREL

One tree we have in abundance on our property is California bay. Unlike our new fruit and nut trees, it seems impervious to drought, gophers and deer.

Once a year, for Great and Holy Saturday, we provide fresh bay leaves to churches which observe the tradition where the priest casts bay leaves, the ancient symbol of victory, throughout the sanctuary and nave, thus announcing the victory of Christ over death.

Recently we asked: Does California Bay have other uses? The answer is yes! Perhaps in the future we will be able to- make some of these leaves available to our friends.



Dried leaves can be used as a condiment and flavoring in soups and stews.

The seeds can be cooked or roasted.

Drink the leaf tea to treat colds, stomachaches, sore throats and clear mucus in the lungs.

A tincture of the leaves is analgesic, antimicrobial and antifungal.

Inhale the crushed fresh leaves to relieve pain for headaches and nasal congestion.

Apply the poultice to the head for treating headaches.

(But before you rush to your nearest bay tree to try these remedies, please use caution. Leaf oil can cause sneezing and headaches if inhaled, and the aroma can cause headaches in some people.)