

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery
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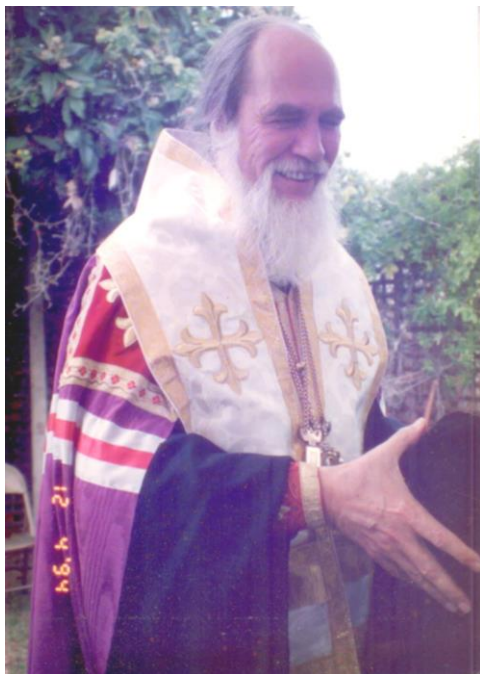


*There will be no
St. Barbara Monastery
Friends' Gathering
in January 2023*

*We hope to see you
in February.*



**+ *TIKHON, BISHOP OF SAN FRANCISCO, LOS ANGELES,
AND THE WEST,
FALLS ASLEEP IN THE LORD***



His Grace, TIKHON, the retired Bishop of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West of the Orthodox Church in America, fell asleep in the Lord early Sunday morning, January 22, 2023, at the age of 90.

Back in 1992, it was Bishop TIKHON who first proposed the idea of having a women's monastic community in Santa Barbara. When circumstances allowed the actual founding of such a monastery, he, together with his Archdeacon Benjamin (who succeeded Bishop TIKHON in 2007), came and served the first Vigil for the Feast of St. Barbara on the eve of the Feast, December 3rd, in the small cottage that was the Monastery's first home.

May Bishop TIKHON'S memory be eternal!

***As noted on the front cover,
there will be no Friends' Gathering in January.
The Sisters are recovering from a recent bout of sickness
that made its rounds through our community.
We ask for your prayers and thank you for your understanding.***

BLESSING OF THE WATERS

On the eve of Theophany after days of rain, our community wondered if the weather would permit us to bless the waters of Sisar Creek the following day. By God's grace, Theophany Sunday dawned sunny and beautiful!

After the Divine Liturgy, we followed the Cross of Christ in procession- with our pilgrims carrying icons and banners - past the infant graves, through the woods, past the tire swing, to the very edge of the now-rushing creek.

Fr. Jude Lepine offered the beautiful prayers of the Blessing of the Waters and sanctified the waters, as we all celebrated the wonder of our Lord Jesus Christ bowing his head as a servant before John the Baptist:

At Thine appearing in the body, the earth was sanctified, the water blessed, heaven enlightened, and mankind was set loose from the bitter tyranny of the enemy.

--Forefeast of Theophany, Compline, Ode IV

The service ended with Fr. Jude liberally blessing us with water and we rejoiced:

Oh, happy stream! For it received in itself the Creator at His baptism and was made a fountain of life-giving water, for our salvation who sing: O God our Deliverer, blessed art Thou! –Ibid, Ode VII



FLOODING

Some of you have inquired about how the monastery fared in these recent waves of torrential rains in California. We are thankful that the major portion of rains arrived only after our priest, Fr. Jude, performed the Blessing of the Waters. Perhaps because of this, the monastery sustained minimal damage—a bench that floated away, a picnic table wrecked, a fence smashed, etc. In addition, the road leading to the monastery remained impassable for a few days due to mudslides. Amid all, however, we beheld mini-waterfalls appearing around the monastery and newly-formed rivulets wending their way towards Sisar Creek—at its height, a muddy, raging river (see front cover).

Interestingly, the rhythmical beating of rains, the loud rumbling of boulders in the creek like giant bowling balls, the cracking of lightning and booming of thunder formed an uncanny backdrop to the Sisters' chanting of the afterfeast services of Theophany within the safe 'womb' of the monastery chapel. The texts of the services of Theophany with their many references to water came alive as we sang our meagre hymnody to the tune of pounding rains: *The voice of the Lord is upon many waters! The God of glory thundered. (Ps 28:3)* Furthermore, our little church itself felt at times like an ark in the great flood of yore.

In a way, these recent rains recalled to us that the Church truly *is* the Ark of salvation amid this tumultuous sea of Life. We are *safe* within the Church: Christ is her captain and all who place their trust in Him will one day be led to the much longed-for harbor of Paradise!

AROUND THE MONASTERY...



Blessing of the Waters. Note: the area where we are shown standing is now submerged.



Fr. Jude generously blesses the faithful.



The chickens are all grown up



...and began laying their first colorful eggs.



READERS' CORNER

The law of the Lord is blameless, converting souls (Psalm 18/19)

The Sisters have held six discussions of the Popular Patristics series to date. Most recently, we read and discussed St. Germanus of Constantinople's *On the Divine Liturgy*, a short but challenging text that we compared to "reading a theological dictionary." For those who want to read alongside the sisters, we are currently enjoying St. Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymns on Paradise*. We will discuss the *Hymns* in February and save the *Commentary on Genesis* for the following month.