

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery
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St. Barbara Monastery
Friends' Gathering
Sunday, March 26th, 2023

4:00 pm Presentation:

What is Man?
An Orthodox Perspective
and Responses to Trans-Philosophy

Speaker: Priest Symeon Halsell
St. Athanasius Orthodox Church
Santa Barbara, CA

5:00 pm: Vespers

6:00 pm: Potluck



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

This Lent our monastery is in the middle of a big plumbing job and everything is topsy-turvy! Just when we wanted to maintain greatest peace and quiet, we are challenged by the clanging of hammers on water pipes and the screeching of electric saws—not to mention the disturbing disorder in our house! Our Lenten efforts have thus been forced to focus on *inner peace and quiet*—which is what is most important after all.

What disturbs our inner peace? Usually, it is anxiety of one sort or another. A couple of days ago, our master plumber told us that, when he and his crew finish their big job, it will remain to us to repair the many walls they have cut through, because drywall experts and plasterers, not plumbers, are needed for that. We were not exactly worried, but we were certainly troubled—partly at the expected time and cost increase but mostly at the prospect of having to find someone to do the job. So what did we do? We did what our elders taught us. We prayed for Heaven’s help. To our amazement, we later learned that, even at the very same moment we were uttering our prayer, a new friend of the monastery, who just happens to be a contractor familiar with the building trades, was writing to us to offer his services for construction-related needs at the monastery! How can we begin to express our thanks to God?

Telling this little story is not enough! Because mere words are not enough to express our thanks and glorify God. What we can do—and as Christians are called to do—is put our trust in Him for everything, every little thing! This Lent, putting away our anxieties through prayer, let us all seek true inner peace—not as the world gives, “but as Christ Himself gives” to us. As the Apostle Paul writes:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)

The Sisters
of St. Barbara Monastery

TAX LETTERS

If you need a “no goods and services” tax letter from the monastery and have not received one to date, please contact us at sbmonastery@gmail.com to request one.

A PIPE DREAM FULFILLED

Looking around the main monastery house today—St. Patrick’s day-- it looks like we are moving. There is an island of stuff in the middle of the kitchen floor, heaps of towels in trash bags, light bulbs on the kitchen counter, boxes of items piled up on corners...well, you get the idea! On top of that, there are sizable holes in our drywall along with exposed pipes all around the house, no running water in half of the house, and the constant noise of work men and their power tools.

Actually what is happening is a complete copper repipe of the main house—a huge job and a blessing. The sisters were finding leaks, mold and other signs of serious pipe decay from the main house’s original plumbing system.



Octavio Maldonado (pictured left), a plumber who has done work for us before, is leading a crew on this two-week long project to replace all of the plumbing system.

Although getting to our cells involves navigating pipes waiting to be installed and attempting to tread lightly (but nevertheless very noisily!) on crackling construction paper put down to protect our floor, we are very grateful finally to be getting this work done. The house is sighing with relief, and we are assured that our plumbing system should be in good shape now for a long, long time.



AROUND THE MONASTERY...



Good friends of the monastery, Eugene Solonin and Helena Solomaho, generously assisted with our plumbing project.



A giant oak tree near our bridge, felled by the recent “atmospheric river” of winds and rains.



READERS' CORNER

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

After a long involuntary hiatus, our reading group resumed. The Sisters gathered to discuss St. Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymns on Paradise*, thinking particularly about the reasons such a deep theological thinker, a contemporary of St. Athanasius the Great and the Cappadocian Fathers, would have chosen to write primarily in poetry. In order to experience this text as a hymn, we took turns reading one of the hymns aloud, with all the rest reading the refrain.

St. Ephrem writes about how he contemplated Paradise in the words of Genesis, and by extension, how to read all the Scriptures:

I read the opening of this book
and was filled with joy,
for its verses and lines
spread out their arms to welcome me;
the first rushed out and kissed me,
and led me on to its companion;
and when I reached that verse
wherein is written
the story of Paradise,
it lifted me up and transported me
from the bosom of the book
to the very bosom of Paradise. (Hymn V, stanza 3)

However, he does not draw only on Genesis, for Paradise is not only the Garden of Eden at the beginning, but the resting place of the saints awaiting the final Resurrection.

We will read the second part of this Popular Patristics book, the prose *Commentary on Genesis*, before the fifth week of Lent. Sometime after Pascha, we will read a selection from another Syrian saint, Isaac of Nineveh. The Popular Patristics title *On Ascetical Life* contains the first six homilies from the larger collection, *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian* (published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston).

LAST CHANCE FOR BAY LEAVES

Time is running out to place your order for Holy Saturday bay leaves! We ask that you contact the monastery no later than the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt (April 2nd). As each pound of bay leaves takes the sisters many hours of labor, kindly limit your order at this time to 1 lb or 2 lbs at the most. You may reach us at sbmonastery@gmail.com or call 805-921-1563.