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Mount Athos: A supplicatory prayer at the place of ascetic struggle of Saint Gregory Palamas



On the Second Sunday of Great Lent, after the Divine Liturgy, fathers of the Vatopedi Brotherhood, together with the Abbot Elder Ephraim, went for a reverent pilgrimage near the Monastery to the place of ascetic struggle of Saint Nikodemos the Hesychast and Saint Gregory Palamas, where they offered a supplicatory prayer service.

The Holy Great Monastery of Vatopedi in the 14th century was a strong, flourishing, and renowned centre of Hesychasm. For this reason it gathered within and around it important hesychast figures such as Saint Savvas the New, Gregory Palamas, Philotheos Kokkinos, and Nikodemos the Hesychast. “All of them were ardent defenders of the hesychastic experience and theology, and they chose as their place of ascetic struggle either the Monastery itself or the nearby cells.”

Saint Nikodemos lived as an ascetic in a cell near the Vatopedi Monastery in the early 14th century. There Saint Gregory Palamas found him practising the ascetic life, and because of his great virtue he desired to place himself under his spiritual obedience. While living near Saint Nikodemos, Gregory Palamas practised complete obedience and submission, continual fasting and vigil, unceasing prayer, fervent devotion to the Theotokos, divine manifestations, and lofty spiritual states, to

which he was guided and sustained by the contemplative and discerning Saint Nikodemos.

All the biographers of Saint Gregory Palamas refer to his elder, Saint Nikodemos, and describe him as “a noble and wondrous monk in both practice and contemplation, known throughout Mount Athos for his virtue.” He was widely known among the Athonites, living a hesychastic life and being regarded as a great spiritual elder.

The source of these accounts is Saint Philotheos Kokkinos, who writes that Saint Gregory Palamas remained with Saint Nikodemos for three years (1319–1322), until the blessed repose of the saint.

A video of the supplicatory prayer can be viewed at vatopedi.gr.

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