

A Prayer Service honoring
Macrina the Younger
Celebrate Macrina on July 19th or at any other time.

The worship space should have a large, clear bowl of water on a table with two branch bundles for the sprinkling ritual placed next to the bowl.

Opening Song: *(to the tune of God of Day, God of Darkness)* Nettleton

As we gather here in worship, we extol God's holy grace,
Join our hearts and souls and spirit, into one within this place.
All creation shows God's glory, heav'n and earth draw near to sing,
Holy, holy, holy, holy, praise together do we bring.

St. Macrina saw creation with a bright and piercing eye,
Sang God's power penetrating into all works low and high,
She described God's holy purpose: weaving unlikes to one end,
In a sacred, redeeming harmony for us all now to attend.

Gathering Prayer: Gracious God, we pray that you send your Spirit upon this gathering in honor of your servant, Macrina the Younger. May we learn from her life how to be strong of purpose yet humble of heart; grateful for blessings and quick to share them; open to dialogue and dedicated to your service. Open our hearts and minds to the inspiration of example and the blessings of your grace exemplified best in your Son, our model, Jesus Christ.

Reading: From *On the Soul and Resurrection*, dialogue between Macrina and her brother, Gregory of Nyssa (<http://www.ccel.org/ccell/schaff/npnf205.x.iii.ii.html>) :

The Creation proclaims outright the Creator; for the very heavens, as the Prophet says, declare the glory of God with their unutterable words. We see the universal harmony in the wondrous sky and on the wondrous earth; how elements essentially opposed to each other are all woven together in an ineffable union to serve one common end, each contributing its particular force to maintain the whole; how the unmingling and mutually repellent do not fly apart from each other by virtue of their peculiarities, any more than they are destroyed, when compounded, by such contrariety;

Response: Psalm 19 *(Left/Right antiphonal readings)*

Left: The heavens herald your glory, O God, and the skies display your handiwork.

Right: Day after day they tell their story, and night after night they reveal the depth of their understanding.

Left: Without speech, without words, without even an audible voice,

Right: their cry echoes through all the world, and their message reaches the ends of the earth.

Left: For in the heavens the sun has pitched a tent.

Right: It comes forth with the grandeur of a wedding procession, with the eagerness of an athlete ready to race.

Left: It rises at one end of the sky and travels to the other end,

Right: and nothing escapes its warmth.

Reading: Wisdom 7: 23-8:1

Reflection: *In small groups, discuss Macrina's vision of creation where "elements essentially opposed to each other are all woven together in an ineffable union to serve one common end". Does this correspond to the description of "Wisdom" from scripture? Where do we see or not see this today? Are we proclaiming this vision of God's creation in our church and society now? Discuss how Macrina's vision could inspire a better world.*

Reading: From *On the Soul and Resurrection*, dialogue between Macrina and her brother, Gregory of Nyssa:

Indeed, it was for this that intelligent beings came into existence; namely, that the riches of the Divine blessings should not lie idle. The All-creating Wisdom fashioned these souls, these receptacles with free wills, as vessels as it were, for this very purpose, that there should be some capacities able to receive His blessings and become continually larger with the inpouring of the stream. Such are the wonders that the participation in the Divine blessings works: it makes him into whom they come larger and more capacious; from his capacity to receive it gets for the receiver an actual increase in bulk as well, and he never stops enlarging. The fountain of blessings wells up unceasingly, and the partaker's nature, finding nothing superfluous and without a use in that which it receives, makes the whole influx an enlargement of its own proportions, and becomes at once more wishful to imbibe the nobler nourishment and more capable of containing it; each grows along with each, both the capacity which is nursed in such abundance of blessings and so grows greater, and the nurturing supply which comes on in a flood answering to the growth of those increasing powers.

Response: Song: to the tune of (God of Day, God of Darkness) Nettleton
Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, mount of thy redeeming love.

Ritual: Blessings Abound Sprinkling Rite

Leader: Macrina's imagery portrays a world where humanity is created by God in order to receive God's blessings – in a fountain that "wells up unceasingly". Our human spirit opens and enlarges to receive these blessings and – wonder of wonders – the greater the abundance of blessings, the greater the capacity to receive becomes. "Each grows along with each" becoming a "flood" of mutual increase.

What blessings have you received in your life? What do you hope for?

(A few minutes of silent meditation, with instrumental music in background, softly)

Leader: In honor of Macrina's vision of flowing beneficence, we will form two processional lines and come forward to the blessing bowl. Two people at a time will name some blessings, dip the branches in the water, and ritually sprinkle each other. They will proceed back to their seats and the next two will come to the bowl, and so on until all have participated.
(the soft music can continue for this procession, but it is recommended that the blessings be heard out loud)

Prayer: Bounteous Creator, who called your servant Macrina to reveal in her life and her teaching the riches of your grace, grant that we will follow her example in seeking Wisdom and upholding truth, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Leader: From adolescence on, Macrina displayed extraordinary strength of character, intellectual ability and spiritual discipline. She became the effective head of her remarkable family and, through her influence on her brothers, shaped the development of Eastern monasticism and church doctrine. Living in a time of great theological upheaval, she entertained complex philosophical concepts and managed a thriving monastic community while living in utter simplicity. When the time came to clothe her body for burial, Gregory asked one of the sisters if Macrina had some garments in readiness. "Nothing," was the reply. "She gave everything away. Here is her hairshirt, here is her patched cassock and her ragged mantia. She kept nothing else on earth; rather, she concentrated on storing treasures in heaven."

Closing Litany:

Leader: May Macrina's vision of a world overflowing with a "fountain of blessings" inspire us to greater gratitude and generosity,

All: Gracious God, hear our prayer.

Leader: May Macrina's ability to teach and engage in intellectual inquiry encourage our own explorations of scripture and theology,

All: Gracious God, hear our prayer.

Leader: May Macrina's creation of a new kind of monastic community living help us to practice spiritual discipline in our own lives,

All: Gracious God, hear our prayer.

Leader: May Macrina's belief in universal harmony and the ultimate "ineffable union" of diverse entities lead us to reconciliation and peace,

All: Gracious God, hear our prayer.

Leader: May Macrina's creative and humble leadership in the fourth century become a model for the twenty-first century,

All: Gracious God, hear our prayer.

Closing Song: "In Christ there is no East and West" (*Today's Missal*)

This prayer service was created by Sheila Peiffer. Sheila has an M.A. in Theology and over twenty-five years of experience in Catholic education, campus ministry and retreat presentation. She is the Administrative Coordinator of the American Catholic Council.

Women Deacons: Why Not Now? was developed by FutureChurch. Permission granted to photocopy upon request of emailed or written permission. \$8.00 paper copy (\$5.00 downloaded from website).

Send for our **Advancing Women in Church Leadership** and **Celebrating Women Witnesses** packets (\$12.00 donation each). Download the most recent **St. Mary of Magdala** prayer service (free) and join hundreds of others celebrating the July 22nd feast of the "Apostle to the Apostles."

FutureChurch

17307 Madison Avenue

Cleveland, OH 44107

216-228-0869

www.futurechurch.org info@futurechurch.org

