

## ***LETTER ON THE GUIDANCE OF ELDER JOSEPH REGARDING THE CALENDAR ISSUE***

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*Prologue: The Traditional Orthodox in France translated the book Monastic Wisdom into French in the early 1990's. The Traditional Orthodox in France use the traditional calendar and are not in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate because of its involvement in the Ecumenical Movement. The Orthodox who follow the new calendar and are in communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople asked the Traditional Orthodox in France why they promoted the Elder Joseph as a great light of the Church but did not follow his example of remaining in communion with the Patriarchate despite strongly disagreeing with the adoption of the new calendar and the involvement in the Ecumenical Movement. The Traditional Orthodox in France appealed to Father Panteleimon to write an explanation of the complicated events that led to the Elder Joseph leaving the non-commemorators (known as the Zealots) and to start commemorating in the early 1950's. They asked him to explain why the synodia stopped commemorating in 1965 only to resume again in 1972. Furthermore, they asked why he thought the Elder Joseph would not have countenanced such a move. Father Panteleimon explained that he came to this conclusion because of various things he personally knew of while the Elder Joseph was still living and also the attitudes of the synodia he personally witnessed during the seven years they were not commemorating.*

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The Elder Joseph the Cave Dweller arrived on the Holy Mountain in his twenties prior to the calendar change, which took place in 1924. He went straight to the desert of Athos and after a few years settled under the obedience of the Elder Ephraim of the Cell of the Annunciation at Katounakia, which is in close proximity to Karoulia. Then came the calendar change. In the beginning all the monasteries and sketes of the Holy Mountain resisted the change. They all refused to follow the directive of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Not only did they not adopt the Papal Calendar, but they all ceased commemorating the name of the Patriarch, pointing out to all that the three former Pan-Orthodox Councils and many local councils had condemned the Papal Calendar as an innovation attempting to overturn the liturgical unity of the Church. Following the anathema of the Seventh Ecumenical Council against all innovations that should ever be enacted against Holy Tradition, all these councils put under anathema any Orthodox who should attempt to adopt the Papal Gregorian Calendar either in its Paschalion or Menologion. Thus at the time of the change, all the monks of the Holy Mountain became zealots, i.e., non-commemorators.

The Patriarchate as well as the Church of Greece, which adopted the innovation, were very embarrassed by this stand of the Holy Mountain, as also by the refusal of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to adopt the calendar innovation, and knew only too well that the pious would look to the example of both the Holy Mountain and Jerusalem in not accepting the innovation, which is what actually did happen. Therefore, both the Patriarchate and the innovating Church of Greece, through the civil authorities, tried every means to intimidate the Fathers of the Holy Mountain, by

threats and coercion, to obey the encyclical of the Patriarchate of Constantinople which had ordered the calendar change.

When I arrived on the Holy Mountain in the mid-fifties, some thirty years after the innovation, the older Fathers who had been witnesses to the events of 1924 told me that many of the leaders among the monastics (i.e., the abbots and the most erudite of the monks) were threatened with physical expulsion and exile from the Holy Mountain. I was told that a battleship of the Greek navy had anchored opposite the Monastery of Gregoriou, which was the most vocal in resisting the innovation, and threatened to bombard the monastery. The outcome was that, one after the other, all twenty monasteries began to commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarchate. But all, except Vatopedi, refused to change to the Papal Calendar.

In 1922 there had occurred the catastrophe of Asia Minor, and a great influx of refugees, fleeing the massacres of the Turks, had come to Greece for safety. In 1924, the year of the calendar change, the Exchange of Populations (Christian Greek and Moslem Turk) took place by agreement between Greece and Turkey. Thus, the fate of all the refugees, both of 1922 and those that arrived in 1924, was sealed, with no hope of their ever returning to their homes in Asia Minor. Over one million Orthodox Christians perished in the massacres of the times enacted by the Turks, and over one-million-and-a-half Orthodox Christians were found as homeless refugees in Greece. This meant that the refugees had to be settled throughout Greece. Using, therefore, the Asia Minor tragedy as a pretext, the Greek government confiscated all the land holdings of the monasteries of the Holy Mountain, ostensibly to settle refugees. (In the years that followed, negotiations took place between the monasteries and the government, with the outcome that a yearly stipend was to be paid to the monasteries for the properties that had been confiscated.) The real purpose at the time (1924) for confiscating the properties was to punish and further intimidate the Holy Mountain for its refusal to comply with the calendar innovation. Not only the properties outside the Holy Mountain belonging to the monasteries were taken, but inroads into the Holy Mountain itself were made. Since the monasteries had not been built at the beginning of the peninsula but rather somewhat further out, the area right up to the Russian Skete of Kormitsa was confiscated and the small island of Amoliani and an old Byzantine defense tower which belonged to the Monastery of Great Lavra were populated with refugees. A whole town was created where the tower is, called Prosphori today, as also Nea Rhoda, etc. The reason why the government did not proceed to confiscate even more of the Holy Mountain itself is that, providentially, the Russian Monastery of Saint Panteleimon had the Skete of Kormitsa in the locale, and if this had been taken, it would have created an international affair. That the confiscation of the properties of the monasteries was a punishment is evident from the fact that the large Monastery of Vatopedi, which changed to the Papal Calendar, was rewarded, and none of its properties were confiscated. (Vatopedi, after having been with the Papal Calendar for some fifty years, has finally returned to the Church Calendar.)

Thus, today, all the Holy Mountain abides by the Church Calendar, but all the monasteries, except Esphigmenou, commemorate the name of the Patriarch. Those who do not commemorate are called zealots. Until the new brotherhoods arrived at the end of the seventies, the monasteries were sympathetic to the zealots and aided them in whatever manner they could. The monasteries commemorated by necessity, but they attested that the calendar change had been made

uncanonically and thus refused to adopt the Papal Calendar themselves. They believed and hoped that one day a Pan-Orthodox Council would rectify the situation and return all the innovators to the Church Calendar.

The zealots were concentrated mostly in the desert part of the Holy Mountain— the Sketes of Kavsokalivia, Saint Anne's, Little Saint Anne's, Katounakia, Karoulia, Kerasia, Saint Basil's, etc. All these sketes belong to the Great Lavra. The zealots were usually good monastics and upkept their cells well. Thus, when Constantinople and the State Church of Greece would complain and tell the Monastery of Great Lavra to take action against the zealots, Lavra would answer that the zealots would never compromise, and if any pressure were brought against them, they would abandon their cells, as the Kollyvades had done two centuries before, and they would settle throughout the Greek mainland and the islands and found monastic communities. Thus, it was to the profit of all that they be contained on the Holy Mountain. Besides, Lavra argued, if all the zealots left the Holy Mountain, their cells would fall into ruins. It was to the profit of all, therefore, that they be tolerated.

Father Joseph the Cave Dweller was a great ascetic and a follower of the Kollyvades tradition (i.e., strict adherence to the canons, frequent Holy Communion, a hesychast way of life, etc.). He was thus a zealot (non-commemorator) from the beginning. He knew personally the Priestmonk Matthew, who was also a great ascetic on the Holy Mountain, and who later became a bishop. (The Matthewites, a jurisdiction of the Old Calendarists in Greece, are named after him.) He knew the great Elder Kallinikos, a God-bearing Father on the Holy Mountain at the beginning of this century. (It is this same Elder Kallinikos who, applying strictly the holy canons concerning schism, said concerning the innovators' baptism, "A bath it is, a baptism it is not!") Father Joseph, therefore, living in the desert of Athos, was a fellow ascetic of those who were then the luminaries of the Holy Mountain, and consequently a zealot. He actually was one of those Fathers of Athos who actively aided the pious throughout Greece to resist the Calendar innovation.

He would often go out of the Holy Mountain with Father Arsenios, his co-ascetic, to preach to the people, especially the newly-arrived refugees from Asia Minor (Father Arsenios spoke fluent Turkish and would translate Father Joseph's admonitions to the pious). He also founded a convent of nuns, made up mostly of refugees, in Macedonia. It was Father Joseph who stayed over a month at the newly-founded Convent of Saint Irene Chrysovolantou in Athens and established their typicon according to the Athonite usages for coenobia. The convent, which is now world-renowned, was founded by Mother Meletia at the beginning of the thirties outside of Athens. Father Joseph, therefore, showed great zeal in admonishing the faithful, by word and deed, to "stand fast and keep the traditions" of the Church, even as we have received them, withstanding every and all innovation. During this period, prior to the Second World War, the best fathers of the Holy Mountain were zealots. Many illustrious fathers left the monasteries because of the commemoration and joined the zealots.

In 1935, eleven years after the innovation, three bishops of the State Church of Greece joined the faithful who had resisted the calendar change. They immediately ordained other bishops, to the great joy of the Orthodox. But, as always happens, because of the malice of the devil and our human weaknesses, dissensions and divisions began among the zealots. In 1937, Bishop Matthew

with Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades separated from the Synod of the True Orthodox Christians over the issue of whether the State Church of Greece was in actual schism or potential schism. This was the first blow to the zealots of the Holy Mountain, who took sides in the controversy and final division of the True Orthodox Church into two—the Florinites and the Matthewites. Some ten years later (at the end of the forties), Bishop Matthew, seeing that his end was drawing nigh and that no other bishop was with him, proceeded against the canons and ordained numerous bishops by himself, which then declared themselves a Synod and elected him Archbishop. This was the second blow to the zealots of Athos. Many at the time abandoned Bishop Matthew, observing that they could not be consistent in condemning the calendar change as uncanonical and then accept the uncanonical ordinations of bishops by one bishop. If their main purpose was to uphold the canons, how could they now justify themselves? This second blow further demoralized the Fathers of the Holy Mountain. Then some years later, in the early part of the sixties, Archimandrite Akakios Papas, the Elder, was ordained a bishop in the United States for the Florinites who, after the demise of Metropolitan Chrysostom, formerly of Florina (who reposed in 1955), had been left without a bishop. But upon his return to Greece, Bishop Akakios was unable to produce a Certificate of Ordination, and he refused to divulge who had ordained him. He was, therefore, referred to by some as *koukloepiskopos* (“doll bishop”), even as the Matthewite bishops were referred to, that is, that he donned episcopal vestments without having been ordained. (After his demise in 1962, the names of the two bishops who had ordained him were revealed.) All of this created much confusion in the ranks of the True Orthodox Christians. This was the third blow to the zealot Fathers.

In this atmosphere, both in the fifties and in the sixties, numerous Fathers left the zealot movement and joined the commemorators, while still abiding by the Church Calendar. At the time many appeals had been made by leading clergy of the State Church for returning to the traditional Church Calendar, and there was hope that this might be possible. Among those who left the zealot movement in the fifties was the synodia of the Elder Joseph. At the time the synodia had no priests, and two members—Fathers Haralampos and Ephraim—were ordained by Bishop Ierotheos, who was living as a hermit in the Skete of Saint Anne’s and was thus with the traditional Church Calendar, but a commemorator nevertheless. Although Father Joseph left the zealots, yet he never celebrated any feasts with the Papal Calendar. This was not difficult, for from 1939 he never left the Holy Mountain, nor did he allow any one of his synodia to go outside the Holy Mountain. The synodia by this time had settled in New Skete of Saint Paul’s Monastery, and continued to follow their hesychast typicon. It was during this time that I met the Elder Joseph. By leaving the zealot movement, Father Joseph at no time condoned the innovation of the Papal Gregorian Calendar, nor did he ever cease saying that it had been uncanonically introduced and imposed among the faithful. At no time did he ever write and advise his spiritual children outside the Holy Mountain that the Calendar change was of no consequence and therefore following the New Calendar did not matter. Most of his disciples continued to be zealots, such as Mother Evpraxia of Thessaloniki and the group in Volos, which later became the Convent of the Odigitria Mother of God, as also Father John the Vlach, who lived in the first ascetical cell of the Elder at Saint Basil’s on the Holy Mountain. Not one nun of the former convent of the Elder, which had by then been dissolved because of the persecutions of the New Calendarists and internal problems, ceased from being True Orthodox Christians. They all reposed observing the Traditional Calendar and refusing

communion with the innovators. At no time did the Elder write to them to leave the Old Calendarists or that their salvation was endangered by remaining with the True Orthodox Christians, which is what his disciples preach today. It should also be noted that, as long as the Elder lived, he did not permit the two priests of his synodia to concelebrate at the Kyriakon of the Skete, and this because oftentimes priests from outside the Holy Mountain, who celebrated according to the New Calendar, would come to the Skete, especially for its Feast of the Nativity of the Holy Mother of God, and concelebrate. Father Joseph, therefore, not only refused to celebrate with the New Calendar, but felt uneasy about allowing his synodia to concelebrate with New Calendar priests. It also should be noted that even after the repose of the Elder in 1959, his synodia continued to refuse to concelebrate with visiting New Style priests, until their departure from the Skete. But even after they departed for Provata and Karyes, they still did not concelebrate or commemorate, until they at last took over the abbotships of Philotheou and Dionysiou Monasteries, and later Xeropotamou and Vatopedi.

Thus we come to December 1963—January 1964, when Pope John and Patriarch Athenagoras met in Jerusalem and prayed together, and one year later mutually lifted the excommunications and anathemas of 1054. At the time the whole of the Holy Mountain—all the monasteries and sketes—ceased the commemoration of the name of the Patriarch of Constantinople in protest, even as they had done forty years earlier in 1924 with the uncanonical change of the calendar. A document was drawn up by the Holy Mountain Fathers protesting the breaking of apostolic and synodal canons by the Patriarch, and was signed by the Abbots and Elders of Athos. (See Appendix of Against False Union for a translation of this document into English.) As one can readily see, the synodia of the Elder Joseph all signed this protest. As in 1924, 50 now, pressures and threats were used by Constantinople to intimidate the abbots of the twenty monasteries to submit and again to commemorate the name of the Patriarch. Thus, one by one, except for three abbots, the rest resumed the commemoration. The three that refused were the abbots of Esphigmenou, Xenophontos, and Saint Paul's. As for the Monastery of Esphigmenou, all the monks were united to a man behind their abbot, Archimandrite Athanasios, a man attested by all on the Holy Mountain as being filled with gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus nothing could be done to induce the monastery to resume the commemoration. To this day, some thirty years later, the monastery continues not to commemorate the Patriarch's name. As for the abbot of Xenophontos, Archimandrite Evdokimos, and the abbot of Saint Paul's, Archimandrite Andreas, since some of the fathers of these two monasteries feared the consequences of continuing to protest, and since both abbots refused to comply with the orders of the Patriarchate, they were finally deposed and exiled from their monasteries. Both abbots refused to commemorate till the end of their lives. They lived for many years after they were forcefully expelled from their monasteries and reposed as confessors.

At the time of the meeting of Pope and Patriarch (1963/1964), our Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Boston also ceased the commemoration of the name of the Patriarch of Constantinople at the counsel received in writing from both New Skete and our synodia, of whom we were a dependency. And following the example of the above-mentioned three confessing abbots, as also of many of the other venerable Fathers, we have till this day never quavered in our stand, especially since we see that things have progressively become much worse in regards to the espousal of the heresy of ecumenism by the Church of Constantinople.

To better illustrate the mind of at least the Elder Arsenios, the successor to our Elder Joseph, and the then Priestmonk Haralampos and his synodia, concerning the importance of the calendar issue, I will mention one incident that took place in my presence some eight or nine years after the repose of our Elder Joseph. It must have been in the summer of 1967 or 1968. At this time the Elder Arsenios was living with the synodia of Father Haralampos at Saint Nicholas Bourazeri outside of Karyes. Bear in mind that at the time the members of the synodia of the Elder Joseph were non-commemorators. I, of course, stayed at Saint Nicholas a few nights in order to confer with the Elder Arsenios and concelebrate with Father Haralampos. One evening after the service of Compline I spoke with the Elder and Father Haralampos. Father Joseph the Cypriot was also present (he is today the Elder of the Monastery of Vatopedi) and one or two, of Father Haralampos' synodia. We were discussing recent church affairs and the involvement of the local churches in ecumenism, their betrayal of the Faith, and how they were becoming more bold in their open apostasy. Father Joseph repeatedly was bringing the discussion back to the calendar change of 1924. At one moment I said to him quite abruptly, since we were brothers, "Forget the calendar issue! The calendar issue is nothing! Today it is not 1924, but rather over forty years later. Today it is not an issue of schism, but of open heresy! The heresy of ecumenism!" We spoke until quite late, raising our voices like Greeks and shouting at times, but in the end retired to rest a little since Liturgy was served in the night. Most of the conversation was between Father Joseph and myself, with the Elder Arsenios and Father Haralampos listening, although at times they joined in, usually to agree with me. Before separating for a little rest we bowed to one another, asking forgiveness as usual, and, kissing the Elder Arsenios' hand, departed as brothers. I went to my cell and sat pondering on what we had just discussed, then I began my prayers. Just then there was a tap at my door. I opened it to find Father Haralampos telling me that although it was quite late the Elder wished to see me. I went hurriedly with Father Haralampos to the Elder in his cell. He beckoned me to sit and told me in a serious tone that I had said something during the conversation which had grieved him as well as alarmed him, and having already discussed it with Father Haralampos, he wished to speak to me about it. I then myself became quite alarmed and tried to think what it was that I had said that had grieved him. And he answered, "You said, 'Forget about the calendar issue! The calendar issue is nothing!' Is then the uncanonical innovation of the Papal Calendar nothing? Is it not a cause of schism and falling away from the traditions of our Fathers? Is it not a blow against the unity of the Church? Are we then to become Franks and to adopt Papal ways? How could you say such a thing? Beware since you are living so far away from the Holy Mountain that you do not fall into this trap. And if you continue to think like this, you will not be able to avoid it." Father Haralampos also joined in and expressed how shocked he was to hear me say that the Calendar issue was of no consequence—that it was nothing. "Why," he said, "I went to jail because of the calendar issue when I was still in the world." (Father Haralampos as a layman lived in Kavala of Macedonia and was a trustee of the local Old Calendar Church. Having come with his family from Russia in the thirties as Greek refugees from Communism, he never celebrated any Church feasts with the New Calendar, for as soon as he came to Greece he joined the Old Calendarists. During a persecution by the local State Church bishop, he was imprisoned because as a trustee of the Old Calendar church he refused to recognize the New Calendar bishop and hand over to him the key to the church.)

When I heard from both of them their complaint and saw how grieved they were, I immediately asked their forgiveness and assured them that the Calendar issue was very important, that it was the first step by the innovating Churches in ecumenism, the beginning of the unraveling of the whole fabric of the Church, especially since there was no pastoral need for the change. I assured them that I would never accept the innovation, and explained that I had only expressed myself in this way because Father Joseph wished to minimize the whole involvement of the innovating churches in the present apostasy to the “mere change of the Calendar in 1924,” as he put it. Whereupon they were relieved and they both hugged me and kissed me. Yet years later even Father Haralampos was convinced by his synodia to take over the Monastery of Dionysiou and thus become a commemorator.

As I mentioned above, the divisions of the Old Calendarists of Greece on the mainland divided the Fathers on the Holy Mountain also. In addition, after the demise of the leaders of the zealots on Athos, who were renowned and respected Elders of a high spiritual caliber, the whole movement deteriorated into more factions than on the mainland over matters such as how many points the stars on the forehead and shoulders of the Theotokos (symbols of her ever-virginity) should have. All agreed that the five pointed star was out of the question since it was an occult symbol used by Satanists, Masons, Soviets, etc. etc. But then they disagreed over whether it should be four-pointed, six-pointed, seven-pointed, or eight-pointed. Thus, the zealots became more and more divided, and whenever they met, they would usually argue among themselves over many and various details. This grieved the Elder Joseph, as it did other serious zealots, and he began to prohibit them from visiting him since it only destroyed his hesychia. He used to say concerning this state of affairs that many zealots had chased out love and held on to dry legalistic forms which in turn made them proud and self-righteous and contentious.

Being demoralized by the division among the bishops in 1937, and by Bishop Matthew having ordained bishops by himself, and the later secret ordination of Bishop Akakios, as also the divisions among themselves, some of the leading Kellia of the zealots, one after the other, disassociated themselves from the zealot movement. They closed themselves up in their own houses, not commemorating anyone in the Liturgy, but having communion with the commemorators. This was up to the time of the meeting of Pope and Patriarch in Jerusalem in 1963/1964, whereupon most, if not all, returned to the zealots.

I will give two examples from many.

In the early sixties, one of the leading Kellia of the zealots at Saint Anne’s Skete was that of Saint Seraphim of Phanourian. It consisted of the Elder Seraphim, who was a simple monk, and his two disciples, Euthymios and Savvas, also monks, and one novice John. I knew these Fathers. After the secret ordination of Akakios Papas to the episcopate in 1960 and his refusal to reveal who had ordained him, the Fathers decided to leave the zealots. They reasoned to themselves, “Why should we be so scrupulous about keeping the canons when our leaders among the True Orthodox Christians of Greece are so free and careless about upholding them?”

Thus, they joined the commemorators, and the two monks, Euthymios and Savvas, accepted ordination from Bishop Nathaniel, who was the rector of the Athonias Church School at Karyes.

The synodia also relocated at this time to the Cell of the Annunciation at Karyes. Very soon after came the common prayer of Pope and Patriarch and open acts of ecumenism on the part of Constantinople, whereupon the synodia found the strength to break communion with Constantinople and become zealots again. Not only did they become zealots, but after the demise of the Elder Seraphim, Father Euthymios, who had become the Elder, was recruited by Archimandrite Athanasios, the Abbot of Esphigmenou, on his deathbed, to become his successor and continue the struggle of the zealots. Till this day, Archimandrite Euthymios is abbot of the Monastery of Esphigmenou, which refuses to commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople.

The second example: At Karyes is the Kellion of the Holy Trinity, which belongs to Laura. The Elder in the fifties and sixties was the late Father Basil the Cappadocian, a venerable monk. Father Basil and his synodia were tailors who sewed monastic clothes and koukoulia (cowls). They were a well known and respected synodia of zealots. The fool-for-Christ Constantine monk, the wanderer, used to go to Father Basil for a meal from time to time. Father Basil was a quiet and peaceful man who avoided quarrels and dissensions. Our monastery used to order koukoulia and schemas from Father Basil until we learned to make them ourselves. I had, therefore, visited the Kellion on several occasions. When other zealots began to leave the movement in the fifties and sixties, Father Basil left also in the early sixties. One of the deciding factors which convinced him to leave was that, besides the above-mentioned issues which disturbed the zealots, there was also the contention of some that in the designs found on the tile floors in many of the chapels in the Athonite Kellia, crosses were to be found, which the canons prohibit one to step upon. They, therefore, continually begged him to chisel out the floor of his chapel and put in new tiles. Father Basil protested that he had not installed the floor, that it was at least one-hundred-and-fifty years old, and consequently, at least four generations of venerable monks had inhabited the Kellion, and they had not come to the conclusion that there were actual crosses on the floor so as to remove them. But the zealots would not cease remonstrating with Father Basil, whereupon he joined the commemorators in order to have peace. But when Constantinople began its open policy of ecumenism in earnest, Father Basil's synodia returned again to the zealots. So it was with others also. When Constantinople began openly flaunting the teachings and canons of the Church, then the Fathers saw the divisions and bickerings of the zealots in a new light. They understood that these were human traits of the fall—individual sins—which could be corrected. But the antics of Constantinople and the innovators were sins against the Church—they constituted blasphemy and heresy: in other words, apostasy. Thus, not only former zealots returned to the zealot movement, but even commemorators who were never zealots became zealots. Among the latter are numbered the monks of Esphigmenou Monastery and others throughout the Holy Mountain who from time to time awaken to the fact that Constantinople has apostatized and is not about to return to an Orthodox confession. No other course, therefore, is left to them but to separate themselves from those in heresy, as provided by the Fifteenth Canon of the First/Second Council of Constantinople, even as so many countless Orthodox Christians have done throughout the centuries, and especially the martyred Fathers of Athos at the time of the false Union of Lyons under the false Patriarch John Beccos in the thirteenth century.

A recent example of a small synodia which joined the zealots is that of the late Elder Savvas of the Kellion of Saint Nicholas at Provata. After the late Patriarch Demetrios went to Rome in 1987,

and in his presence his Archdeacon concelebrated with the Archdeacon of the Pope at a papal mass at Saint Peter's, Father Savvas, who was the boast and pride of the commemorators since he was a great ascetic and venerable Elder, could no longer in good conscience continue in communion with the Patriarch, and he joined the zealots. This proved to be a great embarrassment to the commemorators, who formally would point out Father Savvas as a prudent and holy Elder who nevertheless remained in communion with them and did not join the zealots. They even used to send the younger monks and novices from the monasteries to visit him and be convinced by his holy way of life that they did well to remain with the commemorators, and in no way did they endanger their salvation by doing so. Thus, after Father Savvas left them, they sought by all means to return him to their camp and would continually send delegations of learned monks to convince him to return. This forced him a little before his demise to write an open letter to them in which he set forth simple but convincing arguments against them. He thus sealed his life with a true Confession of Faith.

In conclusion I wish to repeat that at no time did I ever hear from the Elders Joseph and Arsenios that the calendar change did not matter, that it was of no consequence if one celebrated with the Gregorian Papal Calendar. I am convinced, since I was the last of his disciples, that if the Elder Joseph were alive today, neither he nor any of his disciples would have taken over monasteries (and thus by necessity be commemorators), nor would they have ever been allowed to go outside the Holy Mountain and consort with the innovating New Calendarists. I am convinced that if he were alive today he would again be a zealot. I have recorded above what I heard myself concerning the New Calendar innovation from the Elder Arsenios years after the repose of the Elder Joseph.

In the summer of 1962, on a visit to New Skete, the Elder told me that I should think about ordination to the priesthood. When I asked why he had such a thought, since I was not of canonical age, he answered me, "One day we shall be separated totally from them. What shall you then do with your synodia in far away America without a priest?" A year-and-a-half after this comment, in December of 1963, the occasion for our "total separation" took place. And towards the end of 1964, I was sent with the blessing of the Elder Arsenios and a letter from the Abbot of Saint Paul's Monastery, Archimandrite Andreas, to Jerusalem, to be ordained to the priesthood. A little later Archimandrite Andreas was deposed by Constantinople for not commemorating the Patriarch and exiled from the monastery. As for my sinfulness, I have never commemorated the Patriarch of Constantinople. Because of this I have been prohibited from visiting the Holy Mountain. A few years before the demise of the Elder Arsenios, who reposed in 1983, his kellenik, who took care of him in his old age, telephoned me while I was on a visit to Greece and told me that the Elder wished to see me. When I told the monk that I also desired greatly to see the Elder before his demise, but that I was prohibited from visiting the Holy Mountain since I was a zealot, the monk told me that the Elder knew this, but that he did not wish to speak on the telephone. He was thus willing to come, although almost one hundred years old, to the village outside the Holy Mountain, to meet with me personally. But, alas, this was not possible at the time. After the demise of the Elder his kellenik left the Monastery of Dionysiou, as also the Holy Mountain, and I have thus not been able to find him in order to ask if he knew what the Elder wished to say to me. But Mother Evpraxia of Aegina, the sister in the flesh of the Elder Arsenios, told me that after the demise of the Elder, his kellenik sent word to her that shortly before his demise the Elder had sent for Father

Haralampos, the Abbot of Dionysiou, who was also his nephew as also his Godson, and told him, “What are we doing here? Let us leave and return to the desert!” It is evident that the Elder Arsenios was troubled that he resided in a monastery which commemorated the Patriarch. Father Haralampos has since resigned as abbot of the monastery.

—Priestmonk Panteleimon

February, 1994

Hermitage of the Holy Apostles

Maine

### Epilogue

Having read the above, Fr. Isaac of our monastery reminded me of two incidents which demonstrate how steadfast the Synodia of the Elder Joseph the Cave-dweller were in their Zealot confession after the meeting of Pope and Patriarch in Jerusalem in the 60’s.

At the end of 1965 Fr. Isaac, the then novice John, joined us at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston. In the early part of 1966 we sent him to stay with the Elder Arsenios and our Synodia at Nea Skete on the Holy Mountain. Having a great reverence and love for the Iviron icon of Portaitissa, I instructed him to make every effort to go and venerate the icon while there. In the summer of 1966 I would join him with another member of our community and after the feast of the Dormition we would all return to Boston. When he was there he informed our Synodia of my instructions and asked for a blessing to visit Iviron Monastery, since he also had a great desire to venerate the holy icon. With one voice the Elder Arsenios and the whole Synodia refused to give him a blessing, explaining to him that since Iviron was a great distance from Nea Skete he would not be able to go and return on the same day. By necessity he would have to stay at the monastery overnight and attend the services and Liturgy where the name of the Patriarch would be commemorated. For this reason they prohibited him to go.

When I finally arrived on the Holy Mountain, I persisted in wishing to visit Iviron Monastery and venerate the Portaitissa Mother of God. It was therefore decided that we would hire a small boat and go from Nea Skete around the tip of the Holy Mountain to Iviron which was in the other side, venerate the holy icon, and return the same day in the evening to Nea Skete, thus avoiding staying overnight at any of the monasteries. Out of great love for us the Elder Arsenios, who was well advanced in years, decided to come with us. He also, as all the fathers of the Holy Mountain, had a great veneration for the Potaitissa Mother of God, and it was many decades since he had last visited Iviron Monastery with the Elder Joseph. Fr. Athanasios, the brother in the flesh of our Elder Joseph, also decided to join us. We thus all left early on the day that we went and when we turned the tip of the mountain at Kafsokalyvia we met a storm, but we continued, hoping in God.

When we got to Iviron it was not possible to dock because of the storm, so we decided to go further to Vatopaidi since it had a large and protected arsana (dock) and wait out the storm. Since

at Vatopaidi they have the belt and tunic of the Holy Theotokos as also the Holy Icon “Paramethia” (Consolation) it would be a good opportunity to venerate these holy objects also. The Elder Arsenios did not object, but he explained to me that he would not enter the monastery himself since at the time Vatopaidi celebrated with the Papal calendar. He told me that when our Elder Joseph was living he also would not set foot in the monastery for the same reason. Fr. Athanasios, the brother of our Elder Joseph, was of the same mind and also refused to enter Vatopaidi for the same reason. They told me that we could go while they waited for us outside at the arsana on the sea. I, myself, had venerated the holy relics and icons at Vatopaidi in 1957 when I was still at St. Panteleimon’s Monastery before I met Fr. Joseph and the fathers at Nea Skete.

Seeing that the Elder Arsenios and Fr. Athanasios refused to enter Vatopaidi because of the innovation of the new calendar, I decided out of respect for the Elder not to enter also, allowing as an *economia* the two young ones to go. The three of us, therefore, Elder Arsenios, Fr. Athanasios, and myself stayed down by the sea, sitting on some logs and conversing while we waited for the two others to return. After some hours we finally got to Iviron and late at night returned to Nea Skete.

This was in 1966, eight years after the Elder Joseph’s repose and after all the fathers of our Synodia became non-commemorators again because of the apostasy of Patriarch Athenagoras, a Mason. At that time all of our Synodia, both on the Holy Mountain and in the United States had become Zealots, without joining any of the Zealot factions on the Holy Mountain. Since then, if anything, things have become much worse as far as Constantinople and the official Churches are concerned.

As long as the members of our Synodia on the Holy Mountain remained at Nea Skete and later at Provata and Kareyes they were non-commemorators because of the heresy of ecumenism. One by one they compromised themselves and became commemorators to take over the large monasteries and become abbots thereof.