

Contemporary Hagiography

Michael Plekon

Current Scholar

Plekon's Background

- Carmelite Friar
- BA Catholic University of America
- Ph. D. (Sociology) Rutgers University
- Married
- Joined the Lutheran Church
- Professor at Baruch College (CCNY)
- Later ordained as a pastor

Background continued

- Converts with his family to Orthodoxy (OCA)
- Ordained as deacon and then priest in the Orthodox Church of America
- Works in academia full time and also as an unpaid associate pastor.
- Numerous publications

Demographics of Saints 10th to 19th Centuries

- 87 percent male
- 82 percent clergy
- This does not reflect our experience of Church

Beginning of the Divine Liturgy

Priest/Deacon incense the holy

- The whole altar
- The icons of Christ, Theotokos and the Saints
- The congregation

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

- Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth! You are everywhere present and **fill all things**. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord.

Saints as they Really Are

- Fr. Plekon examines the lives of people looking for holiness
- His major source for his research are the writings of these people.
- These people go beyond Orthodox and Catholic Christians to include members of the Churches of the Reformation.

Earthly Lives Are Messy

- Dorothy Day said that people are “filled with repulsion at the idea of holiness.”
- People who exhibit holiness frequently go through nonsaintly periods in their lives.
- We see holy people who are able to get beyond the messiness.
- Many seemingly normal people have on occasion risen to heroic behavior.

Autobiographical Chapter

- Plekon discusses his life with the Carmelites.
- This includes high school, novitiate, friar student and friar teacher.
- It shows how “religious” life is a very human experience. It also discusses how removed some of it is from ordinary struggles in life.
- He also shows how holiness in a very real sense can be seen when a bunch of sinners reside together.