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ST BARBARA MONASTERY

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2021



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

*What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits towards me?
I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. (Ps. 116: 12-13)*

The pre-lenten Sundays are quickly passing by and it's time for each of us to think about how we will observe Lent. It will be here before we know it!

If we open the Gospels we find that the first uttered words come from St. John the Baptist: **Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.** And if we read a little further, we find that the first uttered words of Jesus are exactly the same: **Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.** These are the words which are meant to guide us to salvation through life. . . and through Lent.

What is it to repent? How do we begin? The Church takes us by the hand, as it were, and shows us the way with the Sunday of Forgiveness, the last day before Lent begins. Asking forgiveness of one another and of God Himself, our boat is launched on the sea of Lent and on the precise course that will take us to the Kingdom of Heaven, to salvation, to Pascha!

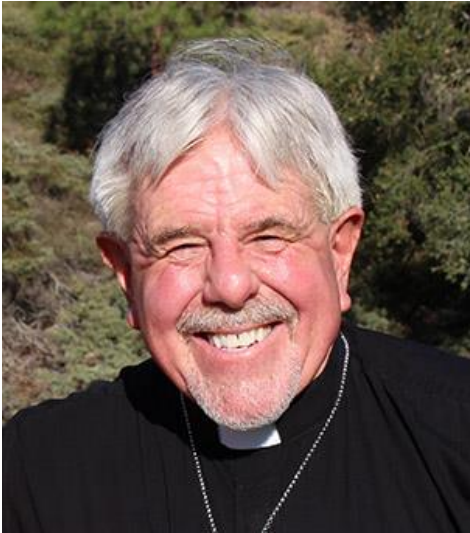
But having made such a beginning, for many the question still remains: What shall I do now? How shall I spend the days of my Lent? In its particulars, the answer may be different for everyone. A verse from the Lenten Triodion addresses this very issue:

Come, ye faithful, and let us serve the Master eagerly. . . each according to the measure he has received, let us increase the talent of grace. Let one gain wisdom through good deeds, let another celebrate the Liturgy with beauty; let another share his faith by preaching. . . let another give his wealth to the poor. So shall we increase what is entrusted to us, and as faithful stewards of His grace we shall be counted worthy of the Master's joy. (Matins of Tuesday in Holy Week, Aposticha)

In other words, there is a host of things we can "do." Let us choose wisely and offer our efforts with a good heart and with joy to our merciful God.

Abbess Victoria
and the community of
St. Barbara Monastery

MEMORY ETERNAL! V. REV. JON-STEPHEN HEDGES



V. Rev. Jon-Stephen Hedges, a priest of St. Athanasius Antiochian Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara, fell asleep in the Lord on February 25th following a short illness.

A good friend of St. Barbara Monastery almost since its beginnings, Father Jon-Stephen graciously accepted to give occasional talks at our Friends' Gatherings. Always happy to tell an instructive story, he enthralled us with the remarkable tales of his adventures ministering to the homeless in and around Santa Barbara and especially Isla Vista, where St. Athanasius Church was formerly located and where he lived. However, his extraordinary ministry was broader than anyone guessed. He served as volunteer Chaplain with the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department, the Isla Vista Foot

Patrol, and several other agencies. He collaborated and consulted with several Santa Barbara County agencies on crisis, trauma, and disaster issues; was deployed by the Red Cross after Hurricane Katrina as a Disaster Mental Health worker; helped develop the St. Brigid Fellowship of St. Athanasius Church which serves the unsheltered; and collaborated with Doctors Without Walls to encourage his friends on the streets.

We send our sympathies to Fr. Jon-Stephen's wife Melissa, their children and grandchildren, the members of St. Athanasius Church and his myriad spiritual children and grieving friends. May his memory be eternal!

NEWS FROM ETHIOPIA: THE GOBEZIE GOSHU HOME.

Over the past year, our good friend Tsige and her amazing projects in her native Ethiopia have had to face not only the Covid-19 pandemic but also devastating civil war. For the inhabitants of the city of Adwa in the Tigray region, this has meant life-threatening shortages of food and water, lives lost in the military conflict, and harm in the form of looting and sexual assault. Tsige and her helpers have already distributed all their funds on hand to the most needy of the 270 invalids and destitute people the Home and Foundation support on a monthly basis.

Fr. Lawrence Russell, pastor of Holy Annunciation Church in Santa Maria, who attempts to keep in touch with Tsige (his



former parishioner) as far as spotty communications in her present circumstances allow, assures us “the need for assistance created by these new crises is beyond great.” He writes:

“We ask your prayers for a speedy resolution to the conflict and your financial donations for the suffering people of Ethiopia that Tsige serves. In a typical year, your donations help enroll up to 1,000 students in school and feed and clothe another 250 poor persons per month. Your donations will make a huge difference to those who are suffering.”

If you wish to donate to this worthy cause, you can write your check to “St. Barbara Monastery” with “Ethiopia” in the memo line. Everything collected will be duly acknowledged and deposited safely in the Foundation’s U.S. bank account.

END OF YEAR TAX RECEIPTS

We regret that almost all of our tax letters (“no goods or services”) are late this year. If you need your letter for your tax records soon, please let us know. We will send it out at once.

SUGGESTED LENTEN READING

Christ is in our Midst: Letters from a Russian Monk, Father John of Valaamo. Fr.

John’s simple counsels are filled with humility and love. \$15

May God Give You Wisdom! The Letters of Fr. John Krestiankin. \$25

The Lenten Triodion. Dwell on the special texts that are sung in church on the Sundays of Lent. \$32

The Lenten Triodion Supplement. Lenten prayers that are read on every day of the fast. \$25.95

The Lenten Spring by Fr. Thomas Hopko. This insightful explication of the Lenten prayers and observances has proved to be a classic. \$15

Great Lent: Journey to Pascha by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. \$16

Season of Repentance: Lenten Homilies by St. John of Kronstadt. \$16.95

The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death by Fr. John Behr. An entrance into the dynamic of death and new birth that characterizes the Christian life. \$19

If We Confess Our Sins: Preparation and Prayers. \$6

Living Prayer by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom). When prayer feels stale, how do we start afresh? \$14.95

To purchase any of the titles listed above from the monastery, please add \$3 for shipping, or \$5 for two.