



St. Macarius the Younger

Born: early 4th century at Alexandria, Egypt

Died: c.401 in Alexandria, Egypt of natural causes

Patronage: confectioners, cooks, pastry chefs

Also known as Macarius of Alexandria, Macarius the Alexandrian Memorials 2 January (Roman Catholic), 19 January (Orthodox; Armenian), 1 May (Coptic calendar), 13 July (Syrian Orthodox)

Successful merchant in fruits, candies, and pastries in Alexandria, Egypt. Converting to Christianity, Macarius gave up his business in 335 to become a monk and hermit in the Thebaid, Upper Egypt. For a while he lived near and was a friend of Saint Anthony the Abbot. Macarius was a poet, healer, and friend to wild animals. He was exiled by heretic Arians with Saint Macarius the Elder and other monks to an island in the Nile because of his orthodoxy, but he was later allowed to return. In later life he travelled to Lower Egypt, and was ordained, and lived in a desert cell with other monks. He wrote a constitution for the monastery at Nitria named after him, and some of its rules were adopted by Saint Jerome for his monastery.

Amazing stories grew up his practice of severe austerities, some of which reached the proportion of legend. For seven years he lived on raw vegetables dipped in water with a few crumbs of bread, moistened with drops of oil on feast days. He once spent 20 days and 20 nights without sleep, burnt by the sun in the day, frozen by bitter desert cold cold at night. "My mind dried up because of lack of sleep, and I had a kind of delirium," the hermit admitted. "So I gave in to nature and returned to my cell."

Trying to get further from the world, and closer to God, Macarius moved to the desert of Nitria in Lower Egypt in 373. The journey was through a harsh land, at when Macarius was at the end of his strength, the devil appeared and asked, "Why not ask God for the food and strength to continue your journey?"

www.missionofjesus.com

Macarius answered, "The Lord is my strength and glory. Do not tempt a servant of God." The devil then gave him a vision of a camel laden with food. Macarius was about to eat, but suspected a trap, and so prayed over the camel; it vanished. He spent six months naked in the marshes, beset constantly by viscous blood-sucking flies and mosquitoes, in the hope of destroying his last bit of sexual desire. The terrible conditions and attacking insects left him so deformed that when he returned to the monks, they could recognize him only by his voice.

A young brother once offered Macarius some very fine grapes. The old fruit dealer was about to eat when he decided to send them to a brother who was ill. This brother passed them to one he considered more in need; that one did the same, and on and on until the grapes made the rounds of all the cells and returned to Macarius. Macarius returned to Skete and began to work on his worst vice - his love of travel. The devil appeared and suggested Macarius go to Rome and chase out the demons there. Torn between travelling for such a good cause, but wishing to fight his vice, Macarius filled a large basket with sand, put it on his back, and set out. When someone offered to help him, he said, "Leave me alone! I am punishing my tormenter. He wishes to lead me, old and weak as I am, on a distant and vain voyage." He then returned to his cell, body broken with fatigue, but cured of his temptation.

In old age Macarius journeyed to a monastery where 1,400 hermits lived under the rigid rule of Saint Pachomius. Macarius was refused admittance. "You are too old to survive the great rigor we have here," Pachomius told him. "One should be trained in it from childhood, or else one cannot stand it. Your health would fail and you would curse us for harming you." Macarius then stood at the abbey gate for seven days and nights - without sleep, without food, without saying a word. Finally, the monks relented and he let him in. Macarius stood in a corner of the monastery in complete silence for all of Lent, living on a few cabbage leaves each Sunday "more to avoid ostentation, than from any real need." The monks became so jealous of this new brother that they took their complaint to Pachomius, who asked God for illumination. When he learned that the old man was Macarius, he went to him and said, "My brother, I thank you for the lesson you have given my sons. It will prevent their boasting about their modest mortifications. You have edified us sufficiently. Return to your own monastery, and pray for us each day."