

ARCHIMANDRITE ANASTASIJE REPOSES IN THE LORD

After a sudden and brief illness, Archimandrite Anastasije (Starcevic) founder and abbot of St. Elijah Monastery and pastor of Protection of the Mother of God Parish in Dover, FL, reposed in the Lord on 19 October 2003. Father Anastasije served in our Ukrainian Orthodox Church since 1985 when he was accepted into our clergy ranks by then Metropolitan Mstyslav. He served as a member of the Church Court and advisor to Bishops Paisiy and Jeremiah on the establishment of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in our Latin America Eparchy.

Fr. Anastasije was born in Italy of an Italian mother and Serbian father. He grew up in Italy following the faith of his father. His family eventually moved to the United States and following graduation from high school, the young Arthur began theological studies at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary in 1957. Still not certain of his call to the priesthood, he enrolled in the St. Louis University School of Medicine from which he graduated in 1961. He went into private medical practice in Missouri for two years and finally entered the U. S. Navy as a physician in 1965, right in the heart of the Vietnamese War. He served as a medical officer in Vietnam and then as part of the NATO force in his native Italy. Upon completion of his Navy service, he returned to the USA and did a residency at St. Luke Medical Center in Chicago, IL and was a professor of pathology at the University of Illinois and Rush College of Medicine, also in Chicago. He later moved back south and taught at the University of Mississippi until moving to Florida in the late 1970's. Here he joined a private medical practice in Tampa served as a pathologist in several central Florida hospitals. During all this time he taught the classical Latin and Greek languages to medical students at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

None of this was enough for Fr. Anastasije. Something was lacking in his life and only when he finally accepted the call of our Lord to enter the Holy Priesthood did he find a fullness of life and spirituality, which had previously escaped him. Father was fluent in seven languages, which greatly assisted him in reaching out to local residents in Florida and

establishing an Orthodox parish. His acceptance into the Ukrainian Orthodox Church gave him a home in the Faith, which he did not have. The entire complex of St. Elijah Monastery and Protection of the Mother of God parish church and hall was made possible through the generosity of Fr. Anastasije. He provided all the funds necessary for purchasing the property and constructing the buildings of the complex. Once the parish was on solid footing, he accepted the assistance of parish members in expanding the parish hall and maintaining the properties. Fr. Anastasije's passion was iconography. Wherever he traveled in the world he purchased icons for his little country church. He also commissioned magnificent icons to be written by noted iconographers here in the USA. The church building is small, but there is little doubt that it contains many more icons than any other parish of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA. It is a beautiful sight to behold and one cannot help but realize that he or she has left the world upon entering this tiny piece of God's Kingdom for prayer and worship.

Fr. Anastasije was a kind and generous philanthropist who contributed to many important causes in the life of our Church, including our St. Sophia Seminary, Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Brazil, our Youth Ministry Program, our Mission and Christian Charity Program and our Orphanage Program, to name a few. There are many former seminarians—whether they were eventually ordained or not and from all over the world—who can recall the kindness and generosity of this humble priest. Fr. Anastasije was always willing to reach out and assist—and very few of them ever asked—the assistance just came, without question or expectation of anything in return. The theology, which most interested Fr. Anastasije, was comparative theology. He was well schooled in the characteristics and dogmas of most of the world's religions and was never hesitant about comparing and contrasting them with true Orthodox theology. He could spend hours discussing with clergy of other faiths in the central Florida area the differences between their faiths or sects and Orthodoxy.

Fr. Anastasije dearly loved the faithful entrusted to his spiritual care. He died at a time when his parish community was finally beginning to come into its own. The size of the congregation had nearly doubled in this year

alone and many plans are in the works to continue this trend into the future. During his memorial service, conducted by Archbishop Antony, Protopresbyter Michael Petlak of St. Michael Parish, Pinellas Park, FL and local Orthodox clergy on 22 October in Holy Protection parish, his family in Christ was saddened by their loss, but pledged to the Archbishop that they would continue his work.

Funeral services were held in St. Andrew Memorial Church, South Bound Brook, NJ on 23–24 October with Archbishop Antony presiding and assisted by fourteen of our clergy participating. The Archbishop expressed the sympathy of His Beatitude Metropolitan Constantine and Archbishop Vsevolod, along with all our clergy at the loss of one of our brothers. Fr. Anastasije was laid to rest in the clergy section of St. Andrew Cemetery. May his memory be eternal.