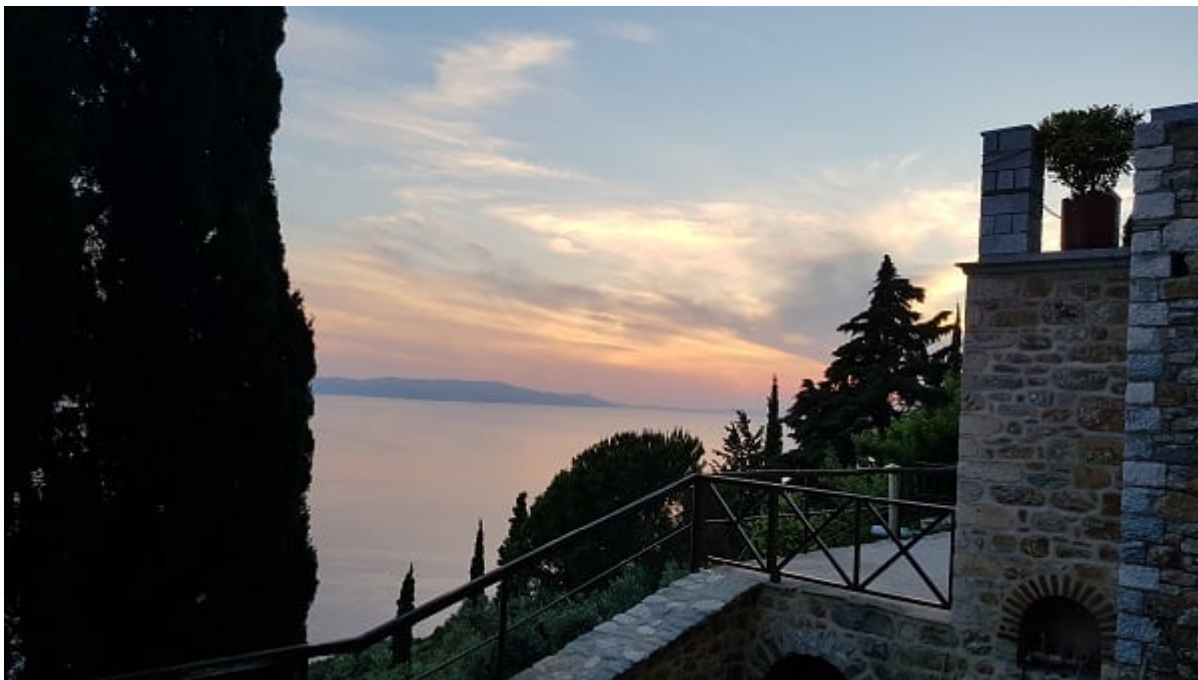


Our Blessed and God-bearing Fathers of the Holy Mountain (Metropolitan Nikolaos (Hatzinikolaou) of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Honoring the saints is a fundamental element of Orthodox tradition and life. Through the churches dedicated to them, through the expressive icons of them as they are in eternity, through the poetic services, through their exciting Lives, through the constant invocation of their name, they're people who are very much alive for us and their grace intervenes in the lives of the faithful, strengthening, supporting and sanctifying.



It's not unusual for the Church to address a group of saints, rather than individuals. In this way, we honor the infants slaughtered by Herod, the Fathers of the Ecumenical Synods, and those who were martyred en masse in the various persecutions. It would have been hard, therefore, for the sensitive, poetic, monastic and theological soul of our blessed father, Saint Nikodimos the Athonite, to refrain from displaying his gifts and embracing the whole company of the genuinely God-bearing Fathers, monks and ascetics, who truly shone on the Holy Mountain. It was

right and proper that their lives should be appreciated, that honor be accorded to them from the whole of the Church world-wide, and that their earthly model and divine grace be provided to the faithful for inspiration and sanctification. This is how the wonderful, spiritual creation of the service for 'our Blessed and God-bearing Fathers, who shone on the Holy Mountain' came to be written.



The modern Elder, Saint Païsius, used to say that if Saint Nikodimos the Athonite hadn't written anything else and if we knew nothing more of his life, the mere fact that he composed this magnificent service would suffice to convince us of his sanctity and unique grace. It's a service which, while it certainly praises the Athonite saints, also demonstrates the sanctity of the hymnographer himself in a unique way.



The life of the Athonite saint is very different in a majestic way and is recognizable by the 'otherness' of its nature. There's nothing else like the Holy Mountain in the whole of world history. It's a unique laboratory of sanctity. It's a variety of paths of total dedication, which all lead, however, to the peak of 'the greatest alteration'. At the same time, it's a one-way road which ends with the 'contemplation of the majesty of God and the sight of His glory'.



As hymnological poetry, the service of the Athonite Fathers really is a masterpiece. Older Athonite composers, such as Matthaïos Vatopaidinos, Ioasaf Dionysiatis, or hieromonk Athanasios and monk Daniil, both from Katounakia, have provided its

harmonious melodies from their Athonite experience, have mingled talent with gifts and have set the words to music of rare grace.



What remains is the execution. This has been undertaken by the Byzantine choir TROPOS, friends of Athos, under the direction of the choirmaster Konstantinos Angelidis and with the assistance of Ioannis Papahronis and Ioannis Hasanidis, who teach chanting at the Athoniada School. They've transformed the musical genius of a composition of written symbols into a harmonious expression of live sounds, from an abstract concept into a musical feast. What gestated as a concept and theological truth has been given birth by TROPOS, in the best possible way, as a thing of incomparable acoustic beauty and rational worship.



When the ineffable and inexpressible mystery of God's truth can be formulated in words, then we can talk about an experience of enlightenment. But when this truth is expressed through the instrument of unparalleled poetry, set to music with rare inspiration and is then made public in the form of an exceptional vocal delivery, this brings every 'humbled heart', 'pierced within desire for God and altered by divine love', to spiritual exhilaration and mystical elevation.



It's certainly 'meet and right' that we should congratulate those behind the idea of this wonderful effort and praise those who contributed to its most excellent presentation. We would also like to thank them for combining truth with beauty, genuine theology with real art, successfully taking the fragrant blossoms of the Holy Mountain and sharing them, as ripe fruit, with the starving and struggling Church in the world. They've transformed the harshness of ascetic teaching into a melodic hymn, the extremes of the monastic life of the Athonite saints into an

experience of worship for the whole Church. May God bless them and grant them His grace as a reward for their efforts.



The feast of our Blessed and God-bearing Fathers of the Holy Mountain is moveable, falling two weeks after Pentecost. So this year it was on 18 June (New Calendar). It is the patronal feast of the Daniilei brotherhood at Katounakia. The photographs are from this year's celebration.