

up the well. God hearkened to his prayer with an abundance of crystal clear water. At another time, through Dios' intercession, the hegumen raised up a drowned man. Hence, as Elias of old, he resurrected the dead to life through his ardent prayer.<sup>6</sup> The Lord worked many other miracles through His saint.

Father Dios arrived at an advanced age and succumbed to a grave illness. When the righteous one was about to repose, he partook of the immaculate Mysteries and then took to his bed. He lay there very still and without respiration. About him there stood, weeping and lamenting, those who were with him in the end. All the funeral arrangements were properly readied. Patriarch Attikos and Patriarch Alexander of Antioch were among the mourners. Suddenly, in the midst of the burial, the deceased arose. Lo, the miracle! The venerable Dios rose up from the bier as from sleep. He made an unexpected announcement: the Lord added to him another fifteen years of life.<sup>7</sup> These tidings ushered in no small joy and wonder among the brethren.

How did he conduct himself in those final fifteen years? He allotted the time in service to others. He guided and counseled those seeking spiritual direction. He aided the indigent and homeless. He wrought cures among the sick and weak. Slightly before the fifteen years were to expire there appeared a man, brilliant like the sun, clad in priestly vestments in the church altar of the monastery. He disclosed to Father Dios that the end of his earthly sojourn was at hand. Father Dios gave sincere thanks, after which he commended his soul quietly and serenely to the Lord. The venerable Abbot Dios was then interred in his monastery. With joy, he passed from this life to the Light that has no evening, taking up his abode with the spirits of the righteous. He, nevertheless, also prays for his flock and those who call upon him in faith.

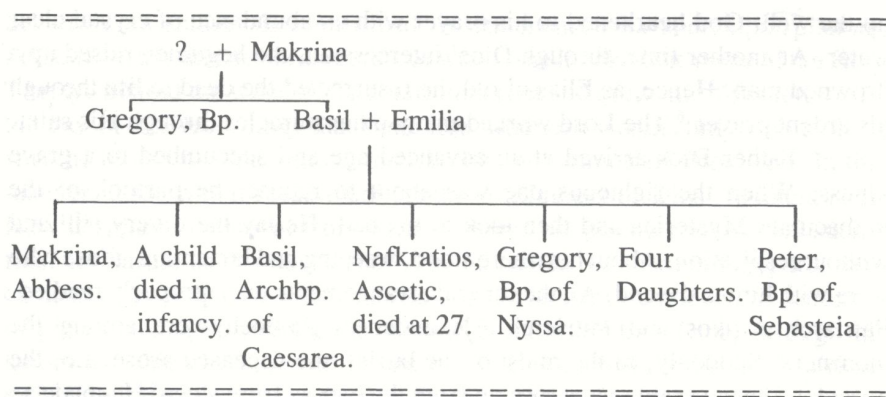
**On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, the holy Church commemorates  
our venerable Mother MAKRINA,  
the sister of Saint Basil.<sup>8</sup>**

Makrina, our most holy mother, was the eldest sister of Saint Basil the Great (ca. 330-379), Saint Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-ca. 395), and Saint Peter of Sebasteia (d. 395).

<sup>6</sup> 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:21, 22. July 19<sup>th</sup>, Vespers Sticheron, Mode Four.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 20:6.

<sup>8</sup> The Life of Saint Makrina was written in Greek by her devoted younger brother, the holy Hierarch Gregory of Nyssa. The text was also rendered in simpler Greek by Nikodemos the Hagiorite, which he included in the *Neon Eklogion*. A divine office with a second canon was composed by the hymnographer, Father Gerasimos Mikrayiananites.



During the persecutions of Diocletian (284-305), Makrina's grandparents fled for safety in the mountainous region of Pontos, where they underwent great privations and hardships. Makrina's maternal grandfather, whose name is unknown, lost his life and property during this time. After the Diocletianic "Era of the Martyrs," the family returned and settled in either Caesarea in Cappadocia or Neocaesarea in Pontos;<sup>9</sup> for there is some uncertainty in the account.<sup>10</sup> Makrina's father, named Basil, died at a comparatively young age, leaving a family of ten children, under the care of their grandmother Makrina and mother Emilia (Æmilia). Both of these holy and illustrious women were conspicuous for their purity and strictness of the Orthodox Faith, to which the latter added the charm of her great personal beauty.

Our story is about the firstborn, a daughter named Makrina, the angel of this household. She participated with both grandmother and mother in the care and education of all her younger siblings. In this chain of female relationship it will be difficult to say which link is worthier of note, that is, grandmother, mother, or daughter. However, it will be daughter Makrina's final pious influence that will cause her mother and brothers to owe their settlement in the Faith and consistency of Christian conduct.

Makrina was born into this wealthy family in about A.D. 327. Her birth nearly synchronized with the transference of the chief seat of the empire from Rome to Constantinople. Thus, in the fourth century, the center of ecclesiastical and theological interest is to be rather in the east than in the west.

<sup>9</sup> Cappadocia was the mountainous region west of the upper Euphrates and north of Cilicia. Pontos was on the northern coast of Asia Minor by the Black Sea; Cappadocia lay immediately to the south, and Galatia and Bithynia were to the west.

<sup>10</sup> The early statement of Saint Gregory the Theologian (329-389) has been held to have much weight, inasmuch as he speaks of Saint Basil (Saint Makrina's brother) as a Cappadocian like himself.

When she was born, the first great Synod of Nicaea (325), had just given official expression to the Articles of the Faith.





The place most closely connected with Saint Makrina's early years was an insignificant hamlet not far from Neocaesarea, where she was brought up by her admirable namesake, grandmother Makrina. Now the family possessed considerable property. Their estate was at Annesi, on the Iris River (Jekil-Irmak), amid an environment of idyllic beauty, surrounded by lofty mountains.



*Saint Makrina*

We shall now read the account of her life, written after her repose, by her brother, Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.<sup>11</sup> The form of the writing, originally a letter by the venerable Gregory to the Monk Olympios, extended into the length of a book.<sup>12</sup> Her story is worth telling, so that such a life might

not be forgotten or concealed by silence. Saint Gregory, knowing by personal experience her manner of life, thought it well to be persuaded by the Monk Olympios' encouragement to record her exemplary life with brevity and simplicity.

### **Saint Makrina's Mother, Saint Emilia**

"The virgin was named Makrina by our parents; though that was her name to the world. Nevertheless, she had a secret name, revealed by a divine vision, which she received before her birth. Our mother, Emilia, before she married my father, was a virtuous maiden who desired to preserve her virginity and remain pure throughout her life. However, since she was left an orphan and was very beautiful, the fame of her comeliness incited many

<sup>11</sup> Saint Gregory was consecrated Bishop of Nyssa, ca. 371. He is commemorated by the holy Church on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January.

<sup>12</sup> When Saint Gregory of Nyssa was on his way to Jerusalem to accomplish a vow he made to behold the holy places of our Lord's earthly sojourn, he met Monk Olympios at Antioch. Olympios, according to Gregory, was a man of wit who enjoyed discussing various subjects. Saint Gregory, at that time, also spoke to the monk about his sister Makrina. Monk Olympios, receiving much spiritual benefit upon hearing her story, persuaded Gregory to record the account. The following is a translation from the Greek version of the *Neon Eklogion* of Nikodemos the Hagiorite. Subtitles have been provided by the editors for clarity and for the reader's ease.



suitors. She perceived that she would suffer a satanic attack by one of her suitors who, smitten by her beauty, would take her by force. Therefore, she consented to take as her lawful husband an honest and noble-minded man, my father, Basil, so she might have a protector of her life and modesty.

“When my mother was about to deliver her firstborn she beheld in her sleep that she was holding the infant, a daughter (of whom we now speak). She then beheld a magnificent man who, after naming the infant Thekla, pronounced it thrice. He then vanished and my mother was able to bring forth the child with ease. Straightway, as soon as my mother awoke, she gave birth to our sister. Therefore, our sister concealed this name of Thekla. I believe, however, that the majestic man who appeared to my mother did not have as his only aim to guide our mother to name her Thekla, but to make manifest beforehand, by this name of Thekla, the life of our sister and the similarity of disposition which she shared with the virgin Thekla.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Saint Makrina's Early Years**

“After passing infancy, Makrina showed herself skillful in learning all those things which children of her age might grasp; and she also advanced in whatever her parents taught her. Our mother zealously pursued in teaching her daughter the God-inspired words of holy Scriptures and everything else suitable for children of Makrina's age. Makrina's studies included the Wisdom of Solomon and whatever else contributes toward useful ethics in this life. The words of the Psalter, also used as lessons for Makrina, were applied at the appropriate time of day. When she awoke from sleep, or was about to commence any work, or when she went to sleep, the words of David were on her lips, as a good companion.”

### **Saint Makrina's Betrothal**

“Upon the nourishment of these texts and other lessons, the holy maiden matured; she also learned to make things with her hands, including handicrafts and embroidery for the church. This is how she fulfilled her time until she was twelve years old, when the flower of her youth began to bloom. It is worthy of wonder that although the family attempted to conceal the comeliness of the damsel so none might gaze upon her, yet it was not possible to hide her away completely from onlookers. Now I believe that Makrina was so lovely that, in all the country, there was no one of like beauty. Due to this, a crowd of young men hastened to my parents that they might betroth her. My

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<sup>13</sup> Saint Thekla of Iconium, equal-to-the-apostles and companion of the holy Apostle Paul, is commemorated by the holy Church on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September. In the sacred Scriptures we also hear an angel pronounce that the Virgin shall bring forth a son—Jesus—and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, “God with us [Mt. 1:23; cf. Is. 7:14].” In the case of Makrina, the private name “Thekla” suggested a vocation to virginity.

father, however, was a prudent man. He was capable in discerning the characters of men, so he selected one noble young man. The latter was about to complete his studies, and was distinguished for his wisdom and prudence.



*Saint Makrina*

Therefore, my father decided to betroth his daughter to him until she reached the suitable age of marriage. Thereupon, the young man, sustained upon the sanguine hope of having as his wife Makrina, gave to my father, as one of the bridegroom's gifts, his success in defending those that had been wronged. However, death cut these good hopes. The promising young barrister was snatched from this life in the time of his youth.

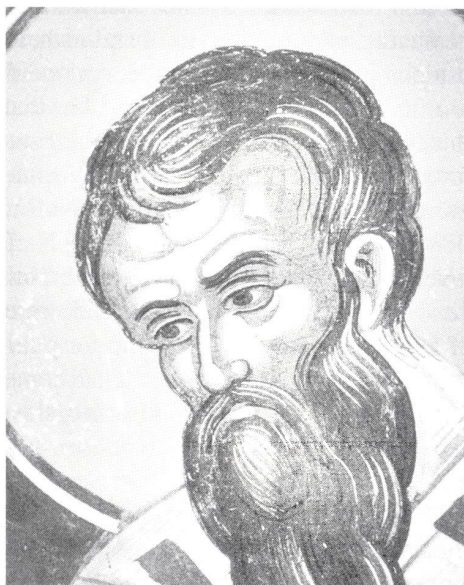
"Now Makrina was aware of her father's promise and decision to wed her with this young man. Though this arrangement was thwarted by death, she considered her father's judgment to be as though the betrothal were binding. Thus, deeming the marriage to have been transacted, she sensibly elected from henceforth to remain pledged to him and, secondly, she resolved not to wed another. Therefore, when her parents spoke of marriage, owing to the many suitors that sought her due to her beauty, she answered them saying

that it was absurd and unlawful not to accept and remain content with the marriage already arranged by her father, but to seek another; since one marriage, one birth, and one death are appointed unto humanity. She confidently affirmed that the man who had been joined with her, according to her parents' decision, had not died; he had only departed. 'He is not dead,' said she, 'but alive in God, through the hope of the resurrection.' Persisting, she thought it indecent not to keep faith and prudence with her bridegroom who was away."

### **Mother and Daughter**

"With these words, those that sought marriage avoided her. She endeavored to preserve her prudent decision by never departing from her mother, not even for a moment. This constant association of Makrina with her mother was not without benefit to Emilia; for the services performed by Makrina would be sufficient for many maidservants. Therefore, each was well

replenished by the other: the mother ministered to the spiritual needs of the daughter; and the daughter undertook all the physical needs of the mother. For example, oftentimes, Makrina, with her own hands, would prepare the bread which her mother ate. Now this was not her chief care, because she believed that it was proper for one professing virginity to be occupied with holy labors. In the time that was left over, she not only made her mother's bread, but, with her mother, took charge of every household care. By now, my mother gave birth to nine other children in addition to Makrina. Furthermore, my mother had to pay taxes to three different authorities, since her property was spread about. Therefore, since our mother was occupied by the many concerns of the house, because our father had died, her partner in all these cares was Makrina, who would ease the burdens of mother's heavy tasks. At the same time, Makrina upheld a pure and irreproachable life with the instructions of her mother. Also, by Makrina's conduct of life, she was an example to her mother, so she might emulate her daughter's asceticism. Thus, little by little, she attracted her mother to that immaterial and perfect life of the monastics."



*Saint Basil*

### **Saint Basil Returns from School**

"When our mother arranged good and proper marriages for our other sisters, our brother, the great Basil, returned home from his studies at the University of Athens. He received instruction for many years in secular knowledge. The marvellous Makrina took him under her wing, and in but a short while she drew him to the object of true philosophy and asceticism. Now Basil had high-minded thoughts from his knowledge of secular philosophy and oratorical skill; thus, he disdained the local officials. Despite all this, the holy maiden, having him separate himself from worldly splendor, brought him to condemn the laudation received from external philosophy and studies. Consequently, all were astonished that he took up working with his hands and living a life of the utmost poverty. It was through poverty that he prepared himself to be unencumbered for the road leading to a virtuous life. Indeed, the life of Saint Basil the Great and his other accomplishments, which have been



named throughout the world, we must now forego, because it would require much time to narrate.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, let us return to the object of this writing.”

### **Saint Makrina's Good Influence**

“Since Makrina liberated herself from the concerns of secular life, she persuaded her mother to abandon her customary life of appearances and ostentation, and to take up the work performed by the handmaids. Thus, she, too, might come to the same mind as that of the common folk. Hence, Emilia joined with the virgins and the older women in one conduct of life; and her former handmaids were held in the same honor as sisters.”

### **Saint Makrina's Brother, Saint Nafkratios**

One of Makrina's brothers, Nafkratios, was also influenced by her to love God and to abandon the world. Nafkratios, according to Saint Gregory, “excelled the others in natural endowments. When he was twenty-two years of age, he achieved great fame for public speaking and industry. By divine providence, he despised all that had come into his hands. He aspired to that life of poverty and asceticism—the life of the monastics. He took nothing with him, except himself. He was, however, followed by one of the men of the household, named Chrysaphios. He loved Nafkratios and, moreover, he also desired the monastic life.

“Nafkratios, repairing to a deserted spot beside the river Iris, found a place with thick and virgin woods. Now the Iris flows through the midst of Pontos, though it actually originates in Armenia and passes through our parts, and discharges its stream into the Black Sea. There was a hill nestling beneath an overhanging mountain. It was there that he retired, far from the turmoil of the cities and the business of the courts. With his own hands, he ministered to some poor and sick old men that dwelt nearby. Since Nafkratios was expert at fishing, he secured the life-sustaining sustenance for these infirm neighbors. By these toils, he subdued the passions of young manhood. During that time, he obeyed his mother's will whenever she would command something of him. Thus, by these two means, Nafkratios adorned his life and progressed in the divine commandments.

“After five years of such asceticism and renunciation, there followed a grave and sad misfortune. This, I believe, was an assault from the devil, who ushered such profound sorrow among all our kin. This is because the ever-memorable Nafkratios was suddenly snatched from this life, without suffering any previous illness or mischief. As he was wont, he went (with Chrysaphios) to the river to fish in order to provide for the infirm old men. He was, however, brought back dead to his cell together with his companion

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<sup>14</sup> Saint Basil the Great is commemorated by the holy Church, individually, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, and the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, as one of the three great hierarchs.

Chrysaphios. Now our mother was at a distance that would require a three-day journey. When she received the news of his death, though she was perfected in the virtues, nevertheless, she was overwhelmed by sorrow which rendered her breathless and speechless. It was then that the courageousness and the virtue of the great Makrina were made manifest. She countered her grief with right thinking; thus, keeping herself unmoved by sorrow, she was able to empower our mother in her weakness and bring her up from the depths of mourning. Through her steadfastness and firmness, Makrina was able to instruct her mother to be brave of soul. As a result, Emilia was straightway delivered from her suffering. She did not conduct herself in a cowardly way; she did not wail, or rend her clothing, or lament with funeral dirges. With solemnity and composure, she endured her sorrow. She cast out the weakness of nature with her own rational and right thinking, and those consoling words offered by Makrina.”

### **The Struggles of the Community**

“Since Emilia’s children were grown, the duties and responsibilities of providing for them and the cares of their establishment were gone; moreover, the property was divided among her children. Then, as we said earlier, the life of her daughter Makrina became a good standard and example in the ascetic life. Emilia left all her old habits and arrived at the same measure of humility as Makrina; for she made herself equal to the other old women. She, too, ate from the same table, slept on the same bedding, and shared in all other things. As souls separated from their bodies, so they were detached from all worldly concerns. The life of Makrina and our mother was estranged from every worldly vanity, thus emulating the life of the angels. In their mode of life, there appeared no anger, envy, hatred, pride, or any other such passion. Also, there was not to be found even one desire for anything worldly. What I mean are such desires as honor, glory, affectation, and the like. For them, continence was a sumptuous fare; obscurity was glory; poverty and the shaking off of every material object, like some particle of dust, was wealth.<sup>15</sup>

“All those occupations zealously pursued in this present life were to them incidental. Their only occupations were divine contemplation, ceaseless prayer, and endless chanting, coincident with time itself, both day and night. To them this was both their handiwork and their relaxation. What words could possibly describe their manner of life, which was on the border between the temporal and the angelic? They strived to be free from human passions.

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<sup>15</sup> Saint Gregory of Nyssa comments, “Temperance’s highest aim looks not to the afflicting of the body, but to the peaceful action of the soul’s functions.” *On Virginity*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser., Vol. V (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.), Ch. XXII.

Makrina and our mother fell short of the angelic nature, insofar as they had bodies and depended upon their sensory organs. Now these things I have dared



*Saint Makrina*

to say; for though they are clothed in the flesh, they are like unto the incorporeal angels by their lofty mode of existence. In this conduct of life they passed many years. With the passage of time, their virtues ever increased; for they were always advancing to what was loftier with the addition of new virtues."

### **Saint Makrina's Brother, Saint Peter**

"One great goal of Makrina's life was to minister especially to our brother Peter, our mother's last son. In fact, as soon as she brought forth Peter from the womb, he was orphaned of our father who passed away. Nevertheless, our oldest sister, Makrina, raised him and trained him with the highest instruction. From his earliest years, she exercised him exceedingly in holy studies, so that no opportunity was given for his soul to be inclined toward any vain pastimes. Makrina became for Peter his father, mother, teacher,

and instructor. She was the standard of every good and virtue. Having molded him in this manner, even before having left his boyhood years, Peter aspired to the lofty goal of asceticism.

"Our Peter, having a natural inclination, was also skilled in every trade. He required no guide or teacher in anything that involved his hands. What would take most considerable time and effort, Peter, on his own, learned the trades and sciences expertly. Peter, loathing worldly studies, besides having an innate ability toward that high philosophy of religion and always looking to his sister Makrina as an example of every good, made such spiritual progress that he was in no whit inferior in virtue to the great Basil.

"Now, about that time, a severe famine struck the land. Many who heard of the benefactions of those three, that is, Makrina, mother, and brother Peter, hastened to them in that place where they practised asceticism. By



means of Peter's administration, he supplied such an abundance of provisions for the multitudes of the needy that the desert appeared as a city."<sup>16</sup>

### **The Repose of Saint Emilia**

"At that time, our mother, reaching an advanced age, would go to the Lord resting in the hands of her two children, Makrina and Peter. What is worthy of remembrance are the words of her blessing, which she pronounced upon her children before her repose. After she blessed the other children, she placed her hands upon Makrina and Peter, who were sitting to her right and left. She then cried out to the Lord, saying, 'To Thee, O Lord, I dedicate the firstfruits and the tenth of the fruits of my womb. My firstfruits is this my firstborn daughter, and the tenth is my last-born son. According to the Law, the firstfruits and the tenth of the fruits are offered and hallowed to Thee.'<sup>17</sup> Therefore, let Thy sanctification and grace come upon my firstfruits and upon my tenth.' Mother then beckoned with her hands toward Makrina and Peter. After uttering this, she gave up the spirit from this life. Since she previously charged her children that her body was to be laid in the tomb of their father, they fulfilled this request.<sup>18</sup> Makrina and Peter then struggled in asceticism with even greater zeal. They contended against their former record of spiritual achievements, and surpassed it by the addition of new feats."

### **Saint Makrina's Brother, Saint Basil**

"At that time, the great Basil became the Archbishop of Caesarea. He ordained our brother Peter a presbyter and hierarch of Sebasteia. Therefore, from that time and henceforth, Peter redoubled his asceticism. With the passage of eight years (379), the world-renowned Basil was translated to the Lord. The event was the cause of general mourning, not only in our homeland but even throughout the world. When news of it reached our sister, Makrina, in her remote retreat, she grieved from the depths of her soul for the loss. For how was it possible for her not to be distressed, as his sister, since it was felt even by the enemies of truth? Nevertheless, she did not utterly break down; but rather, she continued bravely in this calamity. Just as gold is tested in different furnaces so that if any impurity is not purged in the first furnace, it may be removed in the second and, again, in the last furnace of all admixture. In like manner was Makrina tried with various applications of sorrow: first, there was the death of her brother Nafkratios; second, there was the separation with her mother; and, third, the departure from this life of the universal glory of our

<sup>16</sup> Later, the holy Peter become Bishop of Sebasteia. He is commemorated by the holy Church on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January.

<sup>17</sup> Deut. 26:2; Ex. 22:29; Num. 18:26.

<sup>18</sup> Saint Emilia is commemorated on the Slavonic Calendar on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May.

family, I mean, the great Basil. However, she prevailed as an undefeated athlete who, in no way, was tripped up by any attack of misfortune."

### **Saint Makrina's Brother, Saint Gregory**

"Nine months after the repose of the great Basil, a synod convened in Antioch, in which, I, Gregory, participated. At the close of the synod, each hierarch returned to his see before the end of the year. The thought then came to me to go to my sister Makrina, since much time had already elapsed since I last visited with her. This is because I was hindered by the critical circumstances brought about by the heretics (Arians). When I reckoned how much time intervened, I found it to be about eight years since I last visited.

"I, therefore, made plans to go. After I had walked a considerable distance on the road and was about a day's journey from my sister, I beheld a vision. It revealed to me saddened hopes for the future. This is because, in my dream, I was holding in my hands the relics of martyrs. Such a brilliant light emanated therefrom, such as reflects from a clear mirror placed against the sun, that my eyes were dazzled by the brilliance. I beheld this dream three times that night, but I was unable to perceive the meaning of it. I only saw grief for my soul, yet I carefully watched events in order to discern the fulfillment of the vision. When I arrived nearby the hermitage of the holy woman, I first questioned a friend, among those who dwelt in that place, about my brother Peter. When he told me that it was already four days since Peter left to come to me, I understood that he had taken another road. Therefore, he did not meet us. Afterward, I asked about the great Makrina. When I learned that she was to be found ill, I took to the road speedily. This is because my soul was agitated by sorrow and fear for the future."

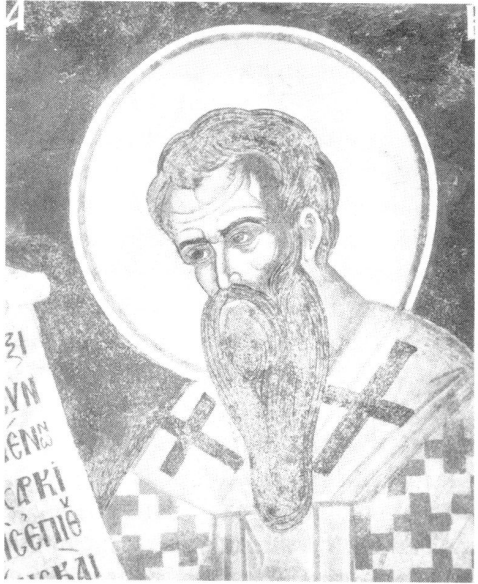
### **At the Convent**

"When I arrived at the hermitage of the holy woman, and word spread that I was with the sisterhood, the men ascetics came to meet me. They had the custom to go out and meet friends. However, the choir of women ascetics stood in an orderly manner inside the church and waited for me. After I entered the church, and conducted the customary prayer and blessing, the nuns gracefully bowed their heads and then departed. I surmised that they did this because the Eldress Makrina was not with them. I then had someone guide me to her cell. I found the sick one not lying on a bed or cushion, but on the floor. A board, covered with a sack, and another board slanting, was devised so her head and neck could be propped up.

"As she beheld me near the door, she raised herself on her elbow. But she was unable to come toward me; for her strength was flagging from the fever. After placing her hands on the floor, she moved herself from the boards, thus greeting me and showing respect to my office. Straightway, I ran to her and placed my hands under her chin which was bowed low. Raising her,

I returned her again to her usual position. She then lifted her hands in prayer and uttered, 'This gift also, my Lord, hast Thou granted unto me, and hast not deprived me of my desire; for Thou hast moved Thy servant to visit Thy maidservant.' So as not to bring me any depression, she subdued her groans and would quickly mask the pain in her heart.

"She then began to speak cheerful words. She started pleasant topics herself, but suggested them as well by the questions she asked. However, when the conversation led to the great Basil, instantly, my heart was afflicted and my countenance turned sullen. The blessed Makrina, far from sharing my sorrow, took the saint's memory as an occasion to mention yet loftier philosophy. She discussed at length human nature and our troubles,



*Saint Gregory*

and the divine œconomy which underlies all. As one enlightened by the Holy Spirit, she discoursed extensively on the future life. My mind, elevated by her words, was borne away from the human realm. Led by her words, I entered up to the sanctuary of the heavens. As we hear concerning the Righteous Job, though his body was riddled with pain, neither was his reasoning impeded nor was his mind prevented from contemplating sublime things. Similarly, this may be seen in the case with the blessed woman. Though the fever was withering all her strength and bringing her to the threshold of death, she, nonetheless, renewed her body, as it were with dew, when her mind, uninhibited and uninjured by the illness, contemplated those heavenly things.

"Now if my words to thee would not extend to such a magnitude, I would desire to relate all, holding back nothing. I would tell thee how the ever-memorable one was uplifted when she conversed and sermonized concerning the soul and the causes of our life in the flesh. She spoke about the reason why man came to be and why man became mortal and whence came death; moreover, she discussed the return to life from death. She expounded upon everything with ease, because she was enlightened by the grace of the



Holy Spirit. Indeed, the words flowed from her mouth as water gushes from a spring.<sup>19</sup>

“When she finished speaking, she said to me, ‘It is time, O brother, to rest thy body a little, since it is fatigued from walking.’ Though I sensed a great and genuine respite with the sight of her and the hearing of her lofty words, nevertheless, since this was pleasing to her, I, not willing to appear disobedient to the teacher, went with my attendant inside a nearby garden. Within, I found prepared a welcome dwelling place. I rested under the shade of a vine growing up the side of a tree. However, it was impossible to feel any good cheer, since my soul was afflicted by the pending grief. I am speaking of the dream which I saw, since it revealed to me what I would see. I say this because, truthfully, the sight of that blessed woman was as the relics of a holy martyr; though dead, yet the Holy Spirit dwelt in them.

“For a long while I was sad of countenance because of my sorrow. Now I do not know how, but the holy woman knew my thoughts. Therefore, she sent a messenger to me with a gladsome note. She bid me to be cheered and to have better hopes concerning her, since she was feeling better. Now she did not say this to make me laugh, because it was the truth. Though I did not understand it at the time, the truth was soon to follow; for, as a runner passes his adversary and arrives toward the finishing post, passing the judge’s seat and the crown of victory, he rejoices to himself as though he already received it and informs his comrades of the win. In like manner, the blessed one, informing us to maintain better hopes for her, was looking toward the prize of the high calling.<sup>20</sup> She also could utter with the divine Apostle Paul, ‘Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day [2 Tim. 4:8]’; for ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith [2 Tim. 4:7].’

“I, therefore, delighted by the happy message, enjoyed various delicious foods. Indeed, it was Makrina who condescended to the making of my meals. After I rested, she called me and began to reminisce what she did in her girlhood—which recollections she related in much detail. Likewise, she also recounted the works of our parents, whatever she could remember, and what took place before and after my birth. Her purpose throughout was to render thanksgiving to God in everything when relating the life of our parents. She spoke not so much of the splendor that they had at that time, but how they

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<sup>19</sup> The discourse between Saint Gregory and Saint Makrina, whom he calls the “teacher,” may be found in English. See, Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser., V:430-468. See also Catherine P. Roth’s translation of *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Phil. 3:14.

were increased and magnified by God Who loves mankind. I say this because our paternal grandparents, who were confessors for Christ, were deprived of their property and possessions. My maternal grandfather was slain due to the imperial displeasure. Also, our parents were estranged from the properties of their parents. Despite all this, the life and wealth of our parents was so enlarged by means of the faith they had in God. Indeed, in their time, no one was named above them. Moreover, when their substance was divided among all their children, the share of each multiplied so that, with the blessing of God, each of the children exceeded the wealth of their parents.

"The great lady also said whatever portion she received, she kept nothing. Instead, she gave it to brother Peter so he might dispense it according to the commandment of God.<sup>21</sup> However, her life was such that, by God's blessing and according to the apostolic command,<sup>22</sup> her hands never stopped working. On the one hand, for her livelihood, she never looked for human help through either benefactions or charities. On the other hand, although she never appealed for donations, still she never cast out any who sought pity. Nonetheless, God increased in a secret manner her substance as seed; for with the little embroidery that she worked, He multiplied it with His blessing into much fruit.

"I then began to tell of my own toils by which I was tried. First, there was the persecution against Orthodoxy by the Arian Emperor Valens (364-378). At length, I then said, 'Later, due to the confusion and turmoil in the churches of Christ, which summoned us to struggles and pangs....' Then the great lady stopped me, and said, 'Wilt thou not cease from appearing ungrateful for the good which God has granted thee? Wilt thou never correct thine ingratitude? Wilt thou not set aright thy judgment? Dost thou not compare the good of thy parents with thine own? Yea, many esteemed our father for his learning, and among rhetors he was considered first; yet his fame did not spread beyond our homeland. Yet thou hast become renowned in cities and among peoples and nations. The churches of Christ send thee and invite thee to aid and set them aright. Dost thou not give attention to this grace? Dost thou not know the cause of these blessings? Thank God Who, by the prayers of our parents, has raised thee up to this lofty height; because thou, by thyself, dost not have any strength.'

"This is what she said to me, which led me to wish that the day were longer, so the words of the blessed woman should not cease from my

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<sup>21</sup> Jesus said, "If thou art willing to be perfect, go thy way and sell as much as thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and keep on following Me [Mk. 10:21]."

<sup>22</sup> "If anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat [2 Thess. 3:10]."

hearing.<sup>23</sup> However, the voices of the chanters summoned us to Vespers. I went into church and she again withdrew to God by means of her prayer. Night passed and, when morning came, I was still endeavoring to interpret the meaning of the signs which I had seen.”

### **Saint Makrina's Last Day**

“This day was to be her last in this life, because the fever consumed all the strength of her body. She, however, foreseeing the infirmity of mine own thoughts, cleverly contrived to draw me out from downcast hopes. With shortened and straitened breath, she dispersed the anguish of my soul with her goodly words. By all that took place, my soul passed through sundry emotions. According to nature, I was inclined to feel sadness—which is to be expected—because there was no hope that I should hear her voice again. Moreover, in a short while, the common boast of our family and generation would depart.

“Again, in another way, my soul was filled with joy, for it considered what I saw: that is, my sister would rise above the natural condition and become beyond nature. When I beheld that blessed woman, who arrived at her last respirations, she in no way displayed cowardice at separation from this life. Instead, she continued to discuss sublime thoughts concerning the monastic life until her last breath. It, therefore, appeared to me and to all that stood about that she then made manifest the divine love for the invisible Bridegroom Christ which she hid in the depths of her soul. She also revealed her great desire to be delivered from the bonds of the flesh, so she might arrive sooner to the much-desired Jesus and be united with Him. Most of the day now had already passed, and the sun was in the west, but the eagerness of that blessed woman remained uneclipsed. In fact, even more so did she hasten with an ardent impulse to the desired One, seeing clearly the beauty of her Bridegroom. Therefore, she did not look upon me at all, but upon Him. Her bedding was turned toward the east. She then left off altogether conversing with me and, through prayer, she spoke with God.”

### **Saint Makrina's Prayer**

“She supplicated Him, whispering in a thin voice which was so low that we could just barely hear what was said. This was her prayer: ‘Thou, O Lord, by Thy grace, hast loosed us from the fear of death. Thou hast made the beginning of true life the end of this present life. Thou, for a time, hast given rest to our bodies with the sleep of death, and again Thou wilt raise us up with

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<sup>23</sup> To the last, this admirable woman appears as the great teacher of the family. Gregory, far from being offended at his big sister's lecture, is grateful and loves her. Indeed, in him, the words of Solomon may be applied: “Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.... Instruct a just man, and he will receive more instruction [Prov. 9:8, 9].”



the last trumpet.<sup>24</sup> Thou hast given our earthly elements, which Thou hast fashioned with Thine own hands,<sup>25</sup> to the earth for safekeeping.<sup>26</sup> Again, Thou shalt take from the earth that which Thou hast given, and transform with incorruption and grace our mortal and unsightly remains.<sup>27</sup> Thou hast delivered us from the curse and from sin, becoming, on account of Thy love, a curse<sup>28</sup> and sin.<sup>29</sup> Thou hast broken the heads of the dragons who,<sup>30</sup> on account of disobedience, swallowed up man. Thou hast opened the path of resurrection unto us. Thou hast crushed the gates of Hades and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.<sup>31</sup> To those that revere Thee, Thou hast given a sign, that of Thine honorable Cross, to destroy the enemy and to protect our life as a shield. To Thee, my God, was I spoken for from my mother's womb; and my soul does love Thee with all my strength. It is to Thee that I have consecrated my body and my soul from my youth to the present. Do Thou give me an angel of light, to guide me to the place of rest, in the bosom of our holy fathers.<sup>32</sup> O Thou Who didst meet the flaming sword<sup>33</sup> and establish in Paradise the thief who was crucified with Thee and placed himself under Thy compassion,<sup>34</sup> remember me also in Thy kingdom. I, too, was crucified with Thee;<sup>35</sup> and, I nailed down my flesh with the fear of Thee, for of Thy judgments am I afraid.<sup>36</sup> Let not the dread chasm separate me from the elect.<sup>37</sup> Neither let the reproachful devil oppose me in the way; nor let my sin be found before Thine eyes, if, on account of our weak nature, I sinned with a word or with a deed or with a thought. O Thou Who hast authority to forgive sins, pardon me. When I put off this body, grant mercy that I might be refreshed and found before without any spot in the comeliness of my soul. Do Thou receive my soul into Thy hands, pure and blameless, as incense before Thee."

### **Saint Makrina's Repose**

"Saying this, she made the sign of the Cross over her eyes, her mouth, and her heart. Afterward, since her parched tongue was dried from the fever,

<sup>24</sup> 1 Cor. 15:52.

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 2:7.

<sup>26</sup> Gen. 3:19.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor. 15:54.

<sup>28</sup> Gal. 3:13.

<sup>29</sup> Rom. 8:3.

<sup>30</sup> Ps. 73:14.

<sup>31</sup> Heb. 2:14.

<sup>32</sup> Lk. 16:22.

<sup>33</sup> Gen. 3:24.

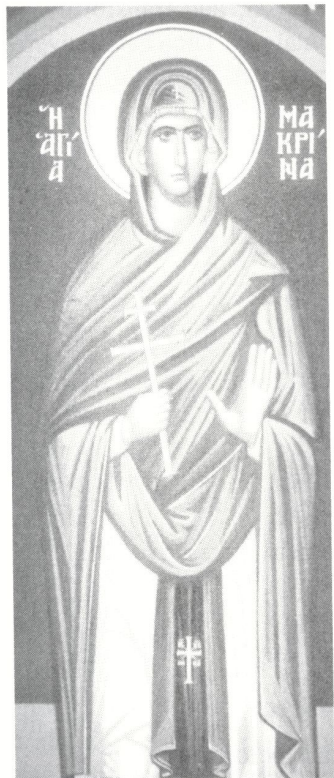
<sup>34</sup> Lk. 23:40-43.

<sup>35</sup> Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6.

<sup>36</sup> Ps. 118:120.

<sup>37</sup> Lk. 16:26.

she was unable to articulate and her voice utterly failed. Only by the opening of her moving lips did we understand that she was praying. In the meantime,



*Saint Makrina*

evening came. When a light was brought to the blessed woman, she opened her eyes once to see the light. It appeared that she had the desire to utter the customary Vespers hymn of thanksgiving. Having completely lost her voice, she gave thanks in her heart by the movement of her lips. When she finished the prayer of thanksgiving, she made the sign of the Cross over her face. She then drew a great and deep breath, and finished her life."

### **Mourning for Saint Makrina**

"I then remembered her command which she gave me at the first meeting. She told me of her wish to have her hands placed over her eyes, and that I should close her eyes (as is customarily done). She also wished that I should make the customary burial arrangements. Therefore, I placed my hand over her holy face—only that I might appear to perform her command—though the blessed one's eyes had no need of closing since they were gracefully covered by eyelids, as in natural sleep. Similarly, her lips were firmly closed. Her hands were laid in a dignified and solemn pose on her chest. In fact, the body had properly positioned

itself, so no human hand was necessary to lay it out.

"I, therefore, from two sides became unnerved from sorrow at beholding the relics and the mourning virgins. Up until now, they remained silent. They had been repressing their sorrow and muffling their laments, for fear of Makrina. The abbess could quiet them by merely her glance. Moreover, they feared the penance if a loud voice should be heard apart from her usual order. They feared this would sorrow her and usher in the death of their teacher. However, now they could no longer restrain their sorrow with silence, because, as a fire, it secretly consumed their inward parts.

"I then suddenly heard such a bitter and uncontrolled wailing among the nuns. I then, too, was unable to hold back my thoughts any longer. Instead, the emotion of sorrow, as a stormy river, took hold of me and I gave no thought to my duties. Nonetheless, I thought the wailing of the nuns had a plausible and praiseworthy cause. They did not mourn because they were

going to miss the customary care given them by the holy woman. They did not lament for any other reason, which many secular folk do at the death of their relatives. It was as if they had been deprived of their hope in God and the salvation of their souls. For this reason, they wept and wailed, and let out cries with tears, saying, 'Extinguished is the light of our eyes; quenched is the light that guided our souls; removed is the seal of our incorruption; severed is the bond of our prudence; shattered is the support of the weak; and gone from our sight is the physician of the sick. In thy days, O our good teacher, the night, illumined by thy pure life, was a day. However, now, this day has been turned into night and darkness.'

"Those that named her their 'mother' and 'nurse' bewailed her the most. These nuns were formerly those women who, in the time of famine, the great lady found desolate on the roadside. She took them, and nourished and guided them to the pure life of virgins. However, in just a short time, as I was observing the holy head of her relics, it was as if she rebuked me for the disorder and confusion among the mourners. Straightway, my thoughts arose as though they had been in the depths of the sea. Then, in a loud voice, I said to the nuns, 'Look upon your teacher and remember her commands. She taught you to preserve orderliness and discipline in everything. This divine soul instructed us to mourn only on one occasion, that is, when we pray to God. This is what we must do now; that is, turn our mournful voices into psalmody of compunction.' Now I had to say this in a loud voice to overcome the wailing of these mourners. Afterward, I encouraged the nuns to go to a nearby cell. However, I requested that some stay whom the blessed woman received when she was alive to minister to her."

### **Vetiane and Lampadia**

"Among the women there was Vetiane, who was famed for her wealth, nobility, and beauty. She had married a man of high rank who, shortly after the wedding, left her a widow. Vetiane then selected the great Makrina to be the guardian and manager of her needs. She spent most of her time associating with the nuns and learned from them the life of virtue. It was to her, therefore, that I recommended that we dress the holy relics with fairer and finer clothing. Vetiane said that we must first learn what the saint discerned as reasonable for her in this instance, because it was only proper to do as she would have wished; that is, what would be pleasing to God would be pleasing and desirable for the holy woman.

"There was a virgin, who was first among the choir of nuns, a deaconess in rank, and Lampadia was her name. She knew exactly what the holy woman ordered concerning her grave. I then questioned her about this; and, with tears, she answered me, 'The raiment of the saint was a clean and pure life; that was her adornment when she lived, let it be also in death. Never



during her life did she receive such things as fineries; she looked away at adornments of the flesh. She never kept any for the event that has now arisen. Even if we desired to do more to her relics, no preparation has been made for this need.' I then asked her, 'You have nothing put away that we might use to dress her relics?' She answered, 'What should we have put away? Behold, before thee are all her things! Look at her vesture. Look at her cloak. Look at her worn shoes. This is her wealth. This is her fortune. Other than what thou hast just seen, there is nothing else hidden away—nay, not in a chest or in the cell. She had only one storehouse for her treasure, and that is in the heavens. It is there that she stored everything, leaving nothing on earth.' In response to this, I said, 'And suppose if I were to offer something which I have kept for her funeral, would I be doing anything that she would not have liked?' She answered, 'Certainly, if the saint were alive she would accept this offering, because of thy prelacy, and also because of thy natural sibling kinship. I do not think she would consider a gift from her brother as something strange. It is for this that she commanded that the burial of her body be done by thine own hands.'"

### **Preparations**

"Deciding upon this, I charged my man to bring the shroud that we might robe the relics. Vetiane, with her own hands, wrapped the holy head of the holy woman. Placing her hand to the neck of the relics, she said to me, 'Behold, the necklace which hung about her neck!' She then loosed the knot from behind the neck, and showed me an iron cross and iron ring which were tied together with a thin thread, which dangled over that area of her heart. I then remarked, 'Let this be a common possession. Take the cross as a keepsake and protection; the ring is an adequate inheritance for me.' The ring had the seal of the Cross inscribed upon it. Vetiane revealed to me that she knew that a relic of the precious wood of the Cross was hidden within the seal of the ring."

### **Breast Disease**

"Since the moment arrived when the pure body should be wrapped in linen, the blessed woman had given me a command to help minister in this work. I followed the order. Vetiane was there and she assisted me in clothing the holy relics with the dress. She then said to me, 'Do not leave unseen a great miracle which the saint wrought.' Forthwith, she bared a section of the holy woman's chest. After I brought the lamp closer, she showed me a thin mark on the skin, which could have been made by a delicate needle. I asked her, 'And what miracle is there if this part of her body has such a mark?' She answered, 'This remained upon her flesh as a remembrance of a great benefaction wrought by God for the blessed woman. At one time, in this area, there was a serious and dangerous growth. If it were not surgically removed,

it would have grown larger and become incurable. On account of this, her mother besought her to bring a doctor to excise it. However, the blessed one thought that if she were to bare any part of her body before strange eyes that this would be a worse evil than the disease that she suffered.<sup>38</sup> When evening came, and she completed her usual ministrations for her mother, she went into the holy bema and remained there all night.<sup>39</sup> Prostrating herself, she supplicated God, the Physician of all, to cure her. Makrina shed so many tears that she made a paste of mud as a kind of external medicament or plaster that she applied to the afflicted area. Meanwhile, her mother, greatly worried, advocated that she bring a physician. The saint then asked her mother to make the sign of the life-giving Cross over the painful spot, claiming this would suffice for a cure. Straightway, as her mother crossed her bosom—O the wonder!—she was cured. There only remained this small evidence, so that she might remember the divine healing, which would prompt her always to give thanks unto God.’”

### **Emilia's Black Robe**

“Thus, in this manner, we adorned the body of the saint. Vetiane the deaconess then said, ‘It is not proper to have the saint appear before the eyes

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<sup>38</sup> This is not an uncommon inhibition and complaint among maidens seeking healing for either physical or spiritual ills. Though Saint Makrina declined to receive medical attention, still her mother encouraged her to do so. Although God allowed this disease to invade her body, a temple of the Holy Spirit, yet she, by her faith and prayer, attracted divine mercy as an example to the sisterhood and to us who read this account.

Saint Makarios, speaking on the medical profession, counsels: “When we fell from the commandment, . . . we also fell henceforth under the disorders and maladies of the flesh. . . . God, therefore, unwilling to destroy utterly our sinful race, ordained remedies for the weak and unbelieving, because of His great loving-kindness. He gave medicine to the world for solace, healing, and care of the body. He permitted the medical arts to be used by those who could not yet entrust themselves wholly to God. But thou, O monastic, who have come to Christ . . . and who have become a stranger to the world, ought to possess a belief, and a conception, and a manner of life, new and strange, beyond all those of the world.” See, “Homily XLVIII,” *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, trans. by A. J. Mason (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Books, 1974), §5.

<sup>39</sup> In convent churches nuns are allowed to enter the holy Bema. “Nuns must enter the holy Bema in order to light a taper or candle, and in order to sweep it” [Canon XV of the 37 Canons of Saint Nikephoros of Constantinople]. Patriarch Nicholas adds that a monk may enter the sacrificial altar to light candles if he is not guilty of any crime. . . . on account of the respectability of the monkish habit. The novice, however, by strict interpretation should not go into the Bema. See, *The Rudder (Pedalion)*, trans. by D. Cummings (Chicago, IL: The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), pp. 964, 965, 970, 971. Canon LXIX of the Holy Sixth Œcumenical Synod permits no one “among the laity to enter within the sacred altar. . . (except the emperor).” The holy Bema is consecrated to those in holy orders. *Ibid.*, p. 372.

of the virgins, bedecked as a bride. Nevertheless, I have a black robe of the blessed woman's mother (Emilia), which we should place over the holy relics, so her sacred beauty might not appear with this novel and bright apparel.' Her counsel prevailed, and the dark robe was placed upon the relics. Though enveloped in black, nonetheless, the countenance of the saint shone brilliantly. Now I think that this was divine power that endowed the holy relics with such grace. Indeed, as I had seen in my dream, it appeared as though lightning shone forth from that beauty."

### **The All-night Vigil**

"As we were conducting the service and the virgins chanted, the wailers filled the church with their dirges. I do not know how the word spread among the inhabitants of these parts, but they came from every place. They converged in the front courtyard, which could not contain the throng. That night the vigil with chanting commenced, as when there is a feast of the martyrs. When the office of Orthros arrived, the multitude of men and women that gathered cast the chanting into disorder by the volume of their laments. I, though suffering badly from grief, determined, as much as possible, not to leave out anything from what was needed to perform the burial. Thereupon, I divided the crowd by placing the women together with the virgins and nuns, and the men with the ranks of the monks. Then I made the two groups into two choirs that they might chant harmoniously and in an orderly fashion."

### **The Burial**

"After daybreak, when the entire hermitage was filled with the press of the crowd, the bishop of that place, named Araxios, came with his entire complement. He encouraged me to be a pallbearer, until we reached the grave. I, then, from one of the forward sides, lifted the bier from its place and Bishop Araxios took the other side. Then two honorable clerics took up the remaining hindmost positions. The procession of deacons and readers, keeping their ranks as they flanked either side of the holy relics, walked with lit candles. The burial of the blessed woman resembled a mystical feast, especially since the melody of the chanting was as one voice from the first until the last.

"The distance to the Church of the Martyrs,<sup>40</sup> where our parents were buried, was a little less than a mile.<sup>41</sup> It was only with difficulty that we went through the day, because the multitudes obstructed the road. When we arrived inside this church, we put down the bier. We then began to pray without chanting. However, the prayer gave cause for the crowd to begin lamenting.

<sup>40</sup> At Annesi, the holy Emilia erected a chapel in honor of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (commemorated by the holy Church on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March). Together with her relics and those of her husband Basil, the blessed Nafkratios also was interred therein.

<sup>41</sup> Saint Gregory calculated that the distance was about seven or eight stadia, which is between eight- or nine-tenths of a mile.



When the grave of our parents was opened, in accordance with the command of the saint who desired to be buried with them, one of the nuns, who gazed upon that holy face, cried out in a disorderly manner, 'Woe unto us! After this hour, we shall no longer behold that godlike countenance.' When the other nuns heard this, they too shouted the same. Straightway, the disorderly clamor confounded the sacredness of our prayer. This outburst of words smote the hearts of all in attendance, reducing all to tears. I then gestured that they should hold silence. The deacon then spoke aloud, in those customary words of the Church, commanding them to pray. Only by constraint did the faithful settle down to an orderly form of prayer.

"When the prayer was finished, a fear entered into my soul when I brought to mind the divine command which says: 'Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother [Lev. 18:7].' The thought then came to me so that I uttered inwardly, 'How shall I escape such condemnation, if I behold the remains of my parents and the common shame of human nature, the dissolution of the body and indistinct bones?'<sup>42</sup> Thinking about this, I also remembered how indignant Noah was against his son Ham, who beheld his nakedness.<sup>43</sup> The method employed by two of Noah's sons, Shem and Japheth showed me what to do.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, as the tomb of my parents was opened, they quickly covered their relics with a clean linen cloth—before we could observe them. The bishop and I then took up the holy relics of Makrina and placed them beside the relics of our mother, thus fulfilling the prayer and promise of both mother and daughter. This is because both sought from God that their bodies be united afterward in death, as they were united in this life. After completing what was customary at the grave, I fell upon the grave and embraced the dust. Afterward, I made for the road, stricken with grief and tears."

### **The Soldier of Sebastopolis**

"On the road, I came upon a distinguished kinsman, who had a military command in Sebastopolis of Pontos. Meeting me, he embraced me and treated me kindly. When he heard of the death of the blessed woman, he sorrowed exceedingly. He then began to narrate a story, which I will reproduce here and then close my epistle. After we finished weeping, he began the account.

<sup>42</sup> The Greek text, in a footnote, comments that it is evident that, at that time, the practise of translating the relics was not done as it is presently. This point of uncovering the remains and what is considered pardonable and unpardonable grave-robbing is also brought up again by Saint Gregory in his Canon VII.

<sup>43</sup> Gen. 9:22, 24, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Gen. 9:23.

“Hearken to how great a goodness departed this present life. I remember once, when I was with my wife, that we desired to go to the school of virtue.’ (“Indeed, that is what the place necessarily must be called where the blessed woman dwelt,” notes the biographer.) ‘At that time, our daughter was with us. After suffering an infectious disease, the lass was left with a physical deficit to her eye. The appearance was ugly and pitiful, because the area about the pupil was enlarged and whitish. Now when we arrived at the convent, we went our separate ways: that is, I went with the monks whose abbot was thy brother, Peter; whereas, my wife went inside the convent of virgins wherein was also the blessed Makrina.

“After we spent sufficient time, we desired to leave. As we were preparing for our departure, thy two siblings detained us. Thy brother begged me to stop and enjoy their ascetic fare at table. Thy blessed sister, in like manner, would not give leave to my wife to depart. Thy sister, in fact, all the while was holding my daughter in her bosom. Then, according to her custom, the blessed woman kissed the child, placing her mouth by the damsel’s eye. As she observed the sickness of her eyes, she said to my wife, “If thou shalt do me this favor by enjoying our table, I shall render a service not unworthy of such honor and grace.” The mother said, “What service hast thou to give us?” The blessed one answered, “I shall give thee a medicine that shall heal the complaint of your child’s eye.” This promise, disclosed to me afterward in the monks’ quarters, made me laugh to myself; but gladdened by the good will behind it, we remained. After the meal finished, we departed filled with good cheer. On the road, each one of us spoke to the other about what was seen and heard in those sacred places. I related what took place in the monks’ quarters. My wife described, in some detail, what she saw and heard from the blessed woman. She did not want to leave out the most minute detail.

“As she was recounting the events, and her words came to that part pertaining to the promise of the saint and her desire to cure our child, she stopped short and said, “Oh! What is this that we have suffered? How did I forget to take the medicine which she promised us?” Since I too was sorrowed by such inexcusable absentmindedness, I ordered that we turn back quickly. It happened that just then the child turned to her mother, as she was being held in the hands of the nurse. Straightway, the mother, looking at the child’s eyes, with joy, said in a loud voice, “Do not be distressed because of the medicine, for we have been deprived of nothing of what the saint determined. Her healing medicine, which cured the disease of our child, is her potent prayer. No trace of the disease in the eye remains, which could not be cured save by her medicine.” After she said this, she took the child into her arms and then placed her in my arms. Then, I, observing the miracle, remembered the miracles of our Lord which were not believed by some. I then said, “And what

great thing is it if the blind receive healing by the hand of the Lord, since His handmaid, with the faith that she has in God, wrought such a wonder which is not inferior from those?" Thus, this is what was narrated to me by my distinguished kinsman; for he quit speaking when the tears streamed from his eyes."

### Conclusion

"I heard these and many other miracles of the blessed Makrina, as recounted by those that dwelt with her and knew well her manner of life. I cannot relate them here, because they will seem incredible to most. This is because most people, according to the measure of their knowledge and experience, judge whatever they hear by their own limited experience. That which exceeds their own limitations, they suspiciously consider a lie and unbelievable. For this reason, I shall remain silent about the miracle—contrary to all expectation—which the blessed one performed during the time of hunger. I shall only leave this hint: during the famine when wheat was being distributed among the poor from the convent storehouse, it never diminished but remained stocked. Nevertheless, there were even far more extraordinary miracles, including the cure she wrought among the sick, the healing among the demonized, and her clairvoyance concerning future events.

"All these supernatural miracles, though they seem unbelievable, are believed as the truth by those possessed of examining minds. Those with careless and carnal minds will think these things impossible. They do not know, however, that, in proportion to faith, the divine gifts are bestowed: small gifts to those of little faith and great ones to those who have an enlarged space of faith. I say this, lest I injure those of little faith who do not believe in the gifts of God. Therefore, I must let these pass and not record the even stranger wonders which God performed by means of the great Makrina. Nonetheless, I calculate that what I have written is sufficient to describe her conduct of life. Through her intercessions, may we be counted worthy of the kingdom of the heavens! Amen."

**On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, the holy Church commemorates  
the holy FOUR MALE ASCETICS,  
who reposed in peace.<sup>45</sup>**

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<sup>45</sup> Other sources record that there were forty, not four, ascetics.