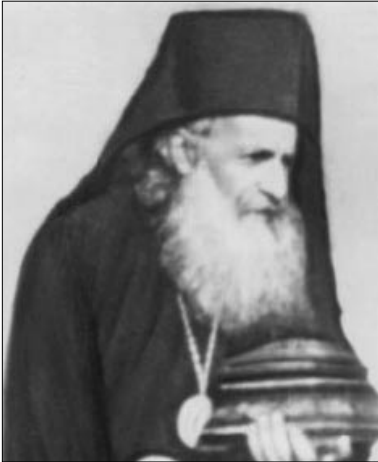


## Hieromonk Hieronymos the Hagiorite of Crete, Spiritual Father\*



**I**N SEPTEMBER of 2000, after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Convent of St. Paraskeve, Acharnai, Attika, and following a *Trisagion* at the grave of its blessed founder and spiritual Father, Elder Hieronymos, by His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, there took place the Translation of the Relics of this renowned Athonite spiritual Father, who has been lying in rest in the garden of the Convent, near the *Katholikon*, since his holy repose on 15 January 1943.

A considerable number of the Faithful, in whose pious conscience Elder Hieronymos is a contemporary Saint, attended the services, along with the small Sisterhood of the Convent, under Mother Macrina. The pale yellow, sacred bones of the Elder, exuding sanctity and consolation, were uncovered with compunction and awe.

**But who** was Elder Hieronymos?

**He was born** in Crete, in the village of Vlatos (district of Kisamos, county of Chania), in 1867, to pious parents, and was nurtured by the waters of faith and godliness.

**At an early age**, a yearning for the things of God, which inflamed his pure and God-loving heart, impelled him to forsake the world and flee to the Holy Mountain, where he lived the cœnobitic life at the Holy Monastery of St. Paul and applied himself with great zeal to the spiritual struggles of the Angelic way of life.

**Within a short time**, in return for his good obedience and total dedication to the fulfillment of the Divine commandments, he was adorned with virtues and spiritual gifts. At a suitable age, he was Ordained Deacon and Presbyter. He correspondingly increased his labors of abstinence, fasting, and prayer, vigil and hardship, and also his humility and love for God and for all mankind. He ate very little and Liturgized daily.

**Seeing his** Godly zeal and spiritual progress, the Abbot of the monastery gave him a blessing to live as a hesychast in the monastery's Holy Trinity hermitage (*asketerion*) and to come down to the monastery only when it

was necessary for him to serve Liturgy. There, his devotion to the work of watchfulness made him worthy of richer spiritual gifts, and, in particular, of clairvoyance and foresight, which were, indeed, displayed subsequently when Our Lady the *Theotokos* appeared to him.

After a considerable period of time had elapsed, he lived as a cœnobite, briefly, at the Holy Monastery of Simonopetra, ending up at the Skete of St. Panteleimon, a dependency of the Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou. Fathers from the entire Holy Mountain thronged there for spiritual guidance and counsel, especially concerning noetic prayer and dispassion.

In 1920, the Elder was sent by the governing body of the Holy Mountain to Crete, the island of his birth, together with the Precious Gifts of the Magi, which are preserved in the Monastery of St. Paul, in order to deal with a pestilential disease. On his return journey, he passed through Athens, where he confessed a great multitude of the Faithful.

For some years, however, he had suffered from a serious ophthalmological problem, which forced him, after losing his sight, to return once again to Athens, where he remained until the end of his earthly life, after nearly thirty-five years of asceticism in the Garden of the *Panagia*. It was characteristic of him, that when he regained his vision—albeit imperfectly—after treatment, he endeavored to return to the Holy Mountain. But every time he would set out, he almost lost his sight, and thus, against his will, he returned to Athens! This occurred on the eve of the calendar innovation of 1924, and, as it seems, Divine Providence had Its plans....

When the innovation was finally enforced, Elder Hieronymos steadfastly opposed it and dedicated himself to the spiritual support and encouragement of the persecuted flock of the pious Old Calendarists, devotees of our Orthodox Faith and Tradition, as a God-sent prophet and comforter, especially by means of confession and spiritual direction. At the outset, in Ampelokepoi and later on in Old Phaleron [districts of Athens—*Trans.*], he received innumerable crowds of the Faithful and guided them to a knowledge of God through repentance and confession of the right Faith.

In 1930, together with his spiritual daughter, Andromache Heliopoulou—later Nun and Abbess Christonymphe—, and other dedicated souls, he began to construct the Convent of the Holy Virgin Martyr Paraskeve in Acharnai, Attika, on the southeastern foothills of Mount Parnes. In this spiritual apiary of true Orthodoxy, the Elder now passed the remaining years of his life, both receiving and imparting enlightenment. At times he was deemed worthy of seeing St. Paraskeve in the western garden of the convent, where today there is a shrine in his honor. Both when the Elder was alive and after his repose, the convent regularly received the blessing of visits by the Confessor-Hierarch Metropolitan Chrysostomos (formerly) of Florina († 1955), who found much respite there.

Elder Hieronymos was by nature sensitive and poetic, and he left behind pamphlets and manuscripts in which he gave expression in graceful verses to his suffering and to the love for our adorable Lord which overflowed his

being, and also to his concern for the guidance of souls who sought his spiritual aid. However, like all the righteous, it fell to his lot to be tested by afflictions, sorrows, slanders, and persecutions. In particular, when the innovators tried to arrest him, in order to send him away to the Holy Mountain and put an end to his God-pleasing work as a confessor, Divine protection and assistance always safeguarded and preserved him in miraculous ways, while he himself, as an model of patience and forbearance, prayed for his persecutors, replete as he was with evangelical love.

At the start of 1943, having a premonition of his departure from this vain world, he summoned Archimandrite Chrysostomos (Naslimis) to Liturgize at the convent and commune him with the Immaculate Mysteries. Thus, prepared for the great final journey, he commended his holy soul to his Maker, Whom he loved and served so fervently and faithfully.

May his prayers uphold and strengthen us!

\* Source: Άγιος Κυρκιανός, No. 299 (November-December 2000), pp. 363, 366-367.

