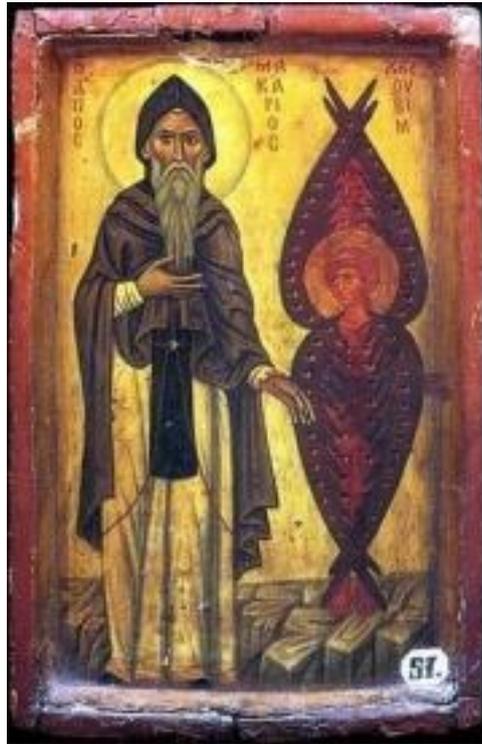




# “Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 87 February 2016



## The Humility of St Macarius the Great

*This is the mark of Christianity—however much a man toils, and however many deeds of righteousness he performs, to feel that he has done nothing, and in fasting to say, “This is not fasting,” and in praying, “This is not prayer,” and in perseverance at prayer, “I have shown no perseverance; I am only just beginning to practice and to take pains”; and even if he is righteous before God, he should say, “I am not righteous, not I; I do not take pains, but only make a beginning every day.*

### St Macarius the Great

St Macarius the Great, born c. AD 300, was a former camel-driver trading in natron, a type of salt used in glass production. He was one of the pioneers of Scetis, which eventually became home to thousands of people seeking the ascetical life of the desert. His great gift was his exceeding humility, by which he was both completely lacking in pride about himself, and extremely merciful towards others. The following stories about him illustrate this astonishing quality:

Abba Macarius said this about himself: 'When I was young and was living in a cell in Egypt, they took me to make me a cleric in the village. Because I did not wish to receive this dignity, I fled to another place. Then a devout layman joined me; he sold my manual work for me and served me. Now it happened that a virgin in the village, under the weight of temptation, committed sin. When she became pregnant, they asked her who was to blame. She said, "The anchorite." Then they came to seize me, led me to the village and hung pots black with soot and various other things round my neck and led me through the village in all directions, beating me and saying, "This monk has defiled our virgin, catch him, catch him!" and they beat me almost to death. Then one of the old men came and said: "What are you doing, how long will you go on beating this strange monk?" The man who served me was walking behind me, full of shame, for they covered him with insults too, saying, "Look at this anchorite, for whom you stood surety; what has he done?" The girl's parents said, "Do not let him go till he has given a pledge that he will keep her." I spoke to my servant and he vouched for me. Going to my cell, I gave him all the baskets I had, saying, "Sell them,

and give my wife something to eat." Then I said to myself, "Macarius, you have found yourself a wife; you must work a little more in order to keep her." So I worked night and day and sent my work to her. But when the time came for the wretch to give birth, she remained in labour many days without bringing forth, and they said to her, "What is the matter?" She said, "I know what it is, it is because I slandered the anchorite, and accused him unjustly; it is not he who is to blame, but such and such a young man." Then the man who served me came to me full of joy saying, "The virgin could not give birth until she had said 'The anchorite had nothing to do with it, but I have lied about him.' The whole village wants to come here solemnly and do penance before you." But when I heard this, for fear people would disturb me, I got up and fled here to Scetis. That is the original reason why I came here.'

One day Macarius the Egyptian went from Scetis to the mountain of Nitria for the offering of Abba Pambo. The old men said to him, 'Father, say a word to the brethren.' He said, 'I have not yet become a monk myself, but I have seen monks. One day when I was sitting in my cell, my thoughts were troubling me, suggesting that I should go to the desert and see what I could see there. I remained for five years, fighting against this thought, saying, perhaps it comes from the demons. But since the thought persisted, I left for the desert. There I found a sheet of water and an island in the midst, and the animals of the desert came to drink there. In the midst of these animals I saw two naked men, and my body trembled, for I believed they were spirits. Seeing me shaking, they said to me, "Do not be afraid, for we are men." Then I said to them, "Where do you come from, and how did you come to this desert?" They said, "We come from a monastery and having agreed together, we came here forty years ago. One of us is an Egyptian and the other a Libyan." They questioned me and asked me, "How is the world? Is the water rising in due time? Is the world enjoying prosperity?" I replied it was, then I asked them, "How can I become a monk?" They said to me, "If you do not give up all that is in the world, you cannot become a monk." I said to them, "But I am weak, and I cannot do as you do." So they said to me: "If you cannot become like us, sit in your cell and weep for your sins." I asked them, "When the winter comes are you not frozen? And when the heat comes do not your bodies burn?" They said, "It is God who has made this way of life for us. We do not freeze in winter, and the summer does us no harm." That is why I said that I have not yet become a monk, but I have seen monks.'

When Abba Macarius was returning from the marsh to his cell one day carrying some palm-leaves, he met the devil on the road with a scythe. The latter struck at him as much as he pleased, but in vain, and he said to him, 'What is your power, Macarius, that makes me powerless against you? All that you do, I do, too; you fast, so do I; you keep vigil, and I do not sleep at all; in one thing only do you beat me.' Abba Macarius asked what that was. He said, 'Your humility. Because of that I can do nothing against you.'

The same Abba Macarius while he was in Egypt discovered a man who owned a beast of burden engaged in plundering Macarius' goods. So he came up to the thief as if he was a stranger and he helped him to load the animal. He saw him off in great peace of soul, saying, 'We have brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.' (1 Tim. 6.7) 'The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' (Job 1.2 1)

A brother came to see Abba Macarius the Egyptian, and said to him, 'Abba, give me a word, that I may be saved.' So the old man said, 'Go to the cemetery and abuse the dead.' The brother went there, abused them and threw stones at them; then he returned and told the old man about it. The latter said to him, 'Didn't they say anything to you?' He replied, 'No.' The old man said, 'Go back tomorrow and praise them.' So the brother went away and praised them, calling them, 'Apostles, saints and righteous men.' He returned to the old man and said to him, 'I have complimented them.' And the old man said to him, 'Did they not answer you?' The brother said no. The old man said to him, 'You know how you insulted them and they did not reply, and how you praised them and they did not speak; so you too if you wish to be saved must do the same and become a dead man. Like the dead, take no account of either the scorn of men or their praises, and you can be saved.'

When anyone came respectfully to the abbot Macarius, desiring to hear some exhortation from him, he received no answer at all. But if anyone came despising Macarius and did violence to him with such words

as these, “Lo, you there, Father Macarius! You used to be a camel-driver and steal the nitre. How your master used to beat you when he caught you robbing him!” Willingly, even joyfully, Macarius used to speak to such a man of whatever he wished to hear.

It was said of St Macarius: “Just as God sees the whole world, but does not chastise sinners, so also does Abba Macarius cover his neighbour’s weaknesses, which he seems to see without seeing, and hear without hearing.”

As the soul of St Macarius rose to heaven, the demons of the air cried, ‘Oh, what glory you have attained, Macarius!’ The saint replied, ‘Silence! I still fear, not knowing my lot, or whether I have done anything pleasing to God.’ As he rose higher, the adversaries shrieked, ‘You have surely escaped us, Macarius!’ ‘Not yet!’ he answered. ‘I am not clear of you yet.’ When he was already inside the gates of heaven, the devils screamed, ‘We have lost you forever!’ Macarius shouted back, ‘Now I am truly safe, having the might of Christ to defend me!’

## Orthodox Christians in America March Against Abortion

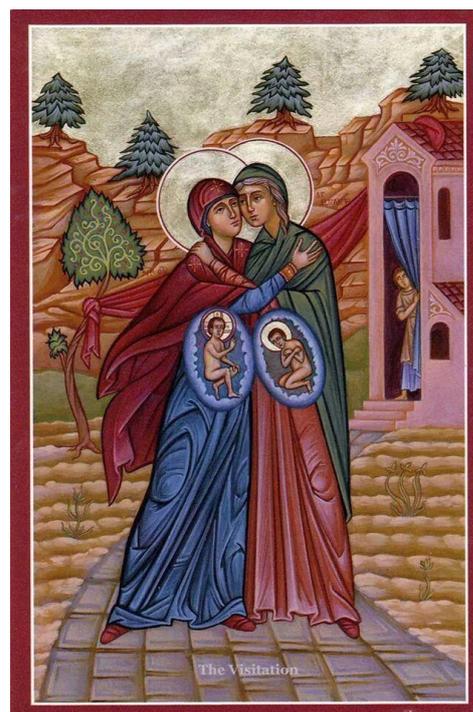


Despite the brutal weather and the threat of the worst snowfall in the US capital in some 90 years, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, clergy and seminarians, and faithful from across the country took part in the annual March for Life in Washington DC on Friday, January 22, 2016. Metropolitan Tikhon was accompanied by His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, and His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey. Also participating were His Eminence, Metropolitan Evangelos of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey and His Grace, Bishop John of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Worcester. The March marked the 43rd anniversary of the Roe v Wade decision that legalised abortion in the United States. During the pre-March rally, Metropolitan Tikhon was among the hierarchs on the stage as Metropolitan Evangelos offered the opening invocation. Marchers representing the pan-Orthodox community braved the cold, carrying icons and “Orthodox Christians for Life” banners and signs. At the conclusion of the rally, marchers made their way to the US Supreme Court while Metropolitan Tikhon offered prayers for those who have fallen victim to abortion. Following is an edited version of a talk given in 2011 by Frederica Mathewes-Green, an American Orthodox Christian who is outspoken against abortion:

The ancient, pagan world was a harsh one. Not only were children aborted before birth, but newborn children were not officially received into a family until their father picked them up and held them. If the father didn’t want them he simply refused to take them up, and they were legally abandoned. This was called “exposing” infants; they would be placed in some public place, and the social fiction was that someone else might pick them up and care for them. Sometimes people did take in these babies, and rear them to be sold as slaves or put on the street as prostitutes. But, often enough, no one took them before they were found by dogs or other animals, or died of exposure and starvation. And this was legal. It was a harsh world.

Christians stood out as different in that world. They were different in seeing every human being as worthy of dignity, whether free or slave, male or female, Jew or Gentile (as St. Paul said in Galatians 3:21). One of the big differences between Christians and pagans was that Christians did not have abortions. From the earliest years, the Church Fathers spoke against abortion. Let me read you some of their statements. This is from the Didache, a work which was written about the same time as the Gospels: "You shall not murder a child by abortion." The Letter of Barnabas, written about the same time, repeats those words. "You shall love your neighbour more than your own life. You shall not murder a child by abortion." Note the connection he makes there. This is not about sexual morality, it's about loving your neighbour, who in this case is a helpless child. The Letter to Diognetus, probably written around 125, describes to a nonbeliever what Christians are like. He writes, "They marry, as do all others; they beget children, but they do not abort foetuses." Yet, even though the early Christians refused to participate in abortion, a terrible rumour circulated about them in those days. You know that, in the centuries when Christianity was illegal, some parts of our Faith were kept secret and not shared outside the community of believers. For example, the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist was something only baptised Christians knew about, and it was never spoken about to nonbelievers. We still say, in the pre-communion prayer of St. John Chrysostom, "I will not speak of Thy mystery to Thine enemies." Yet rumours started to circulate that Christians were cannibals. There was a story going around that in Christian worship a baby was put inside a sack of flour and beaten to death, and then eaten. Minucius Felix wrote, around 200 AD, "I would like to meet the person who says ...that we [Christians] are brought into the faith by means of the slaughter and blood of an infant. Do you think that it can be possible for such a tender little body to receive such fatal wounds? Is it possible for anyone to pour forth the new blood of a little child, scarcely come into existence? Nobody is capable of believing this—except the person who would do it. Yes, I see that you expose your newborn children to wild beasts and to birds, and at other times crush them to death. There are some women who drink medicines that extinguish the life of a child while still inside their body, and thus murder their own relatives before bringing them forth." St. John Chrysostom wrote, "Do you condemn the gifts of God, and fight against His laws? Childlessness is seen as a curse, but you seek it as though it were a blessing. Do you make the chamber of birth a place of slaughter? Do you teach the woman who is formed to give life to perpetuate killing instead?" (Homilies on Romans 24) St. Basil puts medicines that cause abortion in the same category as other kinds of killing. He writes, "The man or woman is a murderer who gives a potion, if the person that takes it dies from it. So also are they who uses a medicine to procure abortion; and so are those robbers who kill on the highway."

Our Orthodox Christian heritage is absolutely opposed to abortion and child-killing from its very beginnings. This stand against abortion and exposure of infants is, in fact, one of the things that attracted people to the Christian Faith. Our Faith's affirmation of life from the moment of conception is evident in the passage in the Gospel of Luke, in which Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, and Elizabeth says that her unborn son leaped for joy at the sound of Mary's voice. She says, "Why do I deserve such honour, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For when the sound of thy greeting reached my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy." (Luke 1:39-45) The unborn John the Forerunner recognized the presence of Christ and His mother, and Elizabeth, with prophetic insight, realized what was happening. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not become a human being on Christmas Day, but 9 months earlier, on 25 March, the Feast of the Annunciation, when the angel appeared to the Virgin Mary and told her that she would conceive a child. The Forerunner did not become a human being on the day he was born; he was already a prophet and a servant of the Most High, even in his mother's womb.



# Notes & Jottings

## CALENDARS

We still have a few calendars in stock. The *St Herman Calendar 2016* is a lectionary, in book format, giving details of saints' days and scriptural readings throughout the year. These retail at £6.50 per copy. Order now to avoid disappointment. Also we have received some copies of the Russian Orthodox *Fund for Assistance* Calendar. This is a large format (A2) wall calendar and retails at £10 per copy.

## RECEPTION INTO THE CHURCH

Stephen Ward, whose wife Olga is Russian, was received into the Church on Tuesday 5 January. May the Protomartyr St Stephen ever intercede for, guide and support him.

## GRAND DUCHESS ELIZABETH ROMANOV SOCIETY

This new society was founded in December with the aim of organising events to celebrate and study the life of the great Saint Elizabeth, New Martyr of Russia. Membership is free, and the inaugural event will be on Sunday 6 March, at Eastwell Manor, near Ashford in Kent, from 4pm – 6.30pm. For more information, please contact: [pauloxburrow@zen.co.uk](mailto:pauloxburrow@zen.co.uk).

## PORCH DOORS

The much delayed work on installation of porch doors for the church is due to begin on Monday 8 February. This should be a great asset to the church.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

**14 March – First day of Great Lent**

**24 April – Palm Sunday**

**1 May – The Bright Resurrection of Christ – Easter Day**

**(The latest date on which Easter can occur is 25 April. This year's date, designated 18 April in the Julian Calendar, is within that limitation because, in the Orthodox Church, Easter is calculated according to the Julian Calendar.)**

**9 June – Ascension Day**

**19 June – Pentecost**

**25 June – Pilgrimage to St Botolph at Iken**

**26 June – All Saints Day**

## NAMEDAYS

To all who are celebrating a Nameday at this time we send congratulations and wish them:

**MANY YEARS!**

1 February – **St Mark, Archbishop of Ephesus** – Monk Mark (Underwood)

3 February – **St Maximos the Confessor** – Maxim Sarmulis

13 February – **St Victor of Corinth, Martyr** – Viktor Levine

16 February – **St Simeon the God Receiver** – Simeon Bascu

21 February - **St Theodore Stratelates** – Tudor-Daniel Costec

26 February – **St Zoe of Bethlehem** – Zoe Andrews



COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD  
*JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW*

**FEBRUARY 2016**

**Saturday 6 February**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 7 February**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of  
Russia)**

**Saturday 13 January**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 14 February**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Zaccheus Sunday)**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Monday 15 February**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (The Meeting of Our Lord, God and Saviour  
Jesus Christ)**

**Saturday 20 February**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 21 February**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee)**

**Saturday 27 February**

*7.30am ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 28 February**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Sunday of the Prodigal Son)**



*Let the children be conscious that they are members of Christ's family. Let the children come to love church!*

**Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky**

*Collegiate Church of the Ikon of the Mother of God: Joy of All Who Sorrow  
The White House, Low Road, Mettingham, Suffolk, NR35 1TP*

*Tel: (01986) 895176*

*[www.mettingham.org.uk](http://www.mettingham.org.uk)*

