

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

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*ST. BARBARA MONASTERY
FRIENDS' GATHERING
August 25th, 2024*

4 pm Presentation:

*Watching Over Our Thoughts
To Prevent Sin*

*Speaker: V. Rev. John Tomasi
Joy of All Who Sorrow Church
Marina Del Rey, CA*

5 pm Vespers

6 pm Potluck



Dear Friends of St Barbara Monastery,

Tempus fugit! That is a phrase that one of our sisters at the monastery is fond of saying. Time flies. So often at the monastery it feels as if we live from Sunday to Sunday, from Feast to Feast, and that in between time seems to be flying by at an increasingly accelerated rate. Another sister is fond of reckoning time in seconds, rather than minutes: We only have 180 seconds before the next church service—that is 3 minutes...better hurry up! Somehow time seems shorter if reckoned in seconds than in minutes.

Perhaps it seems like just yesterday when your child was a newborn baby, then you blinked and suddenly she was an awkward teenager. You blinked again and she was happily married. Now you find yourself a grandparent to adorable grandchildren, wondering how it all went by so quickly!

As we write this, we find ourselves in the season of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos. A priest and good friend of the monastery recently reminded us that the icon of the Dormition is traditionally placed in the back of every Orthodox church for a very specific reason: As we exit the church and gaze at the icon, we are reminded of our own coming dormition, our own impending day of death. And just as the apostles and disciples are gathered around the body of the Theotokos in the icon, so too, at our own funeral, will people gather around our body (only God knows when) to give us the “last kiss” according to the Orthodox tradition.

What a sobering thought! Death will come to all of us and it will come more quickly than we thought— in a blink of an eye!

The Fathers helpfully recommend the remembrance of death as an important aid to bring us to sobriety and watchfulness and to keep our focus on what truly matters in life. And what is it that truly matters? To love God, to love our neighbor, and to prepare here and now for the life of the world to come.

As the Sisters are fond of mentioning, St. Seraphim of Sarov recommends that each of us search out and arrange our lives around those activities that bring us the most grace from the Holy Spirit. Life is but a vapor—here today, gone tomorrow. May we use wisely this God-given gift of time so that, standing before Him at the Day of Judgement, we may not be ashamed, but may hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into My rest!”

—The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

THE END OF LAVENDER SEASON

We have completed the harvesting of our monastery's lavender for the season, thanks to five separate harvests this month as the Sisters were joined by several groups of volunteers—some veterans and some first-timers. Several early morning and late evening August harvests were dedicated to harvesting for essential oil and dried florets for sachets.

For the essential oil harvests, each distillation requires about 70 lbs. of lavender florets. Fueled by coffee (and sometimes snacks and lemonade), the sisters and volunteers hit the field with sickles, empty tubs and boxes and try to fill their containers up as fast as possible with lavender florets containing a minimal amount of stem (in order to maximize the oil yield). Every time a “weigh-in” is called for during the harvest,



everyone crowds around the scale as around a prize fighter at a weigh-in. It usually takes several “weigh-ins” to hit our target, but we are grateful to our volunteers who prove time and again that many hands do indeed make light work.

LIONS, TIGERS AND BEARS...

We have now sighted two out of three—not only on our property, but casually crossing the monastery bridge! Coming up the path from the lower parking lot in the early morning before Matins, one of the sisters observed a big, sleek, powerful mountain lion ambling down from the upper parking lot and garage area and calmly exiting the property. We don't know where he went next and, thankfully, we have not heard of any attacks in the neighborhood. We wondered how to complete the third part of the song, having seen both bear and lion at the monastery recently with not a single tiger in sight. However, not to worry: a few days after the mountain lion sighting, a coyote was spotted running through our property on two separate occasions. (That makes 5 coyote sightings this summer alone.) We think it's high time to change the title of this song!

READERS' CORNER

Our usual patristic reading and book discussion schedule has been delayed somewhat as the Sisters felt it necessary to hold two separate community discussions on our last book, *St. Irenaeus' On the Apostolic Preaching*, which was divided into two sections and packed with interesting material. In September, we will read and discuss *On God and Man: The Theological Poetry of St. Gregory Nazianzus*.

As always, we invite you to join us in reading along with our community and perhaps holding your own book discussions with friends and family.

WORK PARTY FROM L.A.

Hearing about our heavy end-of-summer workload at the monastery, a close friend of ours, Lyubov Ganchenko, organized a group from among the Russian community in Los Angeles to come to our rescue. Fourteen persons arrived on Saturday morning, August 17th, ready to tackle a long list of tasks, starting with a significant harvest in our lavender field of florets to be used for sachets. Although the day was hot, work continued with picking the ripe fruit of our mulberry tree, mowing the meadow, digging an area next to the monastery church for future landscaping with shrubs and flowers, tree-trimming, sanding and repainting weathered crosses from the infant cemetery, polishing brass and even working on a malfunctioning water pump. All these tasks and more were accomplished happily and enthusiastically to the glory of God. The hours of work were punctuated with the usual monastery church services of Sixth Hour and Vespers as well as dinner and supper. And some of these laborers are even planning to return to continue with ongoing tasks! May God reward them for their generous gifts of labor with His gifts of grace in this life and salvation in the world to come.



Left: Armed with sickles, ready to tackle the harvest. ***Above:*** Sanding crosses with smiles!



Above: Polishing brass with precision and focus.



Right: A tired but happy group!

MONASTERY ROAD REOPENS

After 6 months of being closed because of a mudslide, Ojai Rd/ Hwy 150 from Santa Paula has now reopened to through traffic. No need to detour all the way around through Ojai to reach our monastery!