

ST. MAKARIOS
ORTHODOX
CHURCH,
saintmakarios.org
Orthodox Church
in America oca.org

Fr. Elijah Mueller,
pastor: freljah@uchicago.edu 312-714-9775



Saturday Vespers will remain.

Sunday, 9am Orthros, 10am Divine Liturgy at Carith Carmelite Pre-Novitiate House, 5498 Kimbark (door facing Kimbark, building just south of St. Thomas Catholic Church, against 55th St.

Saturday, 6pm Vespers at Calvert

Tuesday, 6pm Vespers at Carith

Theophany Schedule:

*Theophany: Vigil at Calvert 6pm, Saturday the 5th; **Baptism of Maria Gorbacheva, 9am** & Divine Liturgy with blessing of Waters, Sunday the 6th at Carith, 10am.*

No Liturgy on January 7th. We will have a little extra Christmas, Theophany, and baptismal celebration w/ coffee hour on Sunday (it will be at LSTC party room).

We will celebrate the Feast of Saint Makarios on Sunday the 20th, because we cannot easily arrange use of a space on the 19th.



We will have Vespertal Liturgy for Three Hierarchs, the patrons of the UChicago OCF on Tuesday the 29th at Carith, 6:30pm

St. Ephrem

Hymn 4

(Resp.— Blessed be He that blots out in water misdeeds that are without measure!)

1. Descend my sealed brethren, put on our Lord,— and be rejoined to His lineage, for He is son of a great lineage,— as He has said in His Word.

2. From on high is His Nature, and from beneath His Vesture.— Each that puts off his vesture, commingled is that vesture, with His Vesture forever.

3. You too in the water, receive from him the vesture—that wastes not or is lost for it is the vesture that vests— them that are vested in it forever.

4. But the blessed Priest, is arbitrator between two:— the covenant shall be made before Him, He is arbitrator of his Lord,— and surety on our part.

5. The Godhead in the water, lo! Has mingled His leaven—for the creatures of dust, that leaven raises up—and the Godhead joins them.

6. For it is the leaven of the Lord, that can glide into the bondman,— and raise him to freedom; it has joined the bondman to the lineage,— of Him the Lord of all.

7. For the bondman who has put on Him, Who makes all free in the waters—though bondman he be on earth, is son of the free on high—for freedom he has put on.

8. The freeman who has put on, that Angel in the waters—is as the fellow of servants, that he may be made like to the Lord,— Who became bondman unto bondmen.

9. He Who enriches all came down, and put on poverty,— that He might divide to the poor, the stores that were hidden—out of the treasure-house of the water.

10. The lowly one again that has put on, the Giver of all greatness, in the water—even though he be base in the sight of fools, yet is great in the sight of the Watchers,— for that he is clad in greatness.

11. For like as He Who is great, Who became lowly in His love—by the unbelievers was persecuted, and by the Watchers was worshipped,— was made lowly and makes the lowly great.

12. Thus let him be lowly who is great, that in him the lowly may be great:— Let us be like to Him Who is greater than all, Who became less than all:— He was made lowly, and makes all men great.

13. The meek man who has put on Him Who is great, in the water—though humble be his countenance, very great is his discernment,— for He Who is exalted above all dwells in him.

14. For who could be found to despise the bush of thorn—the despised and humble, wherein the Majesty in fire—made its dwelling within?

15. Who again could be found, to despise Moses—the meek and slow of speech—when that excelling glory— dwelt upon his meekness?

16. They that despised him despised his Lord; the wicked that despised him— the earth swallowed up in anger; the Levites who scorned Him—the fire devoured in fury.

17. Of Him Christ commanded, You shall not call him Raca [fool], who is baptized and has put Him on; for whoso despises the despised, despises with him the Mighty.

18. In Eden and in the world, are parables of our Lord;— and what tongue can gather, the similitudes of His mysteries?— for He is figured all of Him in all things.

19. In the Scriptures He is written of; on Nature He is impressed—His crown is figured

in kings, in prophets His truth, His atonement in priests.

20. In the rod was He of Moses, and in the hyssops of Aaron—and in the crown of David: to the prophets pertains His similitude, to the Apostles His Gospel.

21. Revelations beheld You, proverbs looked for You—mysteries expected You, similitudes saluted You, parables showed types of You.

22. The Covenant of Moses looked forward to the Gospel:— all things of old time, flew on and alighted thereon, in the new Covenant.

23. Lo! The prophets have poured out on Him, their glorious mysteries—the priests and kings have poured out upon Him, their wonderful types:— they all have poured them out on all of Him.

24. Christ overcame and surpassed, by His teachings the mysteries—by His interpretations the parables; as the sea into its midst— receives all streams.

25. For Christ is the sea, and He can receive—the fountains and brooks, the rivers and streams, that flow from the midst of the Scriptures.

Hymn 5

(Resp.— Blessed be He that ordained baptism, for the atonement of the sons of Adam!)

1. Descend, my brethren, put on from the waters of baptism the Holy Spirit—be joined with the spirits that minister to the Godhead!

2. For lo! He is the fire that secretly, seals also His flock—by the Three spiritual Names, wherein the Evil One is put to flight.

3. John when he cried and said This is the Lamb of God,— thereby showed concerning the Gentiles that they are Abraham's children.

4. This is he that testified of our Saviour, that with fire and the Spirit He should baptize.— Lo! The fire and the Spirit, my brethren, in the baptism of truth.

5. For greater is Baptism than Jordan that little river—for that in streams of water and oil, the misdeeds of all men are washed out.

6. Elisha by seven times washing, cleansed Naaman's leprosy:— in Baptism are cleansed the secret misdeeds in the soul.

7. Moses baptized the People in the midst of the sea, yet availed not—to wash their heart within, that was full of the defilements of misdeeds.

8. Lo! The priest in the likeness of Moses purges the defilements of the soul—and with oil of anointing, lo! He seals new lambs for the Kingdom.

9. Samuel anointed David to be king among the People:— but lo! The priest anoints you to be heirs in the Kingdom.

10. For with the armour that David put on, after the anointing he fought—and laid low the giant who sought to subdue Israel.

11. Lo! Again in the chrism of Christ, and in the armour that is from the water—the haughtiness of the Evil One is humbled, who sought to subdue the Gentiles.

12. By the water that flowed from the rock, the thirst of the People was quenched. Lo! In the fountain of Christ, the thirst of the peoples is quenched.

13. The rod of Moses opened the rock, and the streams flowed forth; and they were refreshed by its draught, who had grown faint with thirst.

14. Lo! From the side of Christ flowed the stream that bestowed life.— The Gentiles drank that were weary, and in it forgot their pains.

15. With Your dew besprinkle my vileness, and my crimes in Your blood shall be atoned!— And I shall be, O my Lord, at Your right hand, and with Your Saints I shall be joined!

Father Matta El-Meskeen

The Righteousness of Humility

“Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt 3:15)

From www.stmacariusmonastery.org/en1001.pdf

a sermon delivered in the church of Abba Skheiron, in the Monastery of St. Macarius, on January 1976.

WE SHALL FOLLOW ON from what we said on the Feast of the Nativity concerning our great need always to progress from faith expressed in words to faith expressed in experience. Remember how that evening we were able to see in the stature of the Christ child a new opportunity, even a new power, from which we might seek to acquire renewal, or rather healing for the pride of our spirit, which has grown withered with age, and whose wounds are festering. Remember how there opened before us on the Feast of the Nativity a door leading to a new life of fellowship with Christ in His infancy, to prepare us to enter into the Kingdom according to the condition laid down by the Lord: “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3).

Today, beloved, as we celebrate the baptism of the Lord in the Jordan, we see before us the fulfillment of the same experience that we entered into at the Nativity. Now Christ, as a young man of thirty, steps forward, with a childlike spirit that is quite amazing, to be baptized by a man at the hand of John.

As a child, Christ had offered to mankind an opening, or rather an effective source, from which man could draw power and inspiration to solve his major problem: “Which is the greater?” It is a problem from which no one can escape; even the disciples themselves fell prey to it, and St Luke records for us the regrettable scene. “A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the

greatest.” And He said to them, “Rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:24-27).

Now, in His baptism, Christ offers us, as He bows His head under the hand of John, a solution to a deeper and more serious problem: “Which is the most righteous?” I call this a deeper and more serious problem, because “Which is the greatest?” is a problem related to the outward appearance. It may happen that a man may avoid it by preferring his brother to himself before other people, so that he should appear more humble or more righteous. But the great disaster and danger lies in the problem “Which is the most righteous?” Man, in his heart, always praises himself, and it is hard for man to praise the righteousness of another. But in the baptism of Christ we see this rule strikingly reversed. Christ, the most righteous, presents Himself to John, who is totally lacking in righteousness (that is divinity), and bowing His head in humility urges John to consent to baptize Him.

Pay attention here, beloved, for when Christ says, “Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,” He is not receiving righteousness from John, but “fulfilling” all righteousness for John and the whole human race. Christ here, although He appears to be receiving for Himself the anointing of baptism for righteousness, is in fact, by His baptism, bringing about all righteousness, not for Himself, but for any other man who follows His example. Christ here, through His baptism, adds righteousness to the account of mankind, the righteousness of the submission of the greater to the less. Christ

here introduces to the human race a possibility that did not exist before, the possibility of the submission of the righteous to one who is less righteous than he. Through this submission a new righteousness was born, introduced by Christ to the world of human pride; and Christ counted it as “all righteousness.”

Today Christ offers us the greatest treatment for the greatest malady. By bowing His head under the hand of John, receiving from him the unction of baptism, He delivers to us the spirit of humility, or, as we may say more powerfully, the mystery of humility, which contains “the fulfillment of all righteousness.”

In the eyes of God, the people of Israel were basically characterized as a “thick-necked” and “stiff-necked” people. Stiff-necked towards whom? Towards God Himself. The people of Israel never bowed their heads under the hand of God, and they were not the last of the peoples of the earth to behave so. Christ came to heal the stiffness of the necks of the people of Israel and all mankind.

He bows His head simply, submissively and quite willingly under the hand of John and delivers to us a divine balm with which to anoint our necks, so that we shall be healed of the pain of pride and receive the mystery of “all righteousness.” This is the secret balm, the divine and mysterious ointment, which, if we use it, restores to our necks the suppleness of childhood, so that we always bow our heads in simplicity, seeking after all righteousness.

We notice, beloved, that Christ presented Himself to John as one needing to be baptized. This is clear when John says to Him, “I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” That is, “You are coming to me life one in need.” In fact Christ had no need to be baptized, nor any need for anything, nor for

any righteousness, but when He presented Himself for baptism as one in need, bowing His head in obedient submission, He reveals to us one of the mysteries of the fulfillment of righteousness. This is that when a man sets out to perform an act of humility and submission, he must do so as one who is truly in need, and not in condescension! Christ reveals and carries out not what is fitting for Him, but what is fitting for us and for our salvation and the fulfillment of righteousness in our lives.

But I still feel, beloved, that I have not conveyed the full meaning of Christ’s bowing His head to John. This action of Christ’s by the Jordan stirs our consciences deeply. I might almost say that by it Christ has this evening exposed our pride and revealed how far we are from

understanding and practising “true righteousness.” How hard it is for a lay-worker or priest to bow his head to receive a blessing from the hand of one his equal! But what Christ did went beyond all sense and logic. There was no fault in Him that He should bow His divine head under a human hand to be anointed.

By this submission, which supersedes all the logic of priesthood, Christ established a righteousness that excels every other righteousness in greatness, action and warmth. He saw fit to record here in the Jordan, at the beginning of His public ministry, the firm foundation on which a successful ministry must be based: “the bowed head.” This is borne out and confirmed by the parallel we find in what Christ did with the same power the night He instituted the mystery of the Lord’s Supper, when He stooped down completely and sat upon the ground to wash the disciples’ feet. It is as if bowing the head in contrite submission is the formal beginning for every divine mystery, whether baptism or Eucharist.

The true significance of this point appears when we remember what Christ said to Peter when he tried to excuse himself from having his feet washed, thinking it was too much that he should stand like a master with Christ before him like a slave and servant. The Lord rebuked him; "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me" (Jn 13:8). The same thing happened at His baptism, when John tried to excuse himself from the task of laying hands on Christ's head and baptizing Him in the water. The Lord cut him short with, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15).

Christ's firm intention here to insist on the absolute necessity of His taking up a position before both John and Peter of one less than they, reveals to us the importance and seriousness of the practice of the mystery of humility and submission in serving the Church, in the priesthood and in the Christian life in general. It is the basic way of entering into righteousness. "For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (Jn 13:15, 17).

The truth that we monks must never forget, is that Christ here abruptly reverses the normal order of things in order that we should be vigilant. Christ here rejects the human concept of justice and turns it upside down. He rejects every logic of self-defense and pours scorn on it, for after He has bowed His head beneath the hand of John we can no longer ask with dignity "Who is the greatest?" Our dignity lies in our deliberate and insistent relinquishment of every dignity and in surrendering it to those who are less than we. We can no longer uphold claims to leadership or priority or privilege, for the extent to which we humble ourselves before the community is what establishes our

righteousness and our true leadership, and our actions are to be commended in proportion to our renunciation of our worthiness. John the Baptist's readiness to baptize Christ was also an act of obedience and submission, which may be compared with the humble and modest response of the Virgin Mary, when God chose her to bear Christ. The obedience and submission of John the Baptist to the Lord's command to baptize Him prepared the way for Christ to enact, within the rite of the mystery of baptism, the amazing mystery of humility, which He called the mystery of the fulfillment of righteousness. He in the Jordan, as later when He washed the disciples' feet, the Lord demonstrates His submission, like a slave, under the hand of John to abolish the shame of man, who refused to submit under the hand of God.

Once again we stop to contemplate how heaven was moved by the humble acts of the Lord Jesus. When Christ was born and laid in a manger in a stable, the heavens opened, and the angel and the hosts of heaven appeared to announce the good news of a great salvation, and to glorify God. Here at the Jordan the same thing happens. The heavens open, the Holy Spirit appears visibly, and the voice of the Father Himself announces the identity of this Man bowing His head before John. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17). So it is that, in so far as man on earth humbles himself, God reveals Himself and with the angels of heaven gives man glory. We notice too that the Holy Spirit alights on Christ as He bows Himself down, taking the form of a dove. He does not appear as a tongue of flame as on the day of Pentecost, nor as a heavy hand upon the head as happened to the Old Testament prophets, for the Holy Spirit chooses the form in which He appears,

according to the condition of the one He comes upon. So the Spirit chose the form of the gentle dove to reveal the nature of the heart of Jesus and His great meekness, love and humility. How much we need today the meekness of this heart of Jesus, as He stands bowing down before John in simple humility and submission, so that the Holy Spirit may come upon us in the form of a dove, to bring us closer to the Jesus of the Jordan and unite our hearts together with that gentle, humble heart!

At the Nativity we took the meekness of infancy as a standard by which to live at all times to be prepared to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. At the Jordan we take the bowed head

of Christ as a standard by which we may be prepared to live in humble fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and as a vocation to live out in the world. For just as Christ urged us to go back and remain always as children so that we may enter the Kingdom of Heaven, He urges us too to be meek as doves. This is the anointing we need for service and to live in the world. Christ is always ready to give us the spirit of infant humility according to His stature in Bethlehem, and the spirit of the

humility of the dove according to His stature in the Jordan, so that we may be prepared outwardly and inwardly to attain the full stature of Christ.