

## Two Romanian Athonite elders canonised by Ecumenical Patriarchate



Two Romanian elders from Mount Athos have been added to the synaxarion by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. They are Hieroschemamonk Niphon (Ionescu), the founder of Prodromos Skete, and Venerable Nectarios (Crețu) the Protopsaltis, also known as the Nightingale of Mount Athos.

The canonisations were approved during the Holy Synod meeting of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which convened on Saturday. During the same session, Bishop Antonios of Rodostol was elected Auxiliary Bishop of the Symi Metropolis.

The canonisation of the two elders from the Romanian Skete of the Honourable Forerunner was initially proposed by the local Synod of the Metropolis of Muntenia and Dobruja during its May session.

“This Nectarios the Protopsaltis, also known as Nectarios the Vlach, was one of the greatest Romanian hesychasts who lived on Mount Athos,” explained Patriarch Daniel of Romania at that time.

“He is widely known and appreciated not only among Romanians on Mount Athos but also among monks of other nationalities. The Ecumenical Patriarchate was also

receptive, recognising him as a great chanter — often called the Nightingale of the Holy Mountain,” added His Beatitude.

Earlier this year, at the end of August, two other Romanian elders were canonised: Venerable Dionysius (Ignat) of Colciu and Venerable Petronius (Tănase) of Prodromos Skete.

#### Saint Niphon of Prodromos Skete

He was born in Vaslui County to poor but deeply devout parents. Hearing of the renowned abbot Archimandrite Irinarh Rosetti of Horaița Monastery, he joined the brotherhood in 1826, taking monastic vows under the name Nathanael.

In 1840, together with Monk Nectarios from the same monastery, he left for Mount Athos, first living at Koutloumousiou Monastery. Later, they purchased a small hermitage at the Skete of Saint Anne, where Nathanael received the great schema, becoming Hieroschemamonk Niphon.

Gathering many monks around him — some from Horaița — Niphon, together with his friend Nectarios, purchased a larger cell by the sea at a place called Kerasia, on the property of the Great Lavra Monastery.

In 1852, the two founded the Romanian Skete of the Honourable Forerunner, laying the foundation of its church. By 1860, the church was completed and consecrated by Bishop Isaia Vicol of Roman, who appointed Hieroschemamonk Niphon Ionescu as the first abbot.

In 1870, Niphon resigned and returned to Romania, where he founded the Bucium Hermitage in Iași as a dependency of Prodromos Skete. Later, he went back to Mount Athos and withdrew into a seaside cave near the skete, where he continued his life of prayer until his repose.

#### Saint Nectarios the Protosaltis of Prodromos Skete

Venerable Nectarios Crețu, known as the Protosaltis, was one of the most gifted Romanian monks to have lived on Mount Athos, regarded in his time as the foremost chanter of the Holy Mountain.

He was born in 1804 in Huși, where he studied under Bishop Grigorie of Golia (†1846), later joining Neamț Monastery alongside his brother, Monk Athanasius. There he took monastic vows, receiving the name Nectarios.

In 1842, the two brothers settled in one of the hermitages of the Skete of Saint Anne on Mount Athos.

In 1854, they moved to the newly built Prodromos Skete, where Nectarios served as protopsaltis and spiritual elder. In his later years, he retired to a hermitage in the Vigla desert, where he lived a life of prayer until his death.

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