

“The Good Turkish Judge”: Elder Ieronymos of Aegina



Elder Ieronymos of Aegina (1883-1966), c. 1960, a clairvoyant wonderworking ascetic originally from Cappadocia in Turkey. As a young man he visited the Holy Land and its monasteries, and then lived in Constantinople for a few years. He eventually settled on and ministered to the people of the Island of Aegina (not too far from Athens). Just prior to World War I, (c. 1913-1914) while in Constantinople, he was paid a visit by the servant of a Turkish judge. At the time he was an ordained Deacon with the name of Fr. Basil.

Photo Source: http://orthodoxwiki.org/Ieronymos_of_Aegina

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Little by little, without his seeking it, his fame spread. Everyone spoke of this new deacon who although living in Constantinople, lived ascetically, made a great impression with his prayer and resounding words, and brought help to many.

Once he was visited in his humble cell by a Turk. He was sent, he said, by his master, who was a *cadi* [judge], to invite him to his house. Father Basil became a little alarmed. He was not used to invitations for the sake of social visits, and the possibility of some unpleasantness, bringing with it some new trial, crossed his mind. But he said his prayers and went with the Turkish servant.

When they reached the house of the Turkish *cadi*, he was received by him in person and even with much warmth. They sat in the *müsafir onta* [parlor] and the *cadi* began the conversation.

"Efendi papa, I am a Turk, a Moslem. But from the wages I receive, I keep what is necessary for my family and the rest I spend on alms. I help widows, orphans, and paupers, I give dowries to poor girls for their marriage, I help the sick. I keep the fasts strictly, I pray, and, generally speaking, I try to be just. I do not show partiality to anyone, no matter how high a position he has. What do you say--all these things that I do--are they not enough for me to gain that Paradise that you Christians speak of?

Fr. Basil was impressed by all that the Turkish *cadi* told him, and the centurion Cornelius (Acts 10) immediately came to mind. He discerned between them a similarity in way of life. He understood that before him was a just man and well-intentioned man and that perhaps his mission was similar to that of the Apostle Peter to the centurion. So he decided he would give witness to his faith.

"Tell me, Effendi, do you have children?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you have servants?"

"Yes, I have servants."

"Who fulfills your commandments better, your children or your servants?"

"Certainly it's my servants. Because my children, with the boldness they have, are often disobedient and do whatever they want, whereas my servants always do what I tell them."

"Tell me, Effendi. When you die, who will be your heirs: your servants who faithfully do your wishes, or your children who disobey you?"

"Why, my children, of course. Only they have inheritance, not my servants."

"Well then, Effendi, all the things you do are good. But the only thing they are able to do is to number you in the category of good servants. But if you wish to inherit Paradise, the Kingdom of the Heavens, you have to become a son. And that can be done only through Baptism." The Turkish cadi was impressed with the illustration that Father Basil related to him. They talked some more, and in the end he asked him to catechize and baptize him. And after a little while, the Turkish cadi was baptized and became a Christian.