



Little Russian Philokalia: Abbot Nazarius of Valaam

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Philokalia means, "love of the good--love of the beautiful." It was the name given to the celebrated 18th century Greek collection of Patristic texts on Christian spiritual life, teaching the path to inner sobriety and the fullness of union with God.

Christian spirituality is not a retreat or escape from life. On the contrary, it is a withdrawal from the spirit of a fallen world lying in evil in order to cling to the source of life itself--Christ the true God.

Because of the multitude of outstanding spiritual leaders which have existed in Russia, there have been several attempts to compile a collection from the Russian Fathers similar to that of the Greek *Philokalia*. The teachings of these spiritual Fathers rest in the eternal truths and guiding principles of suffering Christianity, and their counsels are of particular value since--from that fount of eternal wisdom--they offer direction suited to the peculiarities of today's "modern age."

Therefore, it is of no small importance to present the Russian Fathers of recent centuries in an anthology of ascetic texts drawn from the original sources. The LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA series serves as an intermediary with the great Fathers of the Greek Philokalia.

In this respect, the humble advice offered by the holy men of the LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA series may render an inestimable service to a true seeker of salvation--a follower of Christ's narrow path of unceasing toil and humility. This, after all, was the primary purpose of the original Philokalia.

The second volume of the *Little Russian Philokalia Series* is dedicated to the "Grandfather" of an entire century of great ascetics of Valaam Monastery, Blessed Elder Nazarius (1735-1809). He was the spiritual father to St. Herman of Alaska and was responsible for sending the first Orthodox mission to America in 1794.

Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers were the daily food of his soul. His soul became so penetrated by the thought of divine things that the only subject of his conversations was what might profit the soul.

Like St. Anthony the Great, Abbot Nazarius possessed experience and knowledge of the spiritual life in practice, and spoke of how to practice Christianity in order to attain genuine sobriety of soul. He allowed no leeway for idle meditating or fantasizing.

Elder Nazarius burned with an unquenchable love of truth. His watchful eye was keen; his words carried great power. Severe and seemingly inaccessible in appearance, by his words alone he could soften hearts into love and obedience.

The LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA series Volume II also contains a short spiritual ladder by Abbot Nazarius' disciple, Hilarion of Valaam and Sarov Monasteries, and contains several hymns composed by Fr. Seraphim Rose in honor of Blessed Nazarius

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