In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Dear brothers and sisters:

Our Church calls Saint Barbara of Heliopolis "the Beautiful" (The Akathist hymn for Saint Barbara). For us, Christians, she is not only one of the loveliest ladies that have ever lived on earth, but also a never-aging person of everlasting youth! On many icons she is depicted as a Tsar’s bride with the crown on her head. What special clothes did she put on and what cosmetics did she use to achieve such an exquisite and stunning splendor? Her real splendor is the absence of sin in her life, it is the gleam of Heaven’s light both in her thoughts and in her deeds. The glory that she had attained is the result, – as the Holy Chalice in her hands reminds us, – of her Communion with Christ. Her spiritual beauty comes from her faithfulness to the Heavenly Groom – Jesus Christ, whom she cherishes as the main Treasure of all her life.

What type of a beauty contest did Saint Barbara win and how did she procure for herself one of the first places in the Heavenly Kingdom? She lived in the time of persecution of the Christian Church, and the "beauty contest" she became a glorious part of – was the trial of the Christian souls, when everything that was inside any person – the depth and strength of his/her faith and devotion to Christ – was revealed.

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh in one of his sermons tells us that any person is a wonderful image of God. Very often this image is distorted, unclean or damaged. As an old beautiful icon, darkened from the time passed, from soot and dust, this magnificent image of God – which is inside of every one of us – needs to be renewed and restored. The restorer carefully and cautiously – one layer after another, one inch after another – cleans and renovates such an icon. The same meticulous work of restoration of the Image of God and of discovering the wonderful beauty of God inside us should be performed by every one of us. This process of revealing Heavenly beauty in our souls is the way of reformation and changing of ourselves through penitence.

Saint Barbara, pray God that through Your Holy supplications our souls become beautiful and full of Heavenly light! Let them receive the Sacrament of Eternity through our faithfulness to Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and through our allegiance to Him in the time of trials and persecutions!