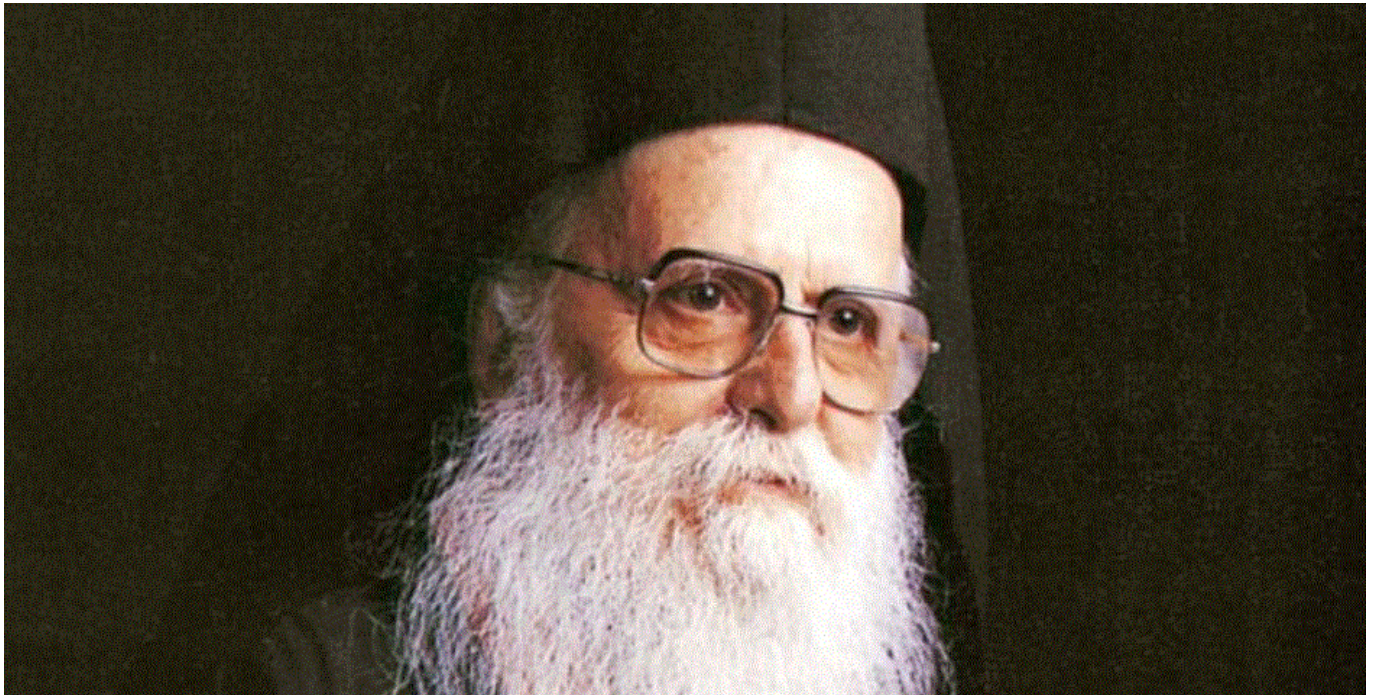


Canonisation of Elder Gerasimos Mikrayannanitis of Mount Athos



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The Monk Gerasimos the Mikragiannanite (September 5, 1905 - December 7, 1991) and born Anastasios - Athanasios was a contemporary hymn writer, one of the rare cases of hymn writers, that most of his work was immediately used in the liturgical life of the Church.

He was born in Droviani, in the province of Delvinos in Northern Epirus. He learned to read and write in the elementary school of his hometown. With the end of primary school, the then adolescent Anastasios was about to leave the village environment. His father had already settled in Piraeus, where he worked. And he himself had to follow him to work near him. Thus, he was forced to abandon his mother and younger brother.

He initially settled in Piraeus, near his father and aunt. Then they moved to Athens. In his new residence he continued his studies at the high school. His zeal for writing

and education was impressive. After high school he continued his studies at a higher Institution of Greek education. In Athens he also took care of his spiritual life and went to church regularly.

Saint Gerasimos himself remembers: “Our parish was Saint Dionysios the Areopagite. We usually went on Vasilissis Sofias Avenue, where the old Rizareios School was, in Agios Georgios of Rizareios, because it was close. Nektarios of Pentapolis also worked there repeatedly, whom I saw.” In Athens he cultivated the thought of becoming a monk and thought of leaving early, before assuming other obligations. And it didn’t take him long to realise his inclination. So he came to Mount Athos on August 15, 1923.

On Mount Athos, he became a novice in the hermitage of Saint Anna. Specifically in ‘Mikra Agia Anna’, in the cell of the Holy Forerunner, having the Asia Minor hieromonk Meletios Ioannidis as an elder.

There, in this desolate, arid, sharp and barren location of the Skete of Little Saint Anne, he found absolute spiritual joy and fulfillment of his life’s dream. He was then able to devote himself undividedly to the exercise of the spiritual life and to the study of the sacred ecclesiastical texts.

On October 20, 1924, during the vigil in memory of Saint Gerasimos of Kefallinia, he was tonsured a schema-monk, taking the saint’s name. The monk Gerasimos, fully adapted to his new life, was a model of obedience, humility and every virtue.

Along with performing the daily monastic services and studying, the two monks of the hut, elder and subordinate, worked for their survival as human beings. Elder Meletios knew well and practiced for years the art of making wood-carved seals used in the preparation of the prosphoro bread for the Divine Liturgy. Close to him, the young monk Gerasimos also learned this art, which he practiced.

However, what fascinated him was dealing with writing. He tells us about it: “Here, when I came, I cultivated and recapitulated my knowledge. The ancient writers, I was satiated by them all, I digested them all. I had some books from the world, which I gave to some poor children who visited me from Sykia across the street.”

After the passage of a few years, the elder Meletios left for Athens for good, leaving the new monk Gerasimos completely alone. Below the hut of the Holy Forerunner is the hut of the Dormition of the Virgin. The ascetic Elder Abimelech lived in it (who reposed in 1965). In 1946, the later Hieromonk Dionysios submitted to him. Fr. Dionysios was joined by Fr. Gerasimos and later, in 1966, they joined to make a brotherhood.

In particular, in 1956, in the cave where the two monks lived the ascetic life, they built a small chapel and in 1960 completed it with the austerity. Elder Gerasimos, among others, was famous for his hospitality, which he also inspired in his subordinates. It is worth mentioning that his ascetic and solitary life in no way affected his sociability. The lay visitors who came to him always left benefited and charmed, as his speech was always careful.

Prudent in his responses, he systematically avoided untimely discussions and chatter; he always sought silence, which he considered “the mother of wise concepts”. In addition to the laity, the visitors were often clergymen or even monks, who came with the same purpose: to listen to the elder, to benefit spiritually and to learn from his virtuous life. During his lifetime, he was assigned solitary ministries. He was a librarian and official of Catechism school of the hermitage of Agia Anna. As a librarian, he even engaged in the compilation and publication of a catalogue of the manuscript codices of the library of Kyriakos of the Skete.

In this capacity he helped many scholars in finding and obtaining copies of the manuscripts. He himself wrote valuable studies and articles. Monk Gerasimos Mikrayannanitis is one of the rare cases of hymn writers, that most of his work was immediately used in the liturgical life of the Church.

Thus, most of the work is accessible, despite the fact that only a small part of it has been published. This is because many services are widely circulated in typed photocopies.

Saint Gerasimos considered hymnography itself an extension of prayer, communion with God and the saints: "I have the saint in front of me. That's why I don't want to communicate with anyone else at that moment. Hymnography, this spiritual work, is a union of the soul with God; it is a prayer of wonder; it is a meditation of the mind; it is a secret theoria; it is a mystery, which is not interpreted and is not externalised with reasons. Hymnography is the underlying philosophy. It does not express itself in these words. One has to try it to feel it."

Gerasimos Mikrayannanitis passed away on 7 December 1991. His rich hymnographic work is estimated at more than 2000 sacred services. This great Hymnographer of the Great Church of Christ was awarded a silver medal by the Academy of Athens on December 28, 1968.

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