

AN  
ELDER  
SAID...



Edifying Stories  
and Teachings from  
Ancient and Modern Times

Two married women living in the world  
surpassed the virtue of St. Makarios the Great!

## God Bestows His Spirit and Mercy on All Those With a Good Disposition\*



**O**nce, when he was in his cell praying, St. Makarios the Great heard a voice from on high telling him:

“Makarios, you must know that, despite your prayers and asceticism, **you have not yet reached the measure of the virtue of two women living in such-and-such a city.**”

In the morning, the Elder got up, took his wooden staff, and set off on the road for that city. **W**hen he arrived, he asked where the women in question lived and knocked on their door.

**O**ne of the women opened to him and invited him into the house with a glad face. **W**hen the Elder had sat down to rest, the other woman also arrived. **H**e then called both of them near him, and when they had sat down he said:

“**I** undertook this entire journey and endured great fatigue in coming from the desert all the way here. I beg you, then, to tell me **what your spiritual work is and what virtues you struggle to attain.**”

The women, with great simplicity, replied:

“**B**elieve us, holy Elder, that we share marriage beds with our respective husbands; what spiritual work, then, do you expect of us?”

The Elder then made a prostration to them and begged them to reveal their virtue to him.

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**Seeing** his great patience, they said to the holy Elder:

“We are strangers to this world and happened to marry husbands who were brothers according to the flesh. • **F**rom the time that we began living in this house with our husbands, **we do not recall ever having quarrelled or spoken a nasty word between us. All these years, we have lived in peace and harmony, with love for one another.** • **A**t one point, we had a peculiar thought: to leave our husbands and to go live in a convent. **We** made every effort and begged our husbands to let us go, but could not convince them. • **T**hus, since we could not achieve our desire, each of us made a pledge to God that **we would nevermore let a worldly, vain word out of our mouths.**”



\* \* \*

**Hearing** this, that holy Elder marvelled and said:

“**I**ndeed, **it is does not matter if a person lives in virginity or in marriage, or is a monastic or a layperson, for God to grant such a one His Spirit and mercy; the only thing He asks of us is our good disposition.**”

**H**aving derived great spiritual edification from their virtue, the Elder returned to his cell in the desert, giving glory to God.

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(\* ) P. B. Paschou, **Women of the Desert**, *The Small Gerontikon* [in Greek], (Athens: Akritas, 2007), pp. 18-19.