

St. Barbara Orthodox Monastery

15799 Ojai Road, Santa Paula, CA 93060

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St. Barbara Monastery Friends' Gathering Sunday, April 30th, 2023

4:00 pm Presentation:

*St. Nikolai Velimirovic:
The Life and Times of a Modern Saint*

*Speaker: V. Rev. John Finley
Chairman, Antiochian Archdiocese
Dept. of Missions & Evangelism*

5:00 pm Vespers

6:00 pm Potluck



Christ is risen!



Indeed He is risen!

Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

On this day Spring is fragrant;

The new creation danceth now!

(From the Exapostilarion of St. Thomas Sunday)

Having just experienced Pascha, doesn't the whole world look rather different? The sky, the trees, the buildings, even cars on the highway and the people walking on the street—all look. . . . *Precious!*—that's the word. The whole world looks very, very precious. What has happened? Have scales fallen from our eyes? Everything, down to the smallest and most inconsequential, appears bright and alive—and *precious*—and *sacred*.

Sacred is, of course, among the words that modernity has stripped from our vocabulary. Relating to the natural and material world. It represents “subjective” categories that impede the purposes of industry, commerce, and development, science and technology, and we are trained not to think about the world in terms of such qualities. In fact, we are taught that such qualities are superimposed by us and do not belong to the world itself.

Then, just when we have begun to view the world routinely in this “objective” way, an icon begins to weep or exude sweet-smelling myrrh, or someone whose medical tests reveal cancer beyond hope of recovery, receives the Sacrament of Holy Unction and is healed. Or someone dies and his body remains incorrupt and even streams with myrrh. We rightly call such occurrences “miracles;” and in them the order of nature is overruled. But naming them “miracles” does not take care of the matter entirely and put it to rest for us. Do we not find ourselves thinking: “Things made of wood and paint do not weep; olive oil does not heal cancer, and the bodies of the departed decay. If such things are unaccountably happening, what is going on? And how much more do I not notice because my eyes have been taught not to see?”

Dear Friends, we and you, who are baptized, who have experienced Pascha, who have “beheld the Resurrection” are called to live on a different plane, a plane where the Kingdom of God is breaking through into this world and rendering it the grace-filled meeting place between God and man that it was meant to be. When we live on this plane, we not only understand but experience the world and everything in it to be precious and sacred and a means of communion with God—objectively so. On this plane it is not incomprehensible when we encounter in created things the marks of the Kingdom that is to come—in an icon, in oil, in the holy relics of saints and, indeed, in our fellow human beings as well as in all the natural world. And by the same token, it is not mere poetic license when the hymnographer, St. John of Damascus, writes: “the new creation danceth now!”

The Sisters of St. Barbara Monastery

BEAUTIFUL RELIQUARY FOR ST. BARBARA'S RELICS

On the eve of Lazarus Saturday, April 7th, 2023, the monastery was graced with a beautiful hand-crafted reliquary to house the monastery's relic of St. Barbara. Made specifically for our monastery in wartime Kiev, Ukraine, by a carefully selected craftsman, Alexander Dmitriev, this reliquary is fashioned of linden wood and adorned with a handwritten icon of St. Barbara. Inscribed in it are two golden plaques that read: *Holy Great Martyr Barbara, pray unto God for us* (in English) and *Fragment of the Relic of the Great Martyr Barbara* (in Slavonic).



We wish to extend our profound gratitude to Reader Serge Liberovsky and his wife, Elena, of Holy Virgin Mary Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles, for their labor of love in the acquisition, transfer, and installation of this reliquary to our monastery church. Likewise, we are exceedingly grateful to Elena's mother, Nataliya Onyshchuk, who coordinated much of the work "on the ground" with Mr. Dmitriev in Ukraine. Due to wartime disruptions in Kiev's bus transportation system, Mrs. Onyshchuk reports that, upon its completion, she carried this sizable reliquary by foot for miles from Mr. Dmitriev's workshop and, remarkably, felt it "light as a feather."

FROM FR. SYMEON HALSELL

Fr. Symeon Halsell gave a fascinating Friends' Gathering talk last month addressing core beliefs of our Faith juxtaposed with modern transhumanist thought. For a deep dive into the topic of transhumanism, please check out his lecture series "What is Man?" on the website of St. Athanasius Church (in Santa Barbara). According to Fr. Symeon, we now have a transhumanist ideology underpinning much of current thought. Although we humans were created with God's own hands for a specific destiny, many have turned from this divine vision of what it means to be human to one created out of autonomous imagination, hubris and ambition. According to Fr. Symeon, we see from the book of Genesis that God is *the* active Being in the creation of the world and of mankind, with a definite purpose and plan both for His world and for mankind, specifically. The philosophical idea that there is nothing that a human being is intrinsically supposed to be, that we can remake human beings into whatever we want them to be, takes us into spiritually dangerous post-human territory. This key principle ties together such seemingly divergent moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, manipulating genes, transgenderism, and AI-human interfacing. As a Church, we should press deeper into our Faith to answer the challenge of transhumanist ideology and its offshoots. Armed with both a deeper faith and an educated evaluation of post human thought, we as Christ's Church can be in a better position to pass on our Faith to our children and to reach out to our neighbor in compassion with the Gospel of Christ.

AROUND THE MONASTERY...



*Above: Celebrating Lazarus Saturday with His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin
Below: Services leading up to Holy Pascha*



Save the Date

***June 23rd – 25th, Friday to Sunday:
Ventura County Greek Festival, Camarillo, CA
The Sisters will have a booth at this Greek Festival sponsored by
St. Demetrios Orthodox Church.***