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Elder Iosif Vatopaidinos, a Man of Abounding Paternal Love (Chrysostomos Papadakis, Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Throne)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



At the presentation of the book on Elder Iosif Vatopaidinos, at the Athens Concert Hall, 19 April 2018.

Nine years have passed since the demise of our blessed Elder, Iosif Vatopaidinos. Throughout this time, many devout souls were hoping earnestly to see his biography published. Naturally, there was not the slightest chance that the Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi would fail to proceed with such a publication about the man to whom it owes its regeneration.

It was in no rush to do so, however.



For its capable helmsman and unflagging labourer for the cause of good, Elder Efraim, it was not his first priority. With great insight, he determined that the passage of time would preserve the text from any shades of emotion, such as excess warmth, bitterness or any form of exaggeration which would have been humanly justified, but only in the immediate aftermath of the Elder's demise.

Time always contributes to mature reflection and a proper evaluation of words and deeds. It is a filter to achieve a better quality of result.

What the respected author has presented us with this evening is characterized by responsibility, a meticulous presentation of events, evidence from witnesses, clarity of expression and an orderly arrangement of his material. All of this in a language which flows, which is felicitously constructed, and contains the required quotations from the words of the Elder, the subject of the biography. His many letters are the richest and most valuable source. They bring to light hitherto unknown aspects of his monastic vocation: from his first steps at Stavrovouni until the time when he and his brotherhood made landfall at Vatopaidi, at the will of the Mother of God, as was revealed in a number of ways.

Other sources were his books, his audio-visual recordings and the personal recollections of his spiritual children.

Researching, selecting, ordering the material and arranging it into a final text was a

painstaking and time-consuming task. It was supported from above, however, through the blessing of the Elder, who taught at length on the virtue of diligence.

The fruit of the sedulous efforts of the holy Abbot is the volume being presented today as a Life. He was the person best suited to undertake the writing, since he lived with the blessed Elder continuously for many years. He practiced obedience and found peace through it in his Elder's kindness.

His obedience before being raised to the position of Abbot, and also thereafter, was exemplary because it was undertaken with faith and dedication. His discipleship was willingly entered upon and punctilious, even in the details. His experience as successor to the spiritual fatherhood of the community was considerable. But there was something else: the great burden of pain through which, as a true son, he shared in the experience of the Elder's cross. This experience helped him towards a deeper understanding of the innocent soul of his Father and, with spiritual confidence, he was able dispassionately to express truths through these pages.

The Foreword to the book is a dignified letter from His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew. It is a hymn for Elder Iosif, formally bearing the weight of his signature as Overseer of the Holy Mountain and Patriarch of the Greek Nation.

The 'Introduction' is of a personal, intimate nature. It is a text felicitously placed as the Introduction, because the biographical details quoted by the most venerable Abbot lucidly present the ways in which Divine Providence worked for him, from the first surges of joy in the Christian life to his entry into the community of Elder Iosif, where he remained for 28 years.

In the last paragraph, he writes: 'It was a bold undertaking on our part to present in this book the biography and virtuous life of our Elder, Iosif Vatopaidinos, and I fear that perhaps we have not managed to reveal the true dimensions of his virtuous personality, to delve into his "deep heart". It is, nevertheless, an expression of our love for his person and also a humble offering to all those who, since he fell asleep in the Lord, have been asking us to make something of this nature available'[1].

Might I add that this fear, this sensitivity, has brought about a result for which we are grateful.

It would be impossible to present the content of the book, certainly not chapter by chapter. Readers can choose to scrutinize it at their leisure, while enjoying a multitude of photographs. We have preferred, therefore, on the basis of the contents, to highlight a few of the many aspects of the saintly personality of this

multi-faceted, spiritual jewel of a man.

[1] Archimandrite Efraim Vatopaidinos, Γέρων Ιωσήφ Βατοπαιδινός, Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi 2018, p. 21.