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Mount Athos Celebrates Christmas in Byzantine Splendor



The monasteries of Mount Athos celebrated Christmas on January 7 in an atmosphere which truly brought Byzantine splendor back to life. An all-night Christmas vigil was held as snow fell outside, while visitors were bathed in the golden glow of candles and chandeliers. Monasteries on Mt. Athos follow the Julian calendar rather than the Western, or Gregorian, calendar.

Visitors and guests who had the privilege to be in Vatopedi, one of the oldest and most famous monasteries on the Holy Mountain (“Agio Oros” in Greek), experienced true Byzantine mysticism and grandeur by participating in the overnight vigil in the early hours of January 7.



The consecutive snowstorms of the last several weeks created a magical Christmas atmosphere all across the Athos peninsula, with some of the monasteries shrouded in snow exceeding one meter in depth.

The harsh, wintry conditions didn’t stop the many Christmas faithful, however. Their wish to celebrate Christmas in the manner that it was done for many centuries, dating back to the Byzantine ages, was much stronger than any obstacles posed by the bad weather.

Mount Athos, just northeast of the city of Thessaloniki, is home to twenty monasteries under the direct jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. It is commonly referred to as “The Holy Mountain” or the “Mountain of Silence”. Its political entity is known as the “Athonite State”, which is a self-governed autonomous region within the nation of Greece.



Source: Greek Reporter

Photos: Proto Thema