

# BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CONSECRATED LIFE



SAINT EUPHROSYNA

## BAROMETER OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH

Our Venerable Mother Euphrosyna lived in the 5th Century. She followed the way of Christian monasticism for approximately 40 years, after which she fell asleep in the Lord and entered heavenly glory. She described monasticism as “a longing for God that knows no limits . . . the beginning of the Age to come, of the Kingdom of Heaven still here on earth.” She further noted that “at times this impulse (of monastic fervor) has been stronger, at times weaker, and the Holy Fathers speak of monasticism as a barometer of spiritual life in the Church.”

It’s interesting to speak of fervor in the Christian life in terms of “barometric pressure.” Such thinking, however, reminds us of rises and falls in Christian commitment over the centuries and how the “white martyrdom” or unbloody witness of those in consecrated life – those who have entered the monastic or religious life – has had a profound influence on the entire Church.

The vocation to consecrated life takes on various forms in the world today. Originating from a desire to know God more intimately by way of journeying to the desert or to a community,

religious life today can be active, communal, or more traditionally monastic.

Regardless of the particulars of consecrated living, monasticism – while counter-cultural – remains the heart and soul of the Church.

During the months of February and March, our bishops call us to a special time of increased understanding of monasticism, prayer for those in consecrated life, and consideration of those who may be called to this most necessary life in the world today.



## ORIENTALE LUMEN

When Eastern Catholics wish to become more acquainted with monasticism, a perfect starting point is Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Orientalis Lumen* or "The Light of the East." Edifying the entire Catholic Church in 1995, this letter places monasticism in a crucial position for the goal of Eastern Churches returning to their authentic spirituality, theology, and discipline. In the apostolic letter we read:

*In the East, monasticism was not seen merely as a separate condition, proper to a precise category of Christians, but rather as a reference point for all the baptized, according to the gifts offered to each by the Lord; it was presented as a symbolic synthesis of Christianity. When God's call is total, as it is in the monastic life, then the person can reach the highest point that sensitivity, culture, and spirituality are able to express. This is even more true for the Eastern Churches, for which monasticism was an essential experience. . . . The monastery is the prophetic place where creation becomes praise of God and the precept of concretely lived charity becomes the ideal of human coexistence. (9)*

*Standing before the abyss of divine mercy, the monk can only proclaim the awareness of his own radical poverty, which immediately becomes a plea for help and a cry of rejoicing on account of an even more generous salvation, since from the abyss of his own wretchedness such salvation is unthinkable. This is why the plea for forgiveness and the glorification of God form a substantial part of liturgical prayer. (10)*

*With regard to monasticism, in consideration of its importance in Eastern Christianity, we would like it to flourish once more in the Eastern Catholic Churches, and that support be given to all those who feel called to work for its revitalization. (27)*

## INSPIRED BY THE HOLY ONES

Our prayer for those in consecrated life and for those who are being called to such a life is heightened when our Byzantine Catholic Church celebrates the memory of bishops, prophets, and monastics.

Last month, on January 1st, we celebrated the memory of Our Holy Father Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. He established communal monastic living and taught his monks meditation on the Scriptures, manual work in obedience, and fraternal love. He established a monastic way of life in what is called a "rule" or "typikon." His sister, Our Venerable Mother Macrina, was learned in the Scriptures and led a solitary life. She was and remains a shining example for those who have forsaken the vanity of the world. Both Basil and Macrina lived in the 4th Century.

Early in the month of February, we celebrate the Meeting of our Lord with the Holy Prophet Simeon and the Prophetess Anna. The righteous and devout elder Simeon and the widow Anna were made worthy to hail the 40-day old Jesus as Messiah and Savior. At the time of this Great Feast each year, all Catholics are called to a greater awareness of and appreciation for modern-day mystics and prophets – those who follow the consecrated life.

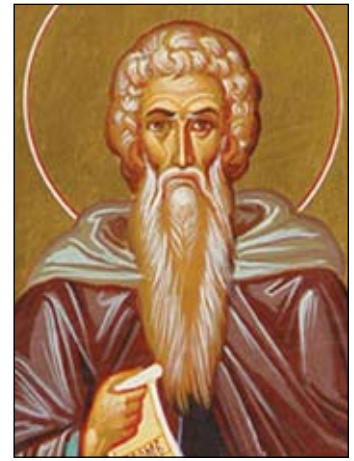
At the end of March we celebrate the memory of Our Venerable Father John Climacus, Author of "The Ladder of Perfection." At the age of sixteen, he entered a monastery on Mount Sinai. He fell asleep in the Lord in the year 649. As monasticism is "a reference point for all the baptized" (*Orientalis Lumen*, 9), we are reminded that the writings of Saint John Climacus should impact all the Christian faithful. His "Ladder" is traditional reading during the Great Fast.



SAINT BASIL THE GREAT



SAINT MACRINA



SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS

## THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

All those in consecrated life are committed to the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. They are faithful to the radical-ness of the gospel. Often they are active in the world and thus courageously intertwined in contemporary reality.

The vocation of traditional Byzantine cenobitic (communal) monasticism stresses the virtues of constant prayer, obedience, and hard work. The daily life of a monk or nun includes the regular cycle of church services, private prayer, and labor in obedience for the common good of the community. All members of the community live out chastity as celibates.

Other models of religious life require the charisms of charity, simplicity, and humility. These express the basic evangelical counsels of perfection – poverty, chastity, and obedience.

## PRAYER TO THE THEOTOKOS FOR THOSE IN CONSECRATED LIFE



Most glorious and ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the Word was made flesh in your womb. Help us to be open to the Word of God so that, having welcomed it, received it, and meditated upon it, it may grow in our hearts. Help us to live, like you, in the spirit of the Beatitudes and to dedicate ourselves with unceasing charity to evangelizing all those who seek your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Intercede in behalf of those whom your Son has called to share his gospel as modern day prophets. Be a constant source of strength and protection to our nuns and monks and all those in the religious life. Grant that they may serve every person in purity and that, having heard and kept the Word of God, they may be living witnesses to the eternal kingdom. Amen.

## GETTING TO KNOW THEM

True appreciation of consecrated life comes by *knowing* the life.

The best way to know about such a life is by getting to know a monk or nun, brother or sister.

A pilgrimage or special visit to a monastery can be a spiritually enlightening experience. A visit by a brother or sister to a parish community for sharing or for a directed retreat or mission can bring greater spiritual fervor to the parochial family.

## WHERE IS THERE A MONASTIC COMMUNITY NEAR YOU?

### COMMUNITIES OF WOMEN

#### Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

##### Byzantine Benedictine Sisters:

Queen of Heaven Monastery  
Warren, Ohio | 330-856-1813

##### Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great:

Mount Saint Macrina Monastery  
Uniontown, Pennsylvania | 724-438-8644

Byzantine Catholic Central School Convent  
Youngstown, Ohio | 330-757-9186

Patronage of the Mother of God Convent  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania | 412-321-5060

#### Eparchy of Passaic

##### Discalced Byzantine Carmelite Nuns:

Holy Annunciation Monastery  
Sugarloaf, Pennsylvania | 570-788-1205

##### Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great:

Saint Therese of Lisieux Convent  
St. Petersburg, Florida | 727-322-0003

Saint Mary Convent  
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania | 570-824-3973

#### Eparchy of Parma

##### Byzantine Nuns of Saint Clare:

Holy Protection Monastery (prayer requests only)  
North Royalton, Ohio | 440-237-6800

##### Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great:

Saint Mary Convent  
Cleveland, Ohio | 216-398-5939

#### Eparchy of Van Nuys

##### Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great:

Saint Stephen Convent  
Phoenix, Arizona | 602-944-5121

### COMMUNITIES OF MEN

#### Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

##### Byzantine Monks:

Holy Trinity Monastery  
Butler, Pennsylvania | 724-287-4461

#### Eparchy of Passaic

##### Basilian Fathers of Mariapoch:

Monastery of Our Lady of Mariapoch  
Matawan, New Jersey | 732-566-8445

##### Byzantine Franciscans, OFM:

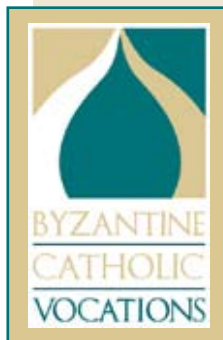
Holy Dormition Friary  
Sybertsville, Pennsylvania | 570-788-1212

#### Eparchy of Van Nuys

##### Byzantine Brothers of Saint Francis:

Saint Francis Monastery  
Calimesa, California | 909-795-0848

### Explore Byzantine Catholic Vocations on-line:



#### Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

[www.archeparchy.org](http://www.archeparchy.org)

#### Eparchy of Passaic

[www.eparchyofpassaic.com](http://www.eparchyofpassaic.com)

#### Eparchy of Parma

[www.parma.org](http://www.parma.org)

#### Eparchy of Van Nuys

[www.eparchy-of-van-nuys.org](http://www.eparchy-of-van-nuys.org)

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