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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Easter – An Ancient Christian Meditation Revealed

“Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer” a new feature film and book on the newly discovered ancient prayer

216 Public television stations to broadcast a sample hour of the highly acclaimed documentary, beginning in April 2011. (Most broadcasts around Easter, April 24th)

HarperOne book now available in bookstores everywhere. DVD's now available online, in retail stores nationally May 5th. iTunes store download (purchase or rental).

Early reviews:

NEW YORK TIMES:

“...earnest, understated and profoundly respectful...the value of silence as a path to inner peace, a notion to which any Manhattan dweller can surely attest.”

NEW YORK MAGAZINE:

*Critics Pick

“Hermits, monks, and nuns share their practices, inviting us into their private sanctuaries throughout the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe.”

VARIETY:

“Greatly aided by the echoing liturgical chants of indigenous monks, Chumley's richly illuminated imagery seeks to capture mystical experiences deeply rooted in firsthand immersion in specific places... fascinating artifacts and vistas...”

In 2003, Emmy Award winning filmmaker, author and theologian, Dr. Norris J. Chumley and historian and author the Very Reverend Professor John A. McGuckin embarked on a journey of a lifetime. Their goal was to trace and document the origins of early Christian monastic life and to meet the keepers of thirteen holy sites in the regions where Christianity and the Church began.

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Over the course of eight years, they gradually gained the trust of the most eminent Patriarchs, Archbishops, Abbots, Abbesses, Monks and Nuns who allowed them unprecedented access to the inner sancta of these sacred sites—never before seen by the outside world. Their travels took them to the cave of St. Antony in Egypt; St. Catherine’s monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai; across the Mediterranean to the Greek peninsula of Mt. Athos, to the forests of Transylvania in Eastern Europe, Ukraine, and finally to Russia.

Along the way, they repeatedly discover the use of a simple and elegant ancient prayer. Known by generations of Eastern Christians as the *Jesus Prayer*, it is one of the earliest and most widely practiced prayer rituals of the ancient Church. The prayer has been chanted in remote caves and active monasteries for centuries but is largely unknown to the Western World, until now. Many say that with this prayer, it is possible to communicate directly with God.

We meet a broad spectrum of male and female monastics, including a former atheist and professor of political science (specializing in Marxism) from New Zealand and now the spiritual master of *St. Antony’s Monastery* in the Red Sea Mountains of Egypt (the first monastery ever erected at the burial site of a canonized ascetic). On the island of Serifos, Greece, a solitary monk maintains the buildings and exquisite grounds of an otherwise empty monastery. Abbess Josephina at *Varatec Monastery* in Transylvania brings us into her private cottage and demonstrates the ancient *Jesus Prayer* on camera. We meet a young Ukrainian priest who, raised under the Soviet regime, came to his calling during the “*Second Spring*” in the early 1990s. Eminent Romanian scholar and priest, Father Teofil, blind since birth and author of volumes of influential theology, teaches us that we need to make a bridge between mind and heart. In stark contrast to the remote cave and nearly empty ancient church of St. Antony, the film concludes with the newly appointed Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, performing his exquisite ritual duties to thousands of parishioners at *Sergiyev Posad Monastery* near Moscow.

Like the illuminated icons among the spiritual treasures on this journey of discovery, the very presence of “Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer” exerts more than material influence. By a combination of academic and historical seriousness, a patient camera and an enveloping calm, this film and book seem illuminated from within. Without exaggeration, a patient viewing of the film or reading of the book has the effect of contemplative prayer, bringing at minimum a sensation of profound peace. “This is a documentary film and text, but not in the traditional sense,” says Chumley “...it utilizes an apophatic mode: that of negation, or a process of elimination...it’s a study in essences and in absences: what is not spoken is as important or more important than what is.”

With this unique weave of intellectual authority and respectful sense of wonder ***MYSTERIES OF THE JESUS PRAYER*** is accessible to any audience regardless of one’s religious conviction, and will work as a catalyst for understanding the core spiritual nature of Christian religious life and its earliest roots of devotional prayer and practice.

www.JesusPrayerMovie.com

FaceBook: Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer

Twitter: JesusMysteries

Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer, by Norris J. Chumley, Ph.D. and John A. McGuckin, Ph.D. is a production of Magnetic Arts, LLC, New York. Fiscal sponsor: the Hartley Film Foundation. The stand-alone book is written by Norris J. Chumley, Ph.D. and published by HarperOne. Review copies of the film and book are available – please send an inquiry to contacts above.

Digital Distributor: SnagFilms

DVD and Theatrical Distributor: Passion River Films

Public Television: American Public Television (APT)

FACEBOOK, search “Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer” Movie Page

On Twitter, follow @Jesusmysteries

Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer

A major motion-picture and book about divine wisdom, timeless insight, silence and prayer. A Production of Magnetic Arts, LLC. Fiscal Sponsor: The Hartley Film Foundation.

The Very Rev. Dr. John Anthony McGuckin is Nielsen Professor of Late Antique & Byzantine Christian History, Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University. He is a priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Born in Newcastle, England, he is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and the author of nineteen books, including: *Standing in God’s Holy Fire: The Byzantine Spiritual Tradition*, *The Book of Mystical Chapters: Meditations on the Soul’s Ascent from the Desert Fathers and other Early Christian Contemplatives*, and *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*. Most recently *Ancient Christian Doctrines: Volume 2: Patristic Christology* (IV Press, 2006; One of a series of five volumes); and *The Orthodox Church: Its History and Spiritual Culture* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2007).

V. Rev. McGuckin has published over 100 scholarly articles, ranging in subject matter from New Testament exegesis to Byzantine iconography, mainly centering on the thought of fourth to fifth century Greek Christian theologians. He has served as visiting professor and guest lecturer in many universities and colleges in England, Ireland, Greece, Romania, Ukraine, Italy, and the United States, and has appeared as a specialist on televised discussions for the BBC, The History Channel, and other PBS programs. In 2005 he was selected as one of the prestigious Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology in America.

Norris J. Chumley, Ph.D. is an Emmy-Award-winning documentary producer, director, and author. His work has been featured on PBS, NBC, ABC, A&E, USA, Showtime/The Movie Channel, HBO/Cinemax, and WNET/13. Born in Bloomington, Indiana, he graduated with a B.F.A., Magna Cum Laude, from New York University in 1981, in Film and Television, and went on to create hundreds of commercials, made-for-television

movies, documentaries and specials, including *Mark Twain's: The Diaries of Adam and Eve* (for PBS *American Playhouse*), *Getting the Love You Want* (PBS, with Oprah Winfrey, Harville Hendrix and Helen L. Hunt), and *The Gospel According to Jesus* (HBO/Cinemax). Chumley's documentary *Little Mike* was recipient of the SONY/American Film Institute's Grand Prize in Video in 1981. His dance performance special, *Grand Central Dances*, was a recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, and received the Emmy award for Outstanding Cultural Programming in 1986. Chumley has authored *The Joy of Weight Loss: A Spiritual Guide to Fitness*, and appears with Susan Sarandon in the documentary DVD, *The Spiritual Guide to Weight Loss*. He is currently a featured blogger in the Religion section of the Huffington Post and daily columnist on Beliefnet.com *Dr. Norris Chumley Satisfied Life*, and is Executive Producer and Director of Media for Columbia University's Department of Religion: Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life. Additionally, Chumley is an adjunct professor at New York University's Kanbar Institute of Film and Television, and is Chairman of Manhattan Neighborhood Networks, the original and largest public-access television network in America.

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