

28/07/2020

## **JONATHAN JACKSON: MY JOURNEY TO ORTHODOXY BEGAN WITH A PASCHAL PROCESSION IN ROMANIA**



In a new interview with the Romanian Orthodox magazine Lumnea Credintei, the Emmy Award-winning actor and singer Jonathan Jackson spoke about his journey to Orthodoxy and his various artistic works dedicated to the glory of God, including the new award-winning documentary dedicated to St. Joseph the Hesychast.

As Jackson revealed, his journey to Orthodoxy began on a trip to Romania. He recalls:

For me, the journey to Orthodoxy began in Romania. And I think this happened thanks to the prayers of the believers in Romania, and, of course, also those of the monks of the Holy Mountain and others, from other parts of the world, but especially from Romania, because the first time I saw a [Paschal] procession was in Romania, from the window of the hotel. I saw a procession of people carrying candles and I had no idea what it was about ... and when they taught me to say,

“Christ is Risen!” [Hristos a înviat—O.C.], something was already welling up within me. So I would like to thank all my brothers and sisters in Christ for all their prayers, love, and support. It means so much to us! My wife and I feel this very, very deeply.

And speaking of the new documentary on St. Joseph the Hesychast, in which Jackson portrayed the great 20th-century Elder, he noted that he was grateful that the documentary received recognition, highlighting the good work that the Athonite Monastery of Vatopedi does for the salvation of the world.

On his first trip to Mt. Athos, Jackson met Elder Ephraim of Vatopedi, a spiritual grandchild of St. Joseph, who told him that his life would never be the same after converting to Orthodoxy and after visiting the Holy Mountain. And “nothing has been the same since,” Jackson confirms.

Orthodoxy changes lives through lived experiences, not mere intellectual ideas, Jackson emphasized: “And one of the aspects that I particularly like about the Orthodox religion is that it does not just consist of philosophies or purely intellectual ideas; its core is concrete experience. Orthodoxy means encounter, relationship with God and His family—from everywhere, but also from all historical epochs; communion with the saints ... but it is an experience, a meeting.”

“I feel the love and prayers of St. Joseph the Hesychast, not only for myself and my family, but, in fact, for the whole world!” the actor emphasized.

And addressing the present pandemic, Jackson noted that while we should not allow ourselves to fall into despair, being separated from the Church services and Sacraments is “basically the hardest thing.”

Jackson recently released a video, “Kosovo (Joy of All Who Sorrow),” dedicated to the holy sites and Orthodox faithful of persecuted Kosovo.

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