

St Macarius Con't

Saint Macarius attained such boldness before God that, through his prayers, the Lord raised the dead. Despite attaining such heights of holiness, he continued to preserve his unusual humility. One time the holy abba caught a thief loading his things on a donkey standing near the cell. Without revealing that he was the owner of these things, the monk began to help tie up the load. Having removed himself from the world, the monk told himself, "We bring nothing at all into this world; clearly, it is not possible to take anything out from it. Blessed be the Lord for all things!"

Once, Saint Macarius was walking and saw a skull lying upon the ground. He asked, "Who are you?" The skull answered, "I was a chief priest of the pagans. When you, Abba, pray for those in hell, we receive some mitigation."

The monk asked, "What are these torments?" "We are sitting in a great fire," replied the skull, "and we do not see one another. When you pray, we begin to see each other somewhat, and this affords us some comfort." Having heard such words, the saint began to weep and asked, "Are there still more fiercesome torments?" The skull answered, "Down below us are those who knew the Name of God, but spurned Him and did not keep His commandments. They endure even more grievous torments."

Once, while he was praying, Saint Macarius heard a voice: "Macarius, you have not yet attained such perfection in virtue as two women who live in the city." The humble ascetic went to the city, found the house where the women lived, and knocked. The women received him with joy, and he said, "I have come from the desert seeking you in order to learn of your good deeds. Tell me about them, and conceal nothing."

The women answered with surprise, "We live with our husbands, and we have not such virtues." But the saint continued to insist, and the women then told him, "We married two brothers. After living together in one house for fifteen years, we have not uttered a single malicious nor shameful word, and we never quarrel among ourselves. We asked our husbands to allow us to enter a women's monastery, but they would not agree. We vowed not to utter a single worldly word until our death."

Saint Macarius glorified God and said, "In truth, the Lord seeks neither virgins nor married women, and neither monks nor laymen, but values a person's free intent, accepting it as the deed itself. He grants to everyone's free will the grace of the Holy Spirit, which operates in an individual and directs the life of all who yearn to be saved."

During the years of the reign of the Arian emperor Valens (364-378), Saint Macarius the Great and Saint Macarius of Alexandria was subjected to persecution by the followers of the Arian bishop Lucius. They seized both Elders and put them on a ship, sending them to an island where only pagans lived. By the prayers of the saints, the daughter of a pagan priest was delivered from an evil spirit. After this, the pagan priest and all the inhabitants of the island were baptized. When he heard what had happened, the Arian bishop feared an uprising and permitted the Elders to return to their monasteries.

The meekness and humility of the monk transformed human souls. "A harmful word," said Abba Macarius, "makes good things bad, but a good word makes bad things good." When the monks asked him how to pray properly, he answered, "Prayer does not require many words. It is needful to say only, 'Lord, as Thou wilt and as Thou knowest, have mercy on me.' If an enemy should fall upon you, you need only say, 'Lord, have mercy!'" The Lord knows that which is useful for us, and grants us mercy."

When the brethren asked how a monk ought to comport himself, the saint replied, "Forgive me, I am not yet a monk, but I have seen monks. I asked them what I must do to be a monk. They answered, 'If a man does not withdraw himself from everything which is in the world, it is not possible to be a monk.' Then I said, 'I am weak and cannot be as you are.' The monks responded, 'If you cannot renounce the world as we have, then go to your cell and weep for your sins.'"

Saint Macarius gave advice to a young man who wished to become a monk: "Flee from people and you shall be saved." That one asked: "What does it mean to flee from people?" The monk answered: "Sit in your cell and repent of your sins."

Saint Macarius sent him to a *Con't Pg 10*

St. Macarius Con't

cemetery to rebuke and then to praise the dead. Then he asked him what they said to him. The young man replied, "They were silent to both praise and reproach." "If you wish to be saved, be as one dead. Do not become angry when insulted, nor puffed up when praised." And further: "If slander is like praise for you, poverty like riches, insufficiency like abundance, then you shall not perish."

The prayer of Saint Macarius saved many in perilous circumstances of life, and preserved them from harm and temptation. His benevolence was so great that they said of him: "Just as God sees the whole world, but does not chastize sinners, so also does Abba Macarius cover his neighbor's weaknesses, which he seemed to see without seeing, and heard without hearing."

The monk lived until the age of ninety. Shortly before his death, Saints Anthony and Pachomius appeared to him, bringing the joyful message of his departure to eternal life in nine days. After instructing his disciples to preserve the monastic Rule and the traditions of the Fathers, he blessed them and began to prepare for death. Saint Macarius departed to the Lord saying, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

Abba Macarius spent sixty years in the wilderness, being dead to the world. He spent most of his time in conversation with God, often in a state of spiritual rapture. But he never ceased to weep, to repent and to work. The saint's profound theological writings are based on his own personal experience. Fifty Spiritual Homilies and seven Ascetic Treatises survive as the precious legacy of his spiritual wisdom. Several prayers composed by Saint Macarius the Great are still used by the Church in the Prayers Before Sleep and also in the Morning Prayers.

Man's highest goal and purpose, the union of the soul with God, is a primary principle in the works of Saint Macarius. Describing the methods for attaining mystical communion, the saint relies upon the experience of the great teachers of Egyptian monasticism and on his own experience. The way to God and the experience of the holy ascetics of union with God is revealed to each believer's heart. Earthly life, according to Saint Macarius, has only

a relative significance: to prepare the soul, to make it capable of perceiving the heavenly Kingdom, and to establish in the soul an affinity with the heavenly homeland.

"For those truly believing in Christ, it is necessary to change and transform the soul from its present degraded nature into another, divine nature, and to be fashioned anew by the power of the Holy Spirit."

This is possible, if we truly believe and we truly love God and have observed all His holy commandments. If one betrothed to Christ at Baptism does not seek and receive the divine light of the Holy Spirit in the present life, "then when he departs from the body, he is separated into the regions of darkness on the left side. He does not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but has his end in hell with the devil and his angels" (Homily 30:6).

In the teaching of Saint Macarius, the inner action of the Christian determines the extent of his perception of divine truth and love. Each of us acquires salvation through grace and the divine gift of the Holy Spirit, but to attain a perfect measure of virtue, which is necessary for the soul's assimilation of this divine gift, is possible only "by faith and by love with the strengthening of free will." Thus, the Christian inherits eternal life "as much by grace, as by truth."

Salvation is a divine-human action, and we attain complete spiritual success "not only by divine power and grace, but also by the accomplishing of the proper labors." On the other hand, it is not just within "the measure of freedom and purity" that we arrive at the proper solicitude, it is not without "the cooperation of the hand of God above." The participation of man determines the actual condition of his soul, thus inclining him to good or evil. "If a soul still in the world does not possess in itself the sanctity of the Spirit for great faith and for prayer, and does not strive for the oneness of divine communion, then it is unfit for the heavenly kingdom."

The miracles and visions of Blessed Macarius are recorded in a book by the presbyter Rufinus, and his Life was compiled by Saint Serapion, bishop of Tmuntis (Lower Egypt), one of the renowned workers of the Church in the fourth century. His holy relics are in the city of Amalfi, Italy.

**REFLECTIONS ON THE AUTOCEPHALY
OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN
AMERICA By Fr. Thaddeus**

Looking back to the birth of our Church's autocephaly brings a flood of memories. In the late 1960s and early 70s priests of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church (the Metropolia) would gather once a year for a summertime retreat at St. Andrew's Camp on Lake Oneida in Upstate New York. Present at the 1970 retreat were priests who had been part of the official Metropolia delegation which traveled to Moscow to receive the Tomos of autocephaly: Fathers Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff, Daniel Hubiak, John Nehrebecki and John Skvir. These men gave the assembled clergy a synopsis of what had transpired in Moscow when the Russian Patriarch presented to our Bishop Theodosius the Tomos.

The priests mentioned above were a special group, pillars of Church life, pastors and teachers that 'baby priests,' such as I was, looked up to as role models. We needed role models, or at least I did, in those days. The American Church was in transition from a highly ethnic community to generations of people familiar only with the mores of the American scene. For example, when I was a seminarian (1965-68) beside the normal course work, three languages were required in order to graduate: Koine Greek, Church Slavonic and Russian. Most Metropolia parishes were using Slavonic as their main liturgical language. The first all-English parishes were located on the fringes of the Metropolia; Encino, CA (founded in 1955) and Dallas, TX (founded in 1954). With rare exceptions, the entire Church used the Julian Calendar to celebrate feast days including The Nativity of Christ.

In many parishes there were on-going struggles focusing on clericalism and anti-clericalism. All young priests had heard stories of parish council presidents who demanded to read priest's sermons before they were delivered in order to make sure they were not in conflict with local sensitivities, of churches where the liturgical schedule was set by parish councils and not the pastor, where priests were 'not allowed' to move church tables or candle stands, and the list went on. Young pastors such as I looked up to the established priests who helped settle these questions.

Becoming the local Church on American soil was not an easy task. Enculturation is the slow and

occasionally painful process of our Faith Community growing into 'Americana' while maintaining true allegiance to the Faith of our Fathers. Considering the life, evolution, and conflicts emanating from the reality of growing into a different way of manifesting our love of Christ and His Church, Father Schmemmann said, "they [the conflicts] are the clearest announcement of our future. If together we have gone through darkness and difficulties, if we have survived and grown, it means that the Church has truly permeated our lives, that she has become a reality for us."

As a seminarian and recently ordained priest, I was an usher at the 13th All-American Sobor held at the pro-Cathedral in Manhattan. It is noteworthy that only male lay delegates were permitted to attend the Sobors. The sessions were conducted in two languages; Russian and English. Almost all the bishops spoke in Russian and between the clergy and the laity, the ratio was about 60/40, leaning toward English. Father George Benigsen had an incredible gift of doing simultaneous translations from Russian to English and English to Russian.

One of the major points during the three-day Sobor was the fact that the Synod of Bishops had forbidden discussion on changing the name of the Church from the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America to "Orthodox Church in America". This item became a 'hot button'. Speaker after speaker insisted that a discussion be held on the question. Finally, the bishops allowed a 'straw vote' to be held and the result overwhelmingly showed that the body of the Church supported a name change. The people of the Church were not simply suggesting a change in wording, rather they were saying it is time to boldly step into a future that is no longer just a repository of Eastern European peoples, but a Christ centered community of and in America. It was decided to meet again in two years to directly address the question of a permanent name change

Another issue at the 13th All-American Sobor was a decision to allow parishes, with approval from their diocesan bishop, to adopt the new calendar. My intuition at the time was that the bishops were thinking that if they were asked by parishes to change the liturgical calendar, they would simply say, "no!" I don't think they realized the deep desire that most people **Con't Pg 13**

PREPARATION FOR THE BLESSING OF HOMES

Before the Priest arrives at your home, here are a few reminders on how to prepare:

- In the main room of the home, usually the kitchen or dining room, have placed on the table a white cloth, a candle and /or an Icon or cross. You may place a small container of Holy Water on the table. (Note: Father will be bringing his own.)
- Make a list of those living in the house including pets and all deceased you want prayed for.
- Turn off all TV's, radios, computers, etc. So as to keep focused on the blessing service.
- Make sure that pets are heeled or restrained so as not to get underfoot while Father goes through the home.
- In some customs, someone (usually a child) takes a candle and leads Father through the house while the rest follow.
- If you have any items to be blessed (Icon, Cross, etc.). Put them on the table where the blessing will take place.
- When the priest arrives, have everyone in the home gather around the table and join in the blessing. PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT.
- Invite friends or neighbors to participate and witness the beauty of this tradition.

NOTE: Remember, the invitation to the priest to come and bless your home is an invitation to ask for the mercy of God upon the household. The sprinkling of the Holy Water is a sign of God's presence in the home as an extension of His Holy House, the Church. It is a time to renew our commitment to God as we begin another year in His mercy and love for mankind.



January Special Collection

Marblehead, OH Police
Fr. Andrew serves as
Chaplain.

BUILDING / RESTORATION FUND

Our 125th Anniversary is coming!
Fund Purpose: To collect funds to pay for the restoration, repair and beautification of the building and parish room. This will avoid using general funds which are earmarked for budgetary items.

Please consider contributing generously to the
Building/Restoration Fund.

Bishop Paul's Travel Schedule

St. Makarios Orthodox Mission, Chicago, IL,

January 18th to 19th

- *Celebration of Patronal feast day*

Ss. Peter & Paul, Burr Ridge, IL, January 19th, 6 PM

- *Annual Pan Orthodox Sanctity of Life Service*

National Right to Life March, Washington DC,

January 23rd to 24th

St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington DC, January 24th to 25th

- *Consecration of Bishop-elect Alexis Trader to the Episcopacy*

St. George Cathedral, Chicago, IL, January 26th

St George Romanian Cathedral, Southfield, MI,

January 31st to February 1st

- *Consecration of Bishop-elect Andre to the Episcopacy*

Holy Transfiguration Church, Livonia, MI,

February 1st to 2nd

Reflections con't

had to participate in a church calendar that was in synchronization with their daily lives.

When my wife and I were taking instructions to become Orthodox, our priest was quite the joker. When he told us the Church celebrated Christmas in January, we truly thought he was joking. On the other hand, for many who grew up with the Julian calendar it was not easy to change. The calendar issue proved to be one of the points of darkness and difficulty that we experienced as a growing missionary church. Eventually, the Holy Synod approved the revised calendar for the entire Orthodox Church in America (with a few exceptions such as the Diocese of Alaska).

I remember my first parish in Rochester, New York. It was established as an all English mission parish, but it came into being during the time when the Julian Calendar was the official calendar of the Metropolia. The parish had a sizeable number of young families with school children and many spouses were converts to the Orthodox Faith. We were experiencing a slow, but steady increase of individuals and families converting to the Faith. Celebrating Christmas on January 7th was a problem. Children were in school, parents were working and for most of the community the joy of the Feast was used up thirteen days earlier. I came up with the idea of celebrating the feast of St. Spyridon (feast day December 12 on the Julian calendar, but December 25th on the revised calendar). We had great attendance on December 25th – January 7th not so much. The Rochester parish was a microcosm of what the entire Metropolia was experiencing.

The next All-American Sobor, the 14th, was held at St. Tikhon's Monastery in Pennsylvania; not in two years as decided at the 1967 Sobor, but in three years in 1970. Much had happened in those three years: primarily, the granting of autocephaly to our Church and the formulating of a new Statute to govern the OCA. This meeting was both the last Sobor of the American mission and the first All-American Council of the new autocephalous Orthodox Church in America. I had been in my first parish for two years – truly a 'baby priest,' but now I was a part of a new Church blessed by Christ to be His home in America.

delegates. This was history in the making and we were elated to be a part of the new Church. One thing I noticed was that when the translations were made between Russian and English, Father Benigsen only translated the Russian into English while the English went untranslated. This was a sign that the new Church was placed on this land to be a community that preached Christ in the language of the American people.

The 5th All-American Council was held in Montreal in 1977 and it was truly a watershed for the OCA. Metropolitan Ireney, who ordained me a deacon using Church Slavonic prayers, had resigned due to failing health. Many people thought that another Russian bishop would be elected as the new Metropolitan. However, that was not to be. During the Divine Liturgy before the vote was to be taken as to who would be the next head of the OCA, the service was exclusively in Slavonic. During the singing of the Creed, Father John Skvir gave a very loud pitch and began singing in English and he was joined by the crowded congregation, which over-powered the Cathedral's Russian choir. This was a sign of things to come.

Following the Liturgy, on the first ballot, an American convert bishop, Dmitri, received the most votes, but 30 votes shy of the two-thirds needed to become the Metropolitan. On a second ballot, again Bishop Dmitri was first, and Bishop Theodosius, American born, was second. The Holy Synod then selected Theodosius as the new Metropolitan. Theodosius had been consecrated as a bishop ten years earlier and at his consecration he ordained his first priest using English language prayers. I was that newly ordained priest.

Many things have transpired in the past 50 years. The memories are abundant – most are good memories, a few carry the suffering of the Cross, the conflicts and difficulties of growth. The growth began in 1794 with the arrival of Russian monks on American land who proclaimed Christ to the Alaskan natives. In 1906, Saint Tikhon, the former head of the Orthodox Church in the Americas, delivered a report to the Russian Holy Synod connecting the founding of American Orthodoxy in 1794 to what was yet to be in this land. The first Russian missionaries on this continent had a vision.

Con't Pg 14

One could feel the vibrant atmosphere among the

Reflections Con't

They saw a Church for a new people in a new land, not a mere extension of Russia for Russian people. Saint Tikhon said, "there is no other way for American Orthodoxy than to return to that prophecy and to that vision, to fulfill today that which was given from the very beginning."

LOCAL MARCH FOR LIFE- PORT CLINTON

WHEN: Sunday, January 26
WHERE: Water works Park Fountain
TIME: 1:00pm

A prayer vigil will be held during the march at the Denny Bergman Hall / Knights of Columbus for those who can't walk the mile march. After the march everyone will head to the hall.

There will be refreshments and testimonies and the movie unplanned will be played for all.

FEBRUARY BULLETIN AND CANDLE SPONSORS

Bulletin: (\$50) Fr. Andrew in memory of Metropolitan Orestes

Chandelier: (\$50) Laura: In loving memory of her dad Steve

Altar Candles: (\$50) Fr. Andrew for the health of his spiritual Fr. James on the occasion of his birthday

Candles on the Tomb: (\$25) Open

Eternal Light & Icon Screen: (25) Open

THANK YOU

A huge thank you to those who helped change the candles and linens to gold last Sunday:

| | |
|---------|-----------|
| Basil | Tim |
| Quincy | Stephanie |
| Ron | Bobbie |
| Natalie | Susan |

Preparing Kids for Leaving Home, Part 5 / Handling Things When the Plan Doesn't Work

One of the things that struck me last week when I talked about using the car, or taking trips away from home, is that what I suggested seemed so simple and easy. But what happens if older kids don't abide by what is expected of them? What if they get arrested for driving under the influence or get in a car accident that was due to irresponsible behavior on their part? What if they don't abide by curfews, or they use the car for purposes that were not intended? There are three things I wish to share with you.

First, if there is anything related to breaking the law, there are consequences built into those events. If someone has to go to court and pay a fine, maybe lose one's license, or face higher car insurance premiums, there is no need to punish one's child twice for the misdeed he or she has committed. No one wants to see any of the above happen to his or her children, but things like this can happen in family life.

Second, it would be good for parents to sit down with their kids and discuss being away from home and the use of the car. There are many other scenarios not as severe as the above that still require attention. Having a "What if?" discussion with your child ahead of time is not a bad idea. Anticipate some of the issues that could arise. Parents, have your child sit down with you and problem solve these situations, so that the result is an understanding among all of what happens if any freedoms are abused. This may be more relevant when kids are using a family car for going to work, visiting a friend, or going to a social activity.

Finally, it is important for parents to involve their older children in the problem-solving process. If this becomes a one-way issue of what the parent will do to the child if one abuses his or her freedom, this is not as helpful. Older children are not to be treated as peers. But at the same time, as kids get older, I often find that negotiation rather than dictation is the best way to resolve these issues.

I am not sure how helpful the above is, but sometimes it seems so easy to come up with formulas and guidelines without asking, "What if they aren't observed?" Next week I will discuss the issue of when a child finishes high school and moves on to college or another career path.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,
The unworthy +Paul