



■ Taking care of the elderly is a blessing, not a chore

The Fragrance of Unmurmuring Patience*

“I Was Serving Christ Himself”

The following is an account by Anna Karaiskou-Styka, from Veroia, Greece:

I have been married for thirty years, and lived for twenty-six years with my mother-in-law in the same house.

It was quite difficult for me since she was bedridden the last five years of her life.

I would return from work to find my mother-in-law with soiled clothes and the house foul-smelling and filthy.

At first, I did not want anyone to come to our house when it reeked like that.

When, however, with the help of my spiritual Father I no longer looked on it as a chore, but rather a blessing, I was no longer aware of the stench.

I kept in mind that I was serving Christ Himself.

At one point, I gave in to bad thoughts and grumbled, and again became aware of the stench.

One evening, I was alone at home and my mother-in-law was in her room.

I went in to see how she was doing and saw that she had soiled everything—the sheets, curtains, the carpet....

While it should have



reeked, I instead smelled a fragrance that I will never forget, and a profound sense of calm came over me until I had cleaned her up.

Thenceforth, until the day of her repose, every time I had to clean her or give her a bath, I felt an inner calmness and serenity and nothing smelled bad to me.



(*) *Ascetics in the World, Vol. 1, Hiera Hesychasterion Hagios Ioannes ho Prodromos* (Holy Mountain: 2008), pp. 376-377. • Translated from the original Greek.