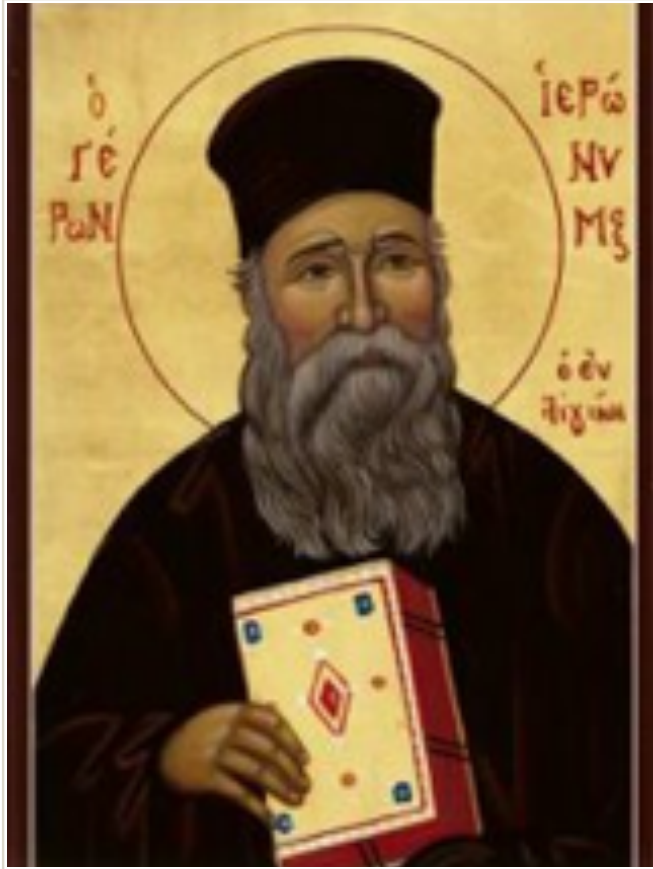


Elder Ieronymos of Aegina Returns to the Old Calendar in August 1942.



Icon of the 20th century wonder-working Elder Ieronymos of Aegina, (1883-1966)

Excerpt from "The Elder Ieronymos of Aegina" on How the Elder Returned to the Old Calendar in August, 1942

November 2, 2011 at 3:33pm

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Lover of Tradition

The region of Anatolia, Cappadocia in Asia Minor, where he lived his childhood years, where he came to know the first spiritual stirrings, where

he tasted the springing waters of Orthodoxy from the holy elders who lived there, and where he matured spiritually remained unforgettable for him. He frequently referred to his homeland and waned nostalgic for all the things he had experienced there. He never forgot the solitary chapels in the rocks, where one could go and pray in utter stillness, nor those simple people, those first-rate artisans, who, whatever they put their hand to, did it perfectly, with ardor, and with good taste.

Being a great lover of the life of stillness and prayer, he often recollected the beautiful days full of spiritual ascents and exaltations that he had passed in the chapels and abandoned monasteries of his homeland.

“Here in Greece you cannot find a quiet place to pray,” he was wont to say. “In Anatolia there were many places where you could pass the whole day in prayer, without anybody seeing you.”

This insatiable and never-silent desire for quietude and prayer, for undisturbed communion with God, never abandoned him. He never lost an opportunity to draw apart and give himself to prayer. Usually, even when he was speaking to his visitors, he would stop for a little and say, “Now let’s chant something.”

And he would begin with his imposing, deeply resounding, and melodious voice to chant “Let us worship the Word,” or “It is truly meet...” or some other hymn, these intermissions of prayer were indispensable for him, they were his life-breath, his spiritual supply-line. And at the same time, it was an excellent example for those who conversed with him, that they might form the habit of conjoining their every occupation with prayer.

He lived the essence of Orthodoxy, tradition, in all its breadth. Without rejecting any of the attainments of technological society, he had a special weakness, a passion we might say, for whatever was olden, ancient-from material things to the spiritual. He liked the ancient order of the services, the old books, antiques, because he believed that they carried the seal of their maker, they had been constructed with fondness and were not machine-made and in bad taste.

With such convictions and perceptions, having always lived his life within but also “outside this world,” within the strict province of tradition, he felt a certain uneasiness from the time that the ecclesiastical Calendar was changed and the new was enforced. These anxieties of his increased as the years went by and he beheld many Orthodox customs changed. He did not like the abridgement of the church services, the secularization of the clergy, the abandonment of the Orthodox way of life. And although he always attended to the essence and not the dim outward form, he believed that these alterations in traditional usages and forms in and of themselves betrayed a certain indifference and slackness towards the Faith: that this was the beginning of a downhill slide whose end was unknown. For this reason, he often thought of following the Old Calendar, especially since he saw that the Old Calendarists faithfully followed tradition and would not tolerate innovations and transgressions in matters pertaining to the Faith. For some time he hesitated, and prayed continually and fervently to God, that He might reveal to him His will. He awaited some sign, some indication from God, that would make it clear to him what he should do.

In August of 1942, specifically on the 23rd of the month, [1] the eve of the feast of Saint Dionysius of Aegina, when the hospital church celebrated, Procopios, the then Metropolitan of Hydra, Spetsai, and Aegina, called him and told him to get ready so that on the morrow, on the occasion of the church’s festival, they might concelebrate. Many priests of Aegina, who knew that Father Ieronymos was sympathetic to the Old Calendar, but were ignorant of the vision he had seen, were under the impression that he had stopped liturgizing at the hospital church on account of his Old Calendarist sympathies. They reported this to the Metropolitan, and he, in order to ascertain the accusation, requested that they concelebrate. [2]

Men of God perceive the finger of Divine Providence behind every action and occurrence. Father Ieronymos, who had stopped liturgizing some eighteen years before, considered this invitation from the Metropolitan to be God’s answer to his prayers. He prayed again all night long and finally decided not to go and concelebrate with the Metropolitan, but to follow the Old Calendar openly thereafter. He departed on the morrow from the hospital very early in the morning for the hermitage of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, where the Eldress Eupraxia was already staying.

From there he sent the Metropolitan the following notification of resignation from the hospital church.

To the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Hydra
Kyr Kyr Procopios
Aegina

Your Eminence,

I beseech you to accept my resignation from the hospital, because since 1924 and henceforward, my yearning and also my zeal have been for the Orthodox Church and the Faith.

Since my childhood I have revered her, having dedicated my whole life to her, being obedient to the traditions of the God-bearing Fathers.

I acknowledge and proclaim the Patristic Calendar to be the correct one, as you also attest. [3]

For this reason I request of you, that you yourself also pray that I abide till the end a genuine child of the Orthodox Church.

Kissing your Eminence's right hand,
I most humbly remain
The servant of our Crucified Lord Jesus Christ,
Ieronymos Apostolides

Thus simply and quietly, without the beating of drums, excommunications, and fanatical manifestations, he followed the Old Calendar the rest of his life.

This event did not in any way influence his behavior towards his spiritual children. He received them all without distinction, whether they followed "the Old" or "the New." He never preached on the calendar issue. His foremost and principal aim was to instill into his visitors faith and love towards Christ; his chief care was how they progressed in the spiritual life,

how they were united to God. He never took part in fruitless and harmful conversations concerning the calendar issue, even when he was challenged to do so. He contented himself with simply confessing that he followed the Old Calendar since “that’s the right one,” and that from the time the Church put the New Calendar into practice “things just have not been going well at all.” He never permitted immoderate and harmful fanaticism to prevail in his soul. On the contrary, he always strove to calm spirits. Once a visitor asked him, “Elder, do you follow the Old?”

“Yes.”

“Who are you with?” She meant, with which faction.

“With all.”

“But they have quarrels with one another.”

“I am not with quarrels.”

He was very discerning and refined in his ways. Even when he went so far as to censure, he did it with the utmost love, and not only did he not cause adverse reactions, but on the contrary he elicited confession and repentance, which was his intended purpose.

Botsis, Peter. *The Elder Ieronymos of Aegina*. Brookline, MA: The Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2007, pp. 159-163.

[1] That is, according to the New or civil Calendar; it was the tenth of August according to the Church (Old) Calendar. Since the feast of Saint Dionysius is August 24, the Elder Ieronymos was being asked to celebrate Saint Dionysius' feast according to the New Calendar. —TRANS.

[2] The truth of the matter is that Father Ieronymos, like his contemporary the holy Papa Nicholas Planas of Athens (+1932), quietly celebrated many of the feasts without liturgizing according to the Old Calendar. That he never liturgized or concelebrated according to the Papal Calendar since he

had desisted from serving before the change of the calendar in 1924 was very convenient for him and somewhat eased his conscience. —TRANS.

[3] Many, if not the majority, of the bishops and other clergy of the State Church of Greece at the time privately acknowledged that the Julian Calendar used by the Church since the days of our Saviour was the correct calendar for reckoning the feasts as opposed to the innovating Papal New Calendar; but for fear of reprisals, they would not proclaim this publicly. —TRANS.

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