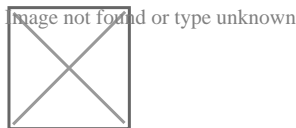


Announcement by the Association of the Friends of Vatopaidi Monastery (Konstantinos Loulis President of the Association of the Friends of the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, Former Civil Governor of Mount Athos)

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Conveying the emotions of its thousands of members, the Board of Directors of the Association “Friends of Vatopaidi Monastery” would like to express – and why not indeed shout from the housetop – our joy over the justification of our hopes. The final triumph of the truth was festally occasioned by the recent and unanimous verdict of acquittal by the three-member Criminal Court of Appeals of Athens for all the defendants involved in the multi-faceted, supposed scandal of Vatopaidi Monastery, which was competently – judicially, that is – shown to be a spurious fabrication and a non-scandal.



The charge for our Association was sparked spontaneously and instinctively, immediately following what we regarded as the uncalled-for imprisonment of the Monastery's Abbot, Elder Ephraim, as a modest expression of moral support to him as he weathered this tempest, as well as to all the members of the Monastery's brotherhood.

Thanks are owed individually to each one of our Association's thousands of members for their united front and support throughout these many years of misadventures for Elder Ephraim and his monastic family.

Justice, fortunately, with its befitting detachment from the surrounding murky and irresponsibly poisoned atmosphere of the public clamor and behavior of the previous nine years, showed itself to be impartial and unaffected. Consequently, it returned all the accused to the monastic and to public life "without stain or wrinkle". It confirmed with its "seal" that the celebrated Holy Great Monastery of Vatopaidi – and representing it today, its entire brotherhood – may now continue its course straight ahead, both in its God-pleasing spiritual work and in its multifaceted pastoral and social activity, while at the same time carrying out a massive program of restoration.

Since 1990, when Elder Ephraim became Abbot of the Monastery, despite its adverse financial situation these past years and the campaign against the Brotherhood, structures covering tens of thousands of square meters that were near collapse have been restored, with the primary aim of preserving sacred heirlooms with centuries of history.

It could be said without exaggeration that the Holy Great Monastery of Vatopaidi is a contemporary Basilian "House of Charity" shouldered by hardworking, studious, infirm and unpaid individuals tested by tribulation. As monks they are men with no salary or possessions, poorer than the "wild beasts" that sought to savage them.

We wish to believe, following the just verdict of acquittal, that the various non-believers, disbelievers and half-believers will be convinced that the Athos of innocence, the Garden of the Virgin Mary in its entirety, but especially the Monastery of Vatopaidi, will continue to constitute the time-honored Ark of Orthodoxy and of Hellenism.

Elder Ephraim, his codefendant Monk Arsenios, as well as the rest of members of the populous brotherhood of the Monastery, despite their unbearable Golgotha, hold no ill-will against anyone who may have helped fabricate this scandal. Moreover, they interpret the various trials of life as divine lessons, and they follow

the dictate of Scripture to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you”. In this way they accept and transmit the timely message of the upcoming Great and Holy Week, “the Resurrection comes by passing through Golgotha”.

All of us, however – the thousands of members of our Association – and, we believe, the entire Greek community, would hope that the above verdict of acquittal will be another occasion to constrain and bring reason to the uncontrolled “Media Republic” in our country, where thought has been replaced by the impression of the image, resulting in judicial authority having been incompetently substituted at times by a televised predetermined guilt at the expense of accused persons.

The eradication of the “media preordained condemnations” would be a wide-spectrum “antibiotic” to the various “infections” that attack and threaten the democracy of our country.

Konstantinos Loulis

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