



Saint Macarius of Alexandria, Anchorite

January 2 — (394 A.D.)

Saint Macarius, a citizen of Alexandria, joined the family business as a confectioner. Wanting to serve God with his whole heart, he spent more than 60 years in the desert in fervent penance and contemplation. He first retired into Thebais (Upper Egypt), around the year 335. Having learned the maxims, and being versed in the practice of the most perfect virtue, under masters renowned for their sanctity, still aiming, if possible, at greater perfection, he left Upper Egypt, and moved to the Lower, before 373.

In this part were three deserts almost adjoining each other: named Scete; Cells (this name being given to it on account of the multitude of hermit-cells with which it abounded); and a third called the desert of Nitria. Saint Macarius had a cell in each of

these deserts.

When he dwelt in Nitria, it was his custom to give advice to strangers, but his chief residence was in Cells. When a stranger came to live among them, everyone offered him his cell, and was ready to build another for himself. Their cells were not within sight of each other.

Their manual labor, which was that of making baskets or mats, did not interrupt the prayer of the heart. A profound silence reigned throughout the whole desert. While here, our saint received the dignity of priesthood, and shone as a bright sun influencing this holy company.

Palladius has recorded one memorable instance of the great self-denial professed and observed by these holy hermits. A present was made to Saint Macarius of a newly gathered bunch of grapes: the holy man carried it to a neighboring monk who was sick; he sent it to another: it passed the same

way to all the cells in the desert, and was brought back to Macarius, who was exceedingly rejoiced to perceive the abstinence of his brethren, but would not eat the grapes himself.

The austerities of all the inhabitants of that desert were extraordinary; but, in

this regard, Saint Macarius far surpasses the rest. For seven years he lived only on raw herbs and pulse, and for the three following years contented himself with four or five ounces of bread a day, and consumed only one little vessel of oil in a year. God had given him a body capable of bearing the greatest rigors; and his fervor was so intense, that whatever spiritual exercise he heard of, or saw practiced by others, he resolved to copy the same.

The reputation of the monastery of Tabenna, under Saint Pachomius, drew him to this place in disguise, some time before 349. Saint Pachomius told him that he seemed too far advanced in years to begin to accustom himself to their fastings and watchings; but finally they admitted him, on the condition that he would observe all the rules and mortifications of the house. Lent was approaching soon, the monks were assiduous in preparations to pass that holy time in austerities, each according to his strength and fervor; some by fasting one, others two, three, or four days, without any kind of nourishment; some standing all day, others only sitting at their work. Macarius took some palm-tree leaves steeped in water, as materials for his work, and standing in a private corner, passed the whole time without eating, except a few green cabbage leaves on Sundays. His hands were employed in almost continual labor, and his heart conversed with God by prayer. If he left his station on any pressing occasion, he never stayed one moment longer than necessity required.

Such a prodigy astonished the monks, who even complained to the abbot at Easter that a person of this nature might be prejudicial to their community. Saint Pachomius appealed to God to know who this stranger was; and learning by revelation that he was the great Macarius, embraced him, thanked him for his edifying visit, and asked him to return to his desert, and there offer up his prayers for them.

continued on page 2

In This Issue:

St Macarius of Alexandria	1
The Immaculate Heart of Mary	2
The Importance of Confessors	3
Gift Suggestion	3
The Devotion of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary	4
Letters to the Editor	4

SAINT MACARIUS OF
ALEXANDRIA, ANCHORITE
continued from page 1

Our saint happened one day inadvertently to kill a gnat that was biting him in his cell; reflecting that he had lost the opportunity of suffering that mortification, he hastened from his cell for the marshes of Scete, which abounded with great flies, whose stings pierced even wild boars. There he stayed six months, exposed to those ravaging insects; and his whole body was disfigured to such a degree with sores and swellings, that when he returned he was only to be known by his voice.

The virtue of this great saint was often exercised with temptations. One was a suggestion to leave his desert and go to Rome, to serve the sick in the hospitals; which he discovered to be a secret ruse of vanity inciting him to attract the eyes and esteem of the world. True humility alone could discover the snare which lurked under the flawed gloss of holy charity. Finding this enemy extremely insistent, he threw himself on the ground in his cell, and cried out to the fiends: "Drag me hence, if you can, by force, for I will not stir." There he lay till night, and by this vigorous resistance they were quite defenseless. As soon as he arose they renewed the assault; and he, to stand firm against them, filled two great baskets with sand, and laying them on his shoulders, traveled along the wilderness. An acquaintance, meeting him, made an offer of easing him of his burden; but the saint made no other reply than this: "I am tormenting my tormentor." He returned home in the evening, very fatigued in body, but freed from the temptation.

Palladius informs us that Saint Macarius wanting to more perfectly enjoy the sweets of heavenly contemplation for at least five days without interruption, confined himself within his cell and said to his soul: "Having taken up thy abode in Heaven, where thou hast God and His holy angels to converse with, see that thou descend not thence: regard not earthly things." The first two days his heart overflowed with divine delights; but on the third he met with so violent a disturbance from the devil, that he was obliged to stop short of his plan, and return to his usual manner of life.

monks, and tempting them by numerous distractions, during the time of public prayer. Some, as often as they approached, chased them away by a secret supernatural force. The saint burst into sighs and tears; and when prayer was ended, warned everyone of his distractions, and of the snares of the enemy, with an earnest exhortation to employ, in that sacred duty, a more than ordinary watchfulness against his attacks.

Palladius was eyewitness to several miracles wrought by Saint Macarius. He relates that a priest, whose head was consumed by a cancerous sore, came to the saint's cell,

but was refused admittance. The saint at first would not even speak to him. Palladius begged him to give at least some answer to so great an object of compassion. Macarius, on the contrary, urged that he was unworthy, and that God, to punish him for a sin of the flesh he was addicted to, had afflicted him with this disorder: however, that upon his sincere repentance, and promise never more during his life to presume to celebrate the divine mysteries, he would intercede for his cure. The priest confessed his sin, with a promise never after to perform any priestly function, the Saint ab-

solved him by the imposition of hands; and a few days later, the priest came back perfectly healed, glorifying God, and giving thanks to His servant.

In 375, Saint Macarius was banished for the Catholic faith, at the instigation of Lucius, the Arian patriarch of Alexandria. Our saint died in the year 394.

In the desert of Nitria there stands, to this day, a monastery which bears the name of Saint Macarius. †



Contemplative souls often desire never to be interrupted in the glorious employment of love and praise: but the necessities of the human frame, and the temptations of the devil, force them, though reluctant, from their beloved object. God sometimes withdraws Himself, as the saint observed on this occasion, to make them aware of their own weakness, and that this life is a state of trial.

In a vision, Saint Macarius once saw devils closing the eyes of the

The Importance of Confessors

“I want to die and go to Heaven,” Francisco Marto, the young Fatima seer who could see Our Lady of Fatima but was unable to hear Her words at the Cova da Iria, replied when asked what career he would choose when he grew up. “Soon, Jesus will come to look for me and take me to Heaven with Him, and then I will be with Him always, to see Him and console Him. ... He is so sad because of so many sins.”

Shortly before his death, Francisco asked his sister, Jacinta, and his cousin, Lucy, to help him remember the sins he had committed, before he went to confession. He wanted to confess all his faults, without missing a single one.

Vatican Council II spoke of the importance of confession. However, following the council, secularization ensued and there was a confusion of terms.

On May 2, 2002, Archbishop Julián Herranz, president of the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legal Texts, presented Pope John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Misericordia Dei* to the press.

The letter stresses personal and individual confession, an integral confession, which means the remission of all grave, but also venial, sins. It is, implicitly, a call to priests, who must always be available to hear the faithful’s confession. It is inconceivable that a priest is not available or has

no time to hear confessions, because confession, together with the Eucharist, is the priest’s principal task.

In *Ministers of Mercy*, a pastoral letter from the Archbishop of Lima, Peru, Cardinal Cipriani writes, “Priests should make time to be available to hear confessions, and they approach the sacrament in humility.”

He appealed to priests to “dedicate time and energy to listen to the faithful’s confessions. They are happy to receive this sacrament when they know that the priests are available.

“The good confessor is aware that he is an active instrument of divine grace ...” †

Gift Suggestion

St. Padre Pio understood the value of our children reading quality material.

At a time when critics rave about just-released books that are meant for a young audience, there is undue pressure placed on our children to be part of the “sophisticated” group of readers who have stood in line to purchase every volume in the series.

This is not the time to corrupt young minds with tales of sorcerers, witches and unrealistic heroes. Saint Padre Pio well understood the value of a good book and was quick to criticize the time wasted with frivolous reading.

Children should read more, but the quality of the material they should choose from must be overseen by concerned family members. There are good children’s books in our catalogue.

A Gift Certificate and a new catalogue from *Our Lady’s Book Service* would put everyone’s mind at ease. The books described therein have been examined by priests of our Apostolate and approved for their content. The saints and other heroes are the best examples of how our lives should be lived in pursuit of true happiness.

Our children need something positive to believe in. There is nothing more positive than the love of our Lord and Our Lady. They need you to help them find that love.

Just call or write to us at the address on page four of this Newsletter to order your Gift Certificates. †



Shortly before his death, Fatima Seer, Francisco, went to confession



St. Padre Pio

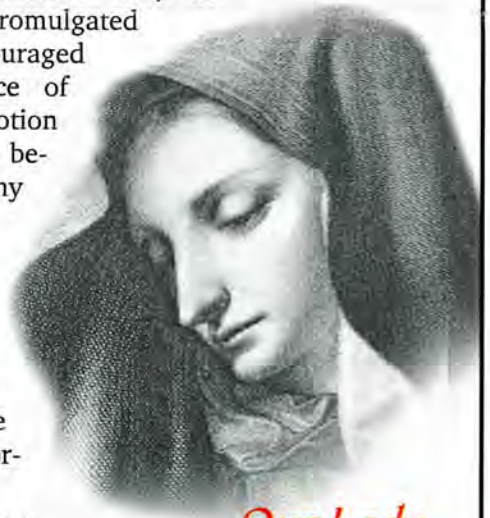


The Devotion of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Please join us in doing something that pleases Our Lady very much. Enclosed with this Newsletter is a new prayer card of Our Lady of Sorrows and a new leaflet promoting The Devotion of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We invite you to join us and Our Lady's other friends in both practicing and promoting this devotion.

Pope Benedict XIII, in 1724, promulgated and encouraged the practice of this devotion when he bestowed many indulgences for the recitation of the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows.

The enclosed leaflet shows how to recite the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary and gives a brief overview of each sorrow, for meditation purposes, while praying the Chaplet. †



Our Lady of Sorrows

Dear Father Gruner,

I would like to express a deep gratitude in receiving *Mary's Immaculate Heart and Your Salvation* book.

I was very moved and touched by it. I will continue with my prayers and support to you. God Bless and keep you.

A.G., Ontario, Canada

Dear Father Gruner,

I enjoy your web site so much. It is informative, spiritually inspiring and uplifting. I say a Rosary every day on your web site.

Father Gruner, you are doing a great work for the Church in honor of Our Lady. Thanks,

Frank, via the internet.

Father Gruner,

Thank you for all that you are doing. We believe you, your work, and believing you is believing the Message of Fatima.

Please stand courageously. We need you, now more than before.

Please pray for me too.

Isabel, the Philippines

Father Nicholas Gruner,

Please send me the booklet *Garment of Grace* and also a Brown Scapular. Thank you very much.

I see you on my TV channel 43 on Sunday mornings from 11:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.

Father, you are always in my prayers and I continue to say the Rosary each day.

Yours in Jesus, Mary and Joseph,

Nancy S., PA

Dear Servants of Jesus and Mary,

I want to thank you for the religious literature you sent us, I have already distributed it to the community and I'm happy to let you know that we appreciate your help. Thanks again,

Diana F., TX

Dear Father,

Thank you for the wonderful book you sent, *The Golden Key to Heaven*. I like it very much.

Rest assured, Father, that we pray every day to the Blessed Mother that they will not silence you.

May God Bless you richly and give you the strength to go on.

Sincerely,

Irene B., CA

We'd like to hear from YOU!

Write or call:

The Editor,

**League of the Immaculate
Heart Newsletter,**

IN U.S.A. – 17000 State Route 30, Constable, NY 12926

IN CANADA – 452 Kraft Rd., Fort Erie, ON L2A 4M7

Call us toll-free at: **1-800-263-8160**

or fax us at: **(905) 871-3646**

Visit Our Lady's Web Site at: **www.fatima.org**

or e-mail us at: **info@fatima.org**