

## ARCHIMANDRITE ATHANASIOS MITILINAIOS

Elder Athanasios Mitilinaios was born in 1927 in Kifisia, a suburb of Athens, Greece. His father, George was from Mitilini and his mother, Efrosini from Samos. What his parents lacked in formal education they made up in spiritual wisdom and piety, richly bequeathed to Athanasios and his sister Grammatiki.

He was drawn to a life of deep piety even before his adolescent years by the holiness and compunctionate liturgies of his childhood spiritual father and confessor, priest-monk Athanasios Hamakiotis. Athanasios studied the Scriptures from a very young age, held Bible studies in his neighborhood and in the adolescent correctional institution of Averof. He completed the requirements for two radio-electronics technical schools in Athens while serving in the Greek air force.

In 1960, when his parish priest-monk, Iakovos Schizas, was elected Metropolitan of Larisa, Athanasios was asked to join the holy priesthood and assist Metropolitan Iakovos in his ministry. After much prayer and with the blessing of his father, Athanasios was tonsured as a monk by the Metropolitan and was subsequently ordained into the priesthood. His first love, however, was sowing the divine word. He quickly established catechetical classes for all age groups in cities and in the country, in churches and in army barracks. For ten years, he cultivated the entire county of Larisa, planting and weeding, confessing, praying, liturgizing, nourishing and serving the people of God.

In November 1970, he gave into the holy desire of his closest disciples to become their Geronda [Elder], and re-established the abandoned holy monastery of Komnineiou in Stomion, a village thirty miles east of Larisa, overlooking the Aegean coastline. Even after his enthronement as abbot, he did not abandon his flock in Larisa, but continued to travel to the city Sunday afternoons and Mondays. This rigorous schedule (5-7 lectures per week) along with sleepless nights for over forty years undermined the health of the Elder.

His gift of preaching was such that scores of laity, professionals, and intellectuals would drive from Athens, Thessaloniki and nearby cities to be nourished by his pure spiritual milk (Peter 1:3). Dozens of tape recorders and video cameras recorded over 4,000 homilies, imbued with the Elder's patristic, ecclesiastical, spiritual, and Orthodox phronema (mind-set). Yet, this is only a fraction of his work since most of the Elder's homilies were never recorded. His recorded homilies were aired, and continue to be aired, by radio stations in Greece and abroad.

Many monks of Mount Athos were elated by the Elder's great gift and continue to give the recorded talks to pilgrims who visit there, initially via audiotape, then cd, and now dvd and mp3's. Recent spiritual giants such as Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain and Abbess Makrina of Volos also perceived the greatness of the Elder's gifts. The Hagiorite intellectual monk, publisher, and writer Theoklitos Dionysiatis said of Elder Athanasios, "In our days, God has

given us a man with the gift of the interpretation of Scripture.” Today the spiritual fruit of the Elder nourishes monastics and laity around the world. On May 23, 2006, at the age of 79, and after a long trial with his failing health, Elder Athanasios entered life eternal. We ask for his intercessions and his blessing upon the work which we are presenting and we pray that one day we will all be together in the Kingdom of Heaven.