

### **The Life and Ethos of Elder Athanasios Mitilinaios**

Bishop Luke, dear Fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ,

I greet you in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I was asked by the organizers of this wonderful conference to speak about the life and charismatic work of holy Elder Athanasios Mitilinaios, whose name may have been introduced to some of you by recordings of St. Nicodemos Publications and the translated volumes on Revelation published by Zoe press.

When I received the invitation from Father Peter, and I began to read the details of the conference, I confess that I was not so eager to accept, mainly due to my inadequacy compared to such a dynamic staff of Orthodox speakers and theologians.

What gave me the impetus to accept was the celebration of the vigil of Saint John the Theologian, because it was during this very all-night vigil of Saint John the Theologian that I met Elder Athanasios exactly 34 years ago at his monastery, in the church of who else? Saint John the Theologian. Little did I know then that I would spend over two decades completing the English translation of the Revelation of Saint John the Evangelist, published and circulated by Zoë Press!

I met the Elder in 1988 and I began to listen to his basic catechism. My Greek vocabulary was rather limited, so I avoided complicated topics like Revelation. I gravitated toward elementary topics such as, the benefits of fasting, what is love, Holy Communion, the veneration of Saints and so on. As

year 2000 was approaching and the numbers of “end of the world” false prophetic books increased greatly, I felt compelled to dive into Revelation since the English resources on this mysterious book were very limited. I started by recording the Elder’s teaching on some of the most abused verses of Revelation, like, the 1,000 year reign of Christ, the Second Presence, the 144,000, and other symbolic numbers, the person of the Antichrist, and the Orthodox perspective on the so-called “rapture.” In 1997 I began to translate the 100 lectures from the beginning. Long before that we published the summary of these lessons in this little out of print booklet.

One of the jokes of our Revelation team of volunteers grew to be: “Let’s try and finish this series before the Antichrist comes.” The fifth and final volume was completed, by my coworker Marie Eliades, in 2020.

I’ll read a few short reviews that fully exemplify the impact of the interpretive charisma of the Elder in the souls of his readers .

From DT- An indispensable commentary on the book of Revelation: This book goes beyond Revelation into all aspects of ones spiritual life...This and the other volumes of the series are not only great commentaries but a great guide to one’s spiritual life. This reader is spot on regarding the pastoral gift of this elder.

From KM

This book is golden. I do not usually highlight my books. But this book had so many pearls of wisdom that I highlighted

almost every page. I could not believe how the Archimandrite, who interpreted this book forty years ago was almost prophetic about our current times. Every page is golden in its advice to us Christians... I couldn't say it better myself.

From Andrew

The decryption of the prophecies of John the Apostle follows the writings of the Holy Saints and adds the contemporary experiences of Father Athanasios. The teacher's style is very similar with the teachings of Saint John the Chrysostom following a very tight logic and flow of thought...

In Revelation, volume 5, we have a review from:

+ Bishop Luke of Syracuse who was kind enough to grace our conference with his presence

For many years I taught the Epistles and Revelation in Seminary. I have had access to all the sources available in Russian and English at our library. This series is one of the finest, most in-depth I have seen. Archimandrite Athanasios is not only a splendid, detailed, patristic exegete, but an inspiring teacher who brings lively examples from contemporary life situations and elevates the soul with morally instructive commentary. I highly recommend this series on Revelation to everyone for an excellent explanation of this difficult book of the New Testament. Thank you, Your Grace.

So, Our Blessed Elder Athanasios was born on Aug 22, 1927 in Kifisia of Attica, a suburb of Athens. His father was named George, a good and quiet man whose forefathers came

from Mitilini, thus the surname Mitilinaios. As an adult George moved to Athens and became a very successful chef in beautiful Kifisia, where he met his future wife Efrosini who was from Samos, a modest, wise, thoughtful and most pious young woman. What his parents lacked in formal education they made up in spiritual wisdom and piety, richly bequeathed to Athanasios and his sister Grammatiki.

The Orthodox ethos and piety of his mother guided his young soul to seek the precious pearl from his teenage years. We will include a few details about the Orthodox ethos and parenting skills of his most wise mother who probably did not pass the third grade of elementary school, but who developed a great love for holy Scripture through the efforts of a zealous and pious priest Father Anggelos.

Out of his many students he selected some capable women and gave them the blessing to hold Bible studies in their homes for the people of their neighborhood.

Mrs. Efrosini, our Elder's mother befriended and followed the catechist activities of two of these women Eleni Kalikas and Maritsa Stamatiadou. Maritsa was an exceptional catechist.

During the 1930s she taught themes of the Philokalia around Athens with much success. Mrs. Ephrosini never failed to drag her son, Athanasios, along who was the only boy listening to their catechism. All other attendees were women of the area of Kifisia. The truth is that little Athanasios did not understand much at the time, but he

learned to love the word of God, and in due time he began to study the New Testament. This was the aim of his mother as well who wanted the truth of the Gospel to have a central place in the formative years of her son. Her great holy desire was to rejoice seeing her son become a catechist one day.

Two years before his death, while in a clinic for medical exams, the Elder spoke with much endearment about that burning desire of his mother to see him teach the Gospel as a catechist. That holy desire of his mother was fulfilled to the fullest, and blessed by God, to the point where her son became a catechist at 18, a priest monk at 33, a monastic abbot at 43, and left for upper Jerusalem as the greatest interpreter of Scripture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century according to Met. Seraphim of Piraeus. His initial zeal was forever nurtured by three spiritual discoveries acquired as a teen. These were; the resurrection of the dead, the renewal of the universe and the recognition of the numerous names of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament: the Divine Logos the Creator, the Hypostatic Wisdom, the Angel of the Lord, the Father of the future age, the Discarnate Logos. These spiritual realities continued to ignite his eros for the Triune God and for the Hypostatic Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ.

During this past 12th Sunday of Mathew, I listened to the Elder praising the good disposition of the polite young man who knelt before the Lord and asked: Good teacher what good thing must I do to enter eternal life, Paradise. He needed to be

commanded because he had higher aspirations and existential concerns. However, his environment, his relatives perhaps did not share these concerns or at least did not inspire the acquisition of spiritual wealth but instilled in him the importance of material wealth.

Thus, when Christ invited him to become one of the 144,000 virgins in Revelation, who follow the Lamb wherever He may go, he turned his back and left because he was not only very wealthy, but severely attached to his wealth. In this pericope, the interpretative genius of the Elder sees the three foundations of monasticism:

Go, sell everything you own. Give it to the poor and come follow Me.

Become poor for the sake of the gospel, the vow of **poverty**. Give it to the poor, not to your friends, family, and so on. Give it to the poor, **obedience**.

Come and follow Me all by yourself with the virtue of **virginity**. Here we have the three foundations of the monastic ideal, the most genuine child of the Church.

The young man did not have the necessary ethos and spiritual bravery to reject the great temptation of material wealth. Perhaps the adults in his household were not helpful, and guided him toward earthly endeavors.

As a young man Athanasios was financially independent as well, yet he did not allow these earthly temptations to lead him astray, because he was surrounded by Christian souls who taught him not all that glistens

is gold. True gold and silver are only those values able to withstand the eternity of the gospel, which he served with great zeal.

From 1945 (at the age of 18) until October 1960, he offered his services as a catechist to the churches of Kifisia. At the age of 33, after 5 years of intense spiritual preparation, he accepted the office of priesthood. His first assignment was the position of preacher in the Metropolis of Larisa. His patristic voice echoed there continuously for 45 years, from October 18, 1960 until June 2005 when he was hospitalized before his eternal rest in May 2006.

In November of 1970, he gave into the holy desire of his closest disciples to become their Geronda [Elder] and moved thirty miles from Larisa to re-establish the abandoned holy monastery of Komnineiou, near Stomion, in solitude and the shadow of Mount Kissavos overlooking the Aegean coastline. He spent the remainder of his earthly life in this spiritual fortress in prayer and study of the Church Fathers, always preparing the choicest spiritual food for his beloved flock. He prepared 4-6 one-hour lectures on a weekly basis, which he committed to memory, with the exception of a 3 by 5 card used for each lecture. On Thursdays he would hear confessions for 18 hours with hardly any interruption.

Sunday afternoon he travelled to his old residence in Larisa to hear more confessions and offer the word of God. Those who had the opportunity to be present at these “celestial festivals of God’s Word” can recall thousands

of people being initiated in the mystery of repentance and regeneration. It was a pure joy to witness this local Pentecost in the churches of Saint Haralambos and Saint Achillios.

On Sunday afternoons over 500 teenagers gathered in the lower level of Saint Haralambos with pencil and paper to record the heavenly wisdom of their beloved Elder and mentor. Two hours later over 1000 adults were gathered upstairs in the main church to listen to the Elder's interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, Genesis, Wisdom of Sirach, Psalms, Revelation, and many other books of the Old and New Testament [We were informed by one of these teenagers and now a monastic that many of the teenagers would also remain to hear the adult lessons]. His Sunday Sermons averaged 30 minutes and they number in the hundreds, 880 recordings to be exact. It is no wonder that with this love and devotion, like Solomon of old, the Divine Wisdom showered him with numerous gifts for the edification of his flock: the gift of Scripture interpretation, the gift of prophecy, the gift of spiritual fatherhood, the gift of knowledge, the gift of memory, and of architecture (needed to rebuild his monastery). As I said earlier, Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus called him the greatest interpreter of holy Scripture of the 20th century. Many academic theologians esteemed him even higher. St Paisios would say to visitors from Larisa, Why did you spent your money to come here. You have Mount Athos next to you...Elder Athanasios! Fr. Mitilinaios continued to shine the Light of Christ and illumine the entire

Orthodox world with his divine wisdom. His lectures have been translated into many languages and his prophetic teachings nurture the Orthodox sheep with patristic nectar and spiritual ambrosia throughout the world.

Along with thousands of recordings on catechism and Scripture interpretation, the Elder took very strong stands and recorded numerous lectures against all heresies, ecumenism, secularization, Free-masonry, theosophy, spiritism, magic arts and the precipitous moral laxity, which results through the loss of Orthodox doctrine and ethos. This made him an easy target from those inside and outside the Church. The words of 1st Peter 2:21, For to this you were called...that you should follow in Christ's footsteps, aroused in his pure heart the burning quest for the God-human Person of Jesus Christ. This quest was centered on two different fronts. The first was all of created universe and the second was holy Scripture. He was awe-struck by the wisdom and beauty of God's creation. He called it "an open book of cataphatic theology." He observed everything very carefully forever tracing the stamp of God the Logos. While walking on the foothills of Mount Kissavos he would point to the most beautiful wild flowers and tell us, "These were created by the divine Logos for his mother," echoing the theology of the fathers that all natural creation was made for the Theotokos. During these peripatetic talks he would cut some of these beautiful wildflowers, form a bouquet, and reverently offer it to the miraculous icon of the Evervirgin upon

returning to the Monastery.

The unfading love of his life, however, was the uncreated Hypostatic Wisdom, the Divine Word embedded in the created golden mines of holy Scripture. And what a miner he was. He could lecture for 5, 6 hours on one word - mining great theological treasure. He nurtured the same love for the Old and New Testament claiming that the one illuminates the other. His insatiable zeal was to point out in the prophecies and general texts of the Old Testament the presence of the God-human person of Jesus Christ, before His Incarnation. He spent 15 hours speaking on the 24th chapter of Wisdom Sirach, about the manifestation and dialogues of the Hypostatic Wisdom in Genesis, Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon and other books of the Old Testament with constant references to the New Testament.

In the 199th lecture of Wisdom of Sirach he develops his theology of the “homelessness of God”: After the fall he posits, God became homeless...God rests on His saints...this sanctity was lost after the entrance of sin in God’s creation. When the fullness of time presented itself, Wisdom created a house for herself, initially he rested within the house of Jacob and his inheritance, but more specifically with the purest fruit of Israel, the main calling of the nation of Israel, the Nativity of the most Holy Theotokos. “Wisdom created a house for herself...”

The Wisdom was housed in the womb of the Theotokos and there he united with his creation in a hypostatic/personal union...One weaves a beautiful sweater so he can wear it.

God the Logos will now be dressed by the crown of his creation, our human nature loaned to Him by the Most Holy Theotokos.

Unfortunately, the stunning simplicity of this type of theology does not speak to the frozen hearts of the post-patristic ecumenist theologians who gathered together at the end of September 2010 in Volos, Greece to try to shipwreck the Orthodox theology of the Church Fathers, according to the pious Metropolitan Pavlos of Glyfada of blessed memory. This “radical theological surprise” was prophetically recorded by Elder Mitilinaios 30 years earlier in the 55th lecture of Revelation.

This excerpt of the Elder was published in many articles and websites in Greece following this “radical conference”.

And I read:

The Antichrist will officially declare the advent of a new age on earth, which will succeed the Christian age possibly creating a third covenant. We have the Old Testament, the New Testament, and he will create a third. This cacodox doctrine about a third covenant is very old. Saint Gregory the Theologian refers to this. Don’t let this surprise you because it is what we are witnessing in our days.

What is the nature of this third testament? It is the widespread perception, cultivated in our days about an antiquated Christianity. This perception flourishes among secular Christian circles and

worldly people with an ecumenist mindset. These secular, ecumenist church leaders claim that traditional Christianity is antiquated and bankrupt and does not offer anything to the heart of the modern man. It needs to be modified. The old [traditional] Christianity is somehow powerless. Therefore, according to these innovationist minds it is necessary to create a different dimension and in reality, a third covenant. As we mentioned, this state already exists. Besides what else did the Prophet Daniel mean when he wrote, He [the Antichrist] will think to change times and law. He will alter the law of God. This is the third covenant. The Church Fathers and the Saints of the Church will be “out of season” and considered irrelevant. Yet this great elder never fails to remind his listeners that God is in control of history... as he continues...to edify us...

Isn't it equally impressive however that God has His Saints at every age and in every century? Why do you suppose? So the faithful can be assured that no one can claim that the Saints are a thing of the past. God gives us many Saints in each century. During the twentieth century, God gave us Saint Nektarios who has been labeled the Saint of our century, in Greece. [There were over 50 enlisted saints in the world of Orthodoxy during the 20th century].

With about ten minutes left if that, it is an impossible task to do any kind of justice to the great contribution of this great Elder. I will close with the Elders teaching on the importance of National Borders and how the abolishment of borders is the brainchild of

the globalist agenda and their Evil patron.

The Elder posits that recent efforts of globalization contradict the will of God and constitute the pavement of the road of Antichrist and he explains...

“Moses writes in Deuteronomy: When the most high divided the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the nations according to the numbers of his Angels (Deut. 38:8).

This took place after the failure of the tower of Babel. The will of God was for each nation to have its boundaries protected by a national Angel. The guard of the boundaries of the border of Israel was Archangel Michael. God also decides the longevity of each nation according to how it measures up to the universal spiritual law written in everyone’s conscience.

The globalists have been aiming for the globalization of the economy, health, education and generally the globalization of ideologies...

But worst of all, is the globalization of religion via the Trojan horse of ecumenism. Needless to say the vast majority of the higher echelons of the Orthodox Churches have

succumbed to this Trojan horse. It is rumored that in 2025 the theologians of the Ecumenical Patriarch are preparing to unite us with Rome. Let’s pray that this remains a rumor. A few weeks ago the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, convened in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, and in his greeting letter an Orthodox Patriarch expressed, “it is faith that can sober people up, return them to the path of dialogue and

cooperation, because in traditional religions the fundamental moral principles of human existence remain unshakable”... The traditional religions present were Christianity, Islam and Judaism. So the fundamental moral principles of human existence remain unshakable between Christians, Jews and Moslems... The false Spirit of peace and love generated in these decade long dialogues seem to produce historical amnesia. World Wars 1 and 2 originated with people of the Christian faith. The war between Iran and Iraq in the 80s was with people of the same faith, Islam. And one only needs to spent a few days in Palestine to witness the deplorable treatment of Jews toward their neighbors and monotheistic Palestinians. So the argument that interfaith unity will eliminate religious wars and promote social justice is utopic. The demonic aim of globalization is to facilitate the enslavement of the nations to universal totalitarian governance. God’s plan of ecumenism manifested itself 2000 years ago. It is called Pentecost. The Holy Spirit alone can unite the Nations of the world without disturbing their borders. Christ said go out and make disciples of all Nations. God wants the ecclesiasticalization of all nations. Today the opposite takes place. Post patristic ecumenist theologians are indemnifying all heresies by calling them churches and are eager to unite with them. The practices and perverse lifestyles of the world are seeking amnesty from like-minded secularized clergy who wish to synchronize the Church. What can we do? The elder advises us in the 253rd lecture of

Sirach: Ecumenism is so wide spread today, in theory and in practice, that we as individuals cannot really do anything to stop it. However, you and I my brother and sister can avoid secularization on a personal level! Let us stand well, let us hold on to our Orthodox dogma and Ethos and when the AX comes we will not worship him. Hold on to what you have, and during His Second Coming Christ will find you as a member of his remnant. The North Kingdom of Israel is a historical type of the end times. Ahab and Jezebel enacted the globalization of religion and turned their citizen into idolaters. Elijah even lost hope and complained to God, “Lord I am your only worshipper! Everyone has left us!” No Elijah! I have a remnant here of 7000 men who did not bow down to Baal! 7000 families, with 5 people in the average family, 35,000 souls did not abandon their faith!

Saint Paul says that this will be repeated at the end of history. Christ asked, when I will return will I find the faith upon the earth? By this he means faith in His God-human person. This faith will be preserved by the remnant: those who hold on to the dogma and the ethos of the Church of Christ, the Orthodox Church. Dear Bishop Luke, Fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ, with your ethos and the continuation of such invaluable conferences we pray to remain anchored in the Faith of our Triune God and forever united to the God-human Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will close with one of my favorite triadic verses of the New Testament. May the Lord direct our hearts to the love of God and to the patience of Christ (2 Thessalonian 3:5). Amen.

