

St SAVVAS OF KALYMNOS

BY

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GIANNITSA GREECE

2009

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Published by HIS EMINENCE PANTELEIMON
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Front photo: St Savvas sitting in the yard of the Holy
Monastery of All Saints in Kalymnos.



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The holy Saints of the Orthodox Church, Martyrs, Hermits and Ascetics, men and women of all ages, became the realization of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's teachings. They consist the living proof that the Holy Gospel can be practised in every period of time and by all faithful.

The existence of the Saints proves one thing: that within the Orthodox Church man can be sanctified and saved. Outside the Orthodox Church, which is the only and canonical Body of Christ, there is no sanctification, nor salvation. Consequently, within the multy forms of contemporary heresies or schisms there are no saints, because in these groups, one cannot find the Divine Grace which grants him sanctification and salvation.

This book was based on the information provided by Basilios Papanikolaos's book, which was published in 1989 by the Holy Monastery of All the Saints, Kalymnos. This pious man collected information concerning St Savvas's life and concequently, has offered a precious treasure not only to the Kalymnians, but to the entire Orthodox world.

This edition aims to present a contemporary holy man, St Savvas, who lived and struggled as an ascetic on the Greek Island of Kalymnos.

Originating from Kalymnos myself and being blessed with the fact that my family was related by true friendship and spiritually with St Savvas, I considered as my duty to offer this book for the glory of St Savvas and to benefit the English speaking people, in order that they may learn about this new holy man, St Savvas.

I pray, that all who shall read this simple biography will find spiritual benefit and glorify the Holy Name of our God, the Holy Trinity, as well as to beseech in their humble prayers St Savvas to become their assistant and protector during the difficult moments of life.

THE METROPOLITAN

+PANTELEIMON

Metropolitan of Antinoes

Giannitsa – Greece, 27th July, 2009

Feastday of St Panteleimon the Great Martyr

This publication is dedicated to my grandfather

Rev. Fr. MICHAEL J. LAMPADARIOS

St Savvas' Spiritual Father and Confessor.

THE LIFE OF OUR HOLY FATHER ST SAVVAS

St Savvas lived the last 22 years of his life on the Greek Island of Kalymnos. He was born in 1862 at Heraclitsa of Eastern Thrace (in the region of Ganos and Choras – today Abdim, Turkey). His parents, Constantinos and Smaragdi, were poor and simple people.

At his baptism, he received the name “Basilios”. Before he received the basic circular lessons, he was taught the eternal lessons of true Christian faith and piety. He struggled to find the Divine Love and turned to the true Philosophy, the realization of the Gospel's Teachings, the monastic way of life, which he followed with great zeal.

The hermits' life and their desire to please God moved St Savvas' sensitive and delicate heart. He wished to imitate their God-pleasing struggles. He desired to become a co-hermit and co-traveller of those holy men.

Under the condition of this spiritual experience, he was taught the circular lessons. He kept himself far

away from all worldly temptations and, as a pure friend of morality, he struggled to keep his soul and body pure and clean from every sin which cloud pollute him.

His father, Constantinos, was troubled and concerned about Basilios's future. It was impossible to continue his education, for he had not the economic capability, nor Baslios had the desire to continue his studies. Thus, Constantinos, opened a small shop for his child. Basilios's father couldn't understand in what commitments and restrictions he was placing his child. Basilios was not interested for worldly riches. He desired the perfect and spiritual way of life in Christ.

THE GREAT DECISION

When Basilios was twelve years old, he realized that the job which he had was not for him. He wanted something higher, more noble and spiritual. He seeked for the Divine Gifts and not the material and worldly things. He lived continuously under the restriction of the soul and realized every day that his true decisions were delayed.

This could not continue. He had to break the bonds with the world and trust himslef in God's Divine Love. He desired to live only for Christ. Within him two main powers were in conflict. On the one hand, as the only son, he had to consider and care for his parents and especially, when his mother learned about his inner desires, she assured him that:

“If he realized his decision, she will die”;

and on the other hand, he struggled for the higher objectives. The Lord's words were always in his mind and heart, *"If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit to a man if he gains the whole world but forfeit his life? Or what will a man give in return for his soul"*¹?. These divine words will assist Basilios to solve his troubles and became the main resultant of his departure.

When a noble soul is flamed by the divine love for God, then the love towards the parents and every material thing are considered as secondary. Primary duty for every Christian is to love Christ and then the love towards everyone else, parents, relatives and friends. *"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me"*².

The sacred words which were once heard by other hermits, *"depart and be saved"*, overruled within Basilios's fine soul. Consequently, one day he decided to abandon the world and all the worldly things. He left the key of his shop under a rock and goes to the port in order to depart from his country. In this way he shall become a stranger to this world, as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was a stranger to this world. Basilios will renounce himself, as the Lord demands

¹ Matth. 18:16-24.

² Matth. 10:37-38.

from all who wish to follow Him. “*If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*”³.

Becoming free from all things which could keep him enslaved and grounded to this world, he followed sincerely Christ and took up his Cross with perfect obedience to the monastic rules. He will built the temple of his existance upon the triptych virtues: *virginity, landless and obedience*.

AT MOUNT ATHOS

Basilios heads towards Mount Athos, the Virgin Mary’s Garden, and settles at the Scete of St Anna. Now, he experiences the first fruits of his sacred desires. He lives with honour and with special care as a good, prudent and abstemious soldier, “*thinking the higher, seeking the higher*”. He lives with continuous understanding of the danger of being led astray. He knows that the path, which leads towards the Heavenly Jerusalem, is very difficult and is attacked continously by Satan, who hates every good thing and especially man.

In the spiritual warfare, Basilios is attacked by Satan left and right. One day, he falls into Satan’s trap. He was tempted to taste chickpeas without the blessings of his Geronta (Spiritual Father)⁴. As he was ready to eat the dry food, he saw Satan laughing and saying to him:

³ Matth. 16:24.

⁴ A basic rule in the monastic lifae is to do everything with the Abbot’s blessings – permission.

“Savvas, I managed to deceive you”!

This incident will never be forgotten. Now, he goes to his Spiritual Father and confesses his sin. During the rest of his life, he shall never forget how harmful the sin of gluttony is.

At the Scete of St Anna, the Monk Savvas, will live practicing icon-painting and Byzantine Music. After 12 years and, after warm prayer, he will decide to depart from the Virgin Mary’s Garden. He desired to visit his parents once again. He wanted to end their pain caused by his departure. Monk Savvas desires to travel to the Holy Lands and to struggle in the sacred grounds of Palestine.

RETURN TO HIS VILLAGE

At his village, Monk Savvas is now like a stranger. He has changed. So many years have passed. His age, the monastic vestments, everything puts in a very difficult situation his family and friends. They recognize him only from a birth mark on his forehead. They wished to keep him. But, he is like a migratory bird. He just came in order to leave. He departed young and now, with so many sacred experiences, it is impossible to stay too long. He is tempted once again. His mother places new obstacles. The landless Monk departs with the help of a wealthy couple, who also desired to visit the Holy Lands.

AT THE HOLY LANDS

In 1887 Monk Savvas travels for the Holy City of Jerusalem. A new and special world is now revealed to him. God's Gifts, which sprang from the Love for mankind of the Word and Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself for the salvation of His creation.

Monk Savvas arrived at the Holy City. He entered the Greek Orthodox Church of the Resurrection with great respect and piety. He venerated the Holy Sepulchre. Here, death was mingled with the Resurrection in order that mortality may be removed. One can feel the holiness and the presence of the divine breeze of this holy place.

Now he is headed towards the desert. He understands that he will enter into a spiritual arena and will struggle face to face with Satan and all his evil angels. Before him an ocean of continuous and uneven struggle is opened. But, he is assured, that his weak powers will be strengthened by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who can achieve everything, as He promised: *"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing"*⁵.

Monk Savvas had always in his heart the words of St Paul, who said: *"For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"*⁶.

⁵ John 15:5.

⁶ Eph. 6:12.

AT HOZTEBAS'S HOLY MONASTERY

St Savvas enrolls himself in the brotherhood of the Holy Monastery of St George, Hotzebas, which is situated at the region of Jordan. He has faith and hope in the Lord, that He would strengenth him.

In 1890, after three years of pious and vitueous life, he is ordained officially Monk by the Abbot Kallinikos. He is armed with the Grace of God and is vested with the angelic scheme. He is always willing to struggle and is first in all virtues.

St Savvas progressed day by day in all virtues and feels that he drags the attention of his fellow ascetics. He decides to hide his spiritual growth by departing from the Monastery.

In 1894, Abbot Kallinikos sends St Savvas to a fellow ascetic, the Very Rev. Archimandrite Anthimos, who was residing at the Holy Scete of St Anna in Mount Athos. St Savvas will be guided even more into the spiritual life of Orthodox Monasticism and will learn hagiagrophy (icon painting). After three years, in 1897 he will return back to Palestine.

ORDINATION AS DEACON AND PRESBYTER

In 1902, St Savvas received the first rank of Priesthood, that of a Deacon. The following year, 1903, he was ordained as Presbyter by the His Eminence Nicodemos Archbishop of Diocaesareia.

In 1906, we find St Savvas serving as the parish priest of the Holy Cross Theological School of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. There he will meet with Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, the future Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. Chrysostomos, spoke about St Savvas to his Kalymnian friend Gerasimos Zerbos; even before St Savvas's falling asleep in the Lord and even before he was recognized as a saint.

“Gerasimos, you must know, that Fr Savvas is a holy man”.

In 1907, St Savvas returns to the Holy Monastery of St George, Hotzebas, and struggles for more spiritual achievements, as well as painting holy icons.

In 1916, St Savvas returns back to Greece.

St Savvas's perfect ascetic way of life will raise him in higher spiritual maturity and will make him an experiant Spiritual Father, who will guide the Kalymnians, through the Holy Sacrament of Confession, encouraging them to seek the divine forgiveness.

He submits himself to the entire ascetic rules. He decorates his soul with the virtue of extreme humbleness and is very distinctive towards everyone else. He weakens the flesh through very strict fasting. He practices self-controll and cultivates the spiritual search in order to avoid the traps set by Satan. He cultivates the virtue of keeping silent and departs from himself and the others. He practices that which St Paul

urges all Christians saying: “*Pray without ceasing*”⁷. He sleeps on the ground and deprives himself from every material thing.

His food, dressing and way of life is blessed with another virtue, that of being landless. He followed the patristic saying:

“The landless monk is a high flying eagle”.

He eats every day one spoon of wet weat and partakes a small amount of water from the river Jordan. Fishing was allowed, but none of his fellow ascetics were eating from this blessed offering of Jordan.

In that endless desert of Jordan, more than five hundred caves welcomed these spiritual eagles of the Divine Grace. The ascetics are the witnesses of the noble virtues. They hear the soul’s pain and the expressions of the divine exaltations. Their tears rise with awe, with devoutness and especially with hope and faith in God. In the desert’s quietness they hear the sweet hymns and words of encouragement. They experienced their personal and repeated struggles against the invisible enemy and they received the divine aroma and fragrance of God, which He granted and justified to them.

RETURN BACK TO GREECE

St Savvas departs unwillingly from Palestine. The political situation is unstabled. The Arabs rob and threaten the lives of the Christian Monks.

⁷ I Thess. 5:17.

He arrives in Greece and searches for a new land to practice ascetism. About 1916 it seems that he visited the holy island of Patmos. In the main Church of the Holy Monastery of St. John the Theologian, he restored two holy icons. There he remained for two whole years. Afterwards, in 1918, he visits once again the Holy Mountain (third time) from where he departs for Athens in order to provide himself with material and colours necessary for his icon paintings.

AT THE ISLAND OF AEGINA

In Athens St Savvas meets a spiritual son of St. Nektarios. He informs him that the Metropolitan of Pentapolis is seeking him. He departs from Athens and travels to Aegina, where he stays with St. Nektarios, whom he served till his blessed falling asleep⁸.

The Holy Monastery of the Holy Trinity was established in 1904 by St. Nektarios. According to one document from the Monastery's Archives, St Savvas lived there for six years and taught the technic of icon painting and church music.

His stay and friendship with St Nektarios will assist him in progressing in the spiritual life, as he himself will refer many times.

⁸ In the Orthodox Christian Faith, the biblical term "falling asleep" is preferable than the use of the term "die", in order to express that one has passed from this life into the Life which the Lord has prepared for all those who believe in Him.

St Savvas experienced St Nektarios' strict ascetism; together they faced the spiritual warfare and the traps of Satan, as well as the craftiness and frame-up of evil men. He experienced St Nektarios's undisputable virtue, his legendary and proverbial humbleness, his simplicity and the calmness of his character. St Savvas heard the paternal instructions and teachings of the ascetic Metropolitan. Finally, St Savvas saw the divine falling asleep of St Nektarios, which proved that this holy man truly pleased God; for many miracles have been performed by the Lord our God through His humble servant.

St Savvas, after the falling asleep of St Nektarios, experienced the first miracle performed by the later. For, as he prepared the body for the funeral service and as he was placing the Epitachilion around St Nektarios's neck, he saw the head inclining forwards and returning to its former position.

During his stay with St Nektarios, St Savvas exchanged many thoughts. They spoke about the invisible and spiritual warfare and, as experient in this warfare; they revealed the ways and methods to deal with it. But, now, with the falling asleep of St Nektarios, this way of life is cut off. Another miracle followed.

During the first three days of St Nektarios's departure, as the nuns of the Holy Monastery of the Holy Trinity were under great sadness for the lost of their Spiritual Father, St Savvas continued his communication with his friend. For, during these three days and three nights, he was next to St Nektarios's tomb; and the two holy men were heard discussing with

one another. When the Mother Superior and the rest of the nuns went to St Savvas's room in order to receive some kind of explanation, they did not find him. They went directly to St Nektarios's tomb and saw St Savvas next to the tomb and discussing with St Nektarios.

St Savvas requested from the Mother Superior not to disturb him for forty days, as he will be in his room fasting and praying. On the fortieth day he opened the door of his room and came out holding the holy icon of St Nektarios, which he handed to Mother Superior instructing her to place it at the tripod on which the holy icons are placed in order to be venerated by the faithful. Mother Superior was caught by surprise and responded that this is not possible, because the Gerontas (St Nektarios) was not officially recognized by the Orthodox Church as a Saint; and that this action will put in a dangerous situation their Monastery and will be persucated by the Ecclesiastic and Civil Authorities. Then, St Savvas said to her:

“You must show obedience. Take the icon and place it on the tripod and do not examine God's Will”.

In the Holy Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Aegina the following event took place. A young nun, sister Nektaria, wanted to see with her own eyes St Nektarios's face. She began to dig and opened his tomb. Her action was discovered by the other nuns. Strong observations followed by Mother Superior, who led her to St Savvas. St Savvas rebuked strongly her action and characterised it as “grave robbing”. He then forbided her from partaking the Holy Sacrament of Holy Communion till Holy Thursday. Sister Nektaria cried

and was asking for forgiveness, saying that she did not realise the sinfulness of her action. As everyone departed from St Savvas's room, St Nektarios appeared and smiling he said:

“Geronta, forgive her. She is young. She didn't know about this sin. She didn't know. You must give her Holy Communion before Holy Thursday. You heard, Geronta? Be lenient. She didn't know. You heard? I thank you”.

DEPARTING FOR KALYMNOS

St Savvas could not remain any more in Aegina, for many pilgrims were visiting the Monastery and were disturbing the quietness of his ascetic way of life.

In 1926, he departs for Athens. There he meets with the Kalymnian Gerasimos Zerbos, who convinced him to come to Kalymnos in order to become the island's Spiritual Father.

In 1926, he is hosted by Gerasimos Zerbos in his home in Athens. Afterwards, he travels for Kalymnos and visits the Monastery of All the Saints.

ST IEROTHEOS PROPHECIES ABOUT THE ARRIVAL OF ST SAVVAS

At the Monastery of All the Saints lived a very holy man, Fr Ierotheos Kourounis. He lived a very ascetic life for many years. This holy man placed the first seed

of piety and prepared the way for St Savvas. This blessed man had the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and, because of his pure and virtuous life; he received the Gift of Foreseeing. Before his falling asleep, he encouraged the nuns saying:

“Do not be disturbed and sad, for another one will come, who will be greater than I”!

St Ierotheos, then, left his eyes to wonder towards the Aegean Sea, towards the island of Cos, as like he was expecting someone to arrive.

The blessed Mother Superior Thecla, saw a dream in which St Ierotheos took St Savvas, guided him to the upper parts of the Monastery and said to him:

“Build here. You hear, Geronta, here you will build”.

At this point I would like to state, that St Ierotheos, in the conscience of the people of Kalymnos is considered to be a *“holy man”*. His relics are preserved and issue divine fragrance. They are kept in the small chapel of St Savvas. Yet, he is not recognized officially by the Orthodox Church as a Saint. The local ecclesiastic authorities, the Holy Metropolis of Leros, Kalymnos and Astypalaia, should examine this issue. Nevertheless, it is indisputable fact that, according to eyewitnesses, during St Ierotheos’s exhumation, his relics and the entire around area were overwhelmed with divine fragrance.

Truthfully, St Savvas arrived at the island of Kalymnos and heads for the Holy Monastery of All the Saints. Thus, Kalymnos added to its list of pious and virtuous priests the ascetic personality of St Savvas. But, from the first day he is troubled. As an ascetic, he desired quietness. The noise of the many people who are visiting the Monastery will disturb him and will distract his attention from prayer. He decides to visit other places on the island. He visits the Holy Monastery of St Catherina, the church of St Nicholaos at Chali; but, at the end he could not find the place which his heart desired for quietness. This, unfortunate event, will encourage him to decide to leave from Kalymnos. But, after 15 days he returns to fulfill the words of Superior Mother Thecla:

“It is the Will of God to live and die there”.

ST SAVVAS REMAINS AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF ALL THE SAINTS

St Savvas with the help of Gerasimos Zerbos builds the new upper rooms and begins a very strict spiritual life. He paints holy icons, celebrates the divine Holy Mysteries and all the divine services; he receives confession from the people, teaches them with words and especially through his Christian and ascetic example. He helps the widows, the orphans and the island's poor.

During this period Kalymnos is under Italian occupation (since 1912). The trial was great, for the Kalymnians have Orthodoxy and Hellenism within their

hearts and they react against the Italian propaganda which aimed to convert them to Roman Catholicism.

The heresy of Roman Catholicism demands to submit the Orthodox Church of the Twelve Islands (Dodekanessa) under the ecclesiastical authority of the Pope of Rome. Unfortunately, the religious leaders submit themselves in exchange for a sum of money and agree to perform the Holy Sacrament of Baptism in accordance to that of the Latin Church, by sprinkling. This decision was considered as extreme betrayal of the Orthodox Christian Faith and will lead the faithful Orthodox people to renounce the decisions of their unworthy leaders. The Metropolitan of Kalymnos will never be accepted by the Kalymnians; and he will find a terrifying death in Athens, as his house was accidentally set on fire.

The local Orthodox Church remained faithful to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople and proclaimed that she is under persecution. All the Priests of Kalymnos, except St Savvas, take an oath not to celebrate in the island's Churches till they will be free from the Pope's and the Italian's evil plan.

At the Holy Monastery of All the Saints, he will pass the 22 years of his life, with humility, ascetism, alms giving. His angelic example will be remembered by all who had the honour of knowing him. The Kalymnians will call upon his holy name in their difficult moments of life.

AS A SPIRITUAL FATHER

When St Savvas heard that someone wanted to confess, he did not hesitate to visit him. With great willingness he approached those who needed spiritual guidance. He was lenient and merciful to all sinners. But, he was strict against the sins of blasphemy and being judgemental against others. These two sins disturbed him very much.

“Do you blaspheme? You blaspheme! You must then bite your tongue”, he was saying!

The great sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit causes God’s wrath upon those who willingly do not want to repent and ask for God’s forgiveness. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, assured us about this great and unforgettable sin. *“He who willingly falls into sin and knowingly blasphemes God will not be forgiven”*⁹. St Paul teaches us saying that *“at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”*¹⁰.

“So, St Savvas was saying, how can anyone blaspheme without any fear and shame”?

St Savvas was overwhelmed in his heart by the divine love and his soul was filled with the heavenly sweetness. He avoided any kind of criticism against his fellow man. He was always advised others saying:

⁹ Zigabenos, *To Matthew 12:32*, Migne, P.G., 129, 381.

¹⁰ Phil. 2:10-11.

“If you judge, you judge your brother”.

He reminded the Lord’s instructions:

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you judge you will be judged, and with the measure you measure you will be measured. Why do you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? Hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye”¹¹.

To those who judged others rather than themselves, he was giving them a hard penance. This reaction was revealing his sensitive and fine heart.

St Savvas was receiving daily the confession of the people. Usually, when he had many faithful visiting him, he was confessing them immediately after the Divine Liturgy till sunset without taking a break or receiving any food. He proved to be a good and experienced spiritual guide. He was transmitting his sacred fear of God and supernatural experiences.

St Savvas believed in the salvation of the souls and desired to guide them in the Lord’s inexpressible joy. Frequently he used to shed tears and heartfully pleaded the sinners to change their sinful way of life.

¹¹ Matth. 7:1-5.

BEFORE THE HOLY ALTAR

According to eyewitnesses, during the Divine Liturgy he was entirely concentrated on the Holy Sacrament and many times he would concelebrate with the holy three Hierarchs, St Basil the Great, St John Chrysostom and St Gregory the Theologian, and many other Saints. At the moment of giving of the Holy Communion, the nuns and other priests have seen the Precious Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, rising within the Holy Chalice till the brim, without overflowing.

In other cases, the faithful who were attending the holy services, when St Savvas was preparing the Offering Gifts (Proskomedi) and was cutting the Offering Bread (Prosforo), they were hearing the cry of an infant, as if it was being slaughtered.

Thus, St Savvas was experiencing beforehand the heavenly beauty and was concelebrating with those Saints of the Triamphal Church in Heaven.

THE SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES

For every spiritual problem he will pray to receive information and divine guidance and thus he was on the right and safe path. He was very careful concerning his own spiritual progress; for God's path faces many temptations and hides many traps set by Satan. These one can overcome only through continuous prayer, humbleness and obedience. This explains Satan's envy,

who wanted to prevent St Savvas to progress in piety and holiness.

Once, on the first Monday of the period of the Holy Great Lent, Satan closed St Savvas in his room and spitefully was saying to him:

“I will never leave you. You shall remain here forever”!

St Savvas increased his personal struggles and prayers to our Lord. God heard his prayers and granted him the strength to defeat the evil powers.

During the Holy Sacrament of Confession, St Savvas was granting the forgiveness of sins with divine authority. This is revealed from the following event. As St Savvas was reading very late at night, he saw his fellow Monk from Mount Athos begging him for forgiveness. This occurred because the later sadden St Savvas, when he was at Mount Athos. St Savvas himself witnessed saying:

“The Lord Himself brought him before me”.

The strict ascetic way of life granted him two things: the fragrance of his body and his illness. The divine fragrance was God’s notification in advance about the purity of His servant. For, even, when he was passing through the crowds, or praying in his room, those around the area will experience the presence of this divine fragrance. This same fragrance will spring up later from his tomb, during the exhumation, and shall grant to those who call upon his name the Divine Grace.

DAILY LIFE

His clothes were made from goats' skin and gave the same divine fragrance. This was another sign of the Divine Grace given to St Savvas.

His food was the holy Bread offered at the Divine Liturgy, which he partook after sunset with a cup of rosemary tea. These two elements will preserve him for many years.

He believed that everything that he was going through, the all night vigils, the few hours of sleep, his strict fasting, were not enough. So, he was taking a heavy iron bar and was breaking large rocks. In this way, he was justifying the right of receiving his daily food.

All the above he suffered under difficult conditions, for he was suffering from prostate and had a chronic abdominal sickness.

During the hard times which the Greek Nation faced during the II World War, the blessed hieromonk Savvas was praying ceaselessly and was beseeching the Lord's mercy upon all mankind.

Once, as he was praying, he found himself to be in rapture outside of his body; praying from sunset to sunrise, because mankind went through great danger. Also, many times, he would bless the enemy's planes in order to avoid any destruction.

He was always very serious and avoided laughters, according to the Lord's words: "*Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep*"¹².

He repeatedly demanded from everyone to be serious. This is a sign of his spiritual maturity.

He was a friend towards and loved the monastic way of life and advised many young people to follow this life. He had the virtue of distinguishing who could carry the monastic scheme and who should marry. He was advising without forcing.

His love was sincere and spontaneous. He loved all and struggled for the return and repentance of all sinners. He wanted all men to partake in God's Heavenly Kingdom. He desired the communion with Christ and the spiritual progress in all virtues.

His purity consisted by many good deeds and virtues. He avoided the scandals and was confessing to Fr Michael J. Lampadarios.

An example is the following:

St Savvas was invited by a family. It was Sunday and, according to the local tradition, the Kalymnians cook stuffed vineleaves. The family, in order to please St Savvas, offered him this meal. St Savvas avoided eating meat, but for the family's sake, he ate only three pieces. This he considered as a great sin! Departing from the family's house, he ran directly to his Spiritual Father, Fr Michael Lampadarios, to confess.

¹² Luke 6:25.

In many occasions, Fr Michael will smile, as he will hear St. Savvas's confession. In other occasions he will delay of receiving him. Because of this, St Savvas will say to him:

“Are you going to receive my confession or should I go to another confessor”?

Fr Michael once again laughed when he heard his “great” sin for which he was asking not only forgiveness, but demanded a strick penance!

Many times he needed to visit the city of Kalymnos, either to serve the spiritual needs of the faithful, and in other occasions to buy materials for his icon paintings. He usually held a large umbrella, in order not to be seen. He avoided looking around him in order not to have any worldly distractions.

The monastic rules which are summarized in the triptych: virginity – landless - obedience, are realized within St Savvas's holy personality.

When he visited Athens, he had a prostate operation. In the Hospital he welcomed all the doctors, nurses and many who came to receive his blessings. Everyone was amazed with his simplicity and requested his holy blessings.

“Your blessings, Father. Your blessings”!

The faithful with great respect kissed his right hand, as they realized his purity and virtuous angelic life.

He never carried money. During the building of the new rooms, he allowed the workers to take his own reward, without checking, if they have received the proper amount according to their work. He never was concerned for money. Whatever he received from his work, as an icon painter, and whatever tips the people used to offer him, he will use it to comfort the widows and orphans. At sunset he wanted not to have any money.

He used to say:

“What money should a Monk have? They are satanic”!

His life was a condition of holy obedience. Within the virtue of obedience, he understood the virtue of the blessed humility. But, nevertheless, in the final analysis one can say that the greatest Commandment of God is the virtue of love. As the holy Apostle Paul teaches us saying :

“And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love”¹³.

When one loves God, he is obedient to Him. When he is obedient, he humbles himself. Thus, the one virtue is extended to all actions of man. Consequently, St Savvas served in an absolute way the virtue of obedience. This is manifested as he was requested to eat meat during his illness on Mount Athos.

This holy man, who refused to partake from the fish of Jordan, accepted to eat food, which he never considered that he will partake in his life. He holds as primary rule, his Geronta’s commandment, to be obedient.

¹³ I Corinth. 13:13.

THE FALLING ASLEEP

In such a way St Savvas passed his earthly life, as a “*good soldier*”. At the last days of his life, he requested to be left alone in order to pray and to consitrate. For three days he did not accept anyone. He was at the footsteps of his departure. He gave his last instructions. He asked from everyone to have love and obedience. When the last moments came, suddently, he recovered his strength and uniting his hands, he clapped them crying out loud:

“The Lord, the Lord, the Lord”!

These words assured the divine path which he will follow. It was the last part of his God-pleasing life. Few nuns had the honour to be next to the ascetic, pious hieromonk and citizen of Paradise.

One nun saw at the departure of St Savvas his soul rising up to Heaven in a golden cloud and chating with a sweet voice:

“Evangelized earth with a great joy”!

It was the vesper of the feastday of the Annuciation of the Virgin Mary (25th March, 1947). This day was celebrated by St Savvas with great piety.

THE DISCOVERING OF ST SAVVAS’S RELICS

After ten years, in April, 1957, the late Metropolitan of Leros, Kalymnos and Astypalaia Isidoros decided to open St Savvas's tomb and to receive his relics. Before the multitude of the people of Kalymnos, who arrived at the Holy Monastery, the tomb was opened. Everyone was surprised. A strong aroma came out from the tomb and filled the entire mountain.

The body of St Savvas was found untouched and whole. Metropolitan Isidoros, the nuns and all the faithful were amazed and tears filled their eyes; they crossed themselves with the sign of the Holy Cross and cried out:

“Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy”!

The Church bells began to sound. In few minutes the news spread throughout the entire island. All the Churches began to celebrate for this God-giving blessing. The Metropolitan, for security, gave the order to seal the tomb. Afterwards, the holy relic was transferred in a new wooden relic container.

Many years passed, after the opening of his tomb, and a multitude of miracles followed by the Grace of God through His servant St Savvas.

Such was the life of St Savvas. His fellow ascetics in Jordan said to many Kalymnians:

“Oh! How blessed you are”!

When they responded saying that they left their country, the Monks answered:

“No! You are blessed, because you have the lately Saint on your island”!

ST SAVVAS RULES CONCERNING THE UNEXCEPTIONABLE MONASTIC WAY OF LIFE

1. A Monk is he who keeps virginity and purity of body and mouth, and has his soul in sadness and remembers constantly death.

2. A Monk is he who is in truly humble and desires to be ignored by men and believes that God is powerful to carry him from all human scandals.

3. A Monk is he who puts to death his own will and surrenders it to his teacher and Spiritual Father in Christ; he shall stand next to the Crucifide Lord.

4. A Monk is he, who mourns and cries for his sins and does not judge the sins of others, nor does he become angry, but he suffers with patience everything and all contempt of men in order to stand worthy before the Lord of all.

5. A Monk is he who is obedient and humble; he is free from anger, impatience and judgement.

6. A Monk is free from all evilness and becomes willingly as an animal, which became obedient, without examining or critising, him who leads it wherever he wishes.

7. The Monks are obliged to suffer without being disturbed and with gladness to accept every trial, for they are called by God, in order to have communion with Him and to partake in His Glory.

8. For the Monks it is not proper to seek the high and theological things; for their duty is to mourn for their sins and seek piety. They must become like those who are disregarded and sit on the edge of the streets and wear poor clothes and cry for their sins. Do not seek, Oh brother, to learn great and difficult to understand matters, for these are not necessary for your salvation. For this reason flee away from these things, in order that the beautiful humility follows you and accounts you amongst the Angelic Hosts.

9. The characteristics of true Monks are those who adjust themselves to please the Lord in the following way: Obedient, landless and virginity. Apart from this way of life, it is impossible for them to progress. He, who lives otherwise from the above, is struggling in vain. Glory be to God.

THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

On the 21st April, 1968, I was with the Nicephorion High School celebrating a national day at the main port of Kalymnos. In that year, I just returned from the U.S.A., where my parents immigrated with all my family. As I stood in front of the statue of freedom, I looked up to the Monastery of All the Saints. My heart always wanted to go and pay my reverence to St Savvas.

But, my mother never had the time to take me. As I was thinking:

“How can I visit St Savvas, since I did not know the way”?

I, then saw a clergyman standing from a long distance on the main road to the Monastery. I said to myself:

“This clergyman must be going to the Monastery. I shall follow him”.

At that time, I did not know the Greek language, so it was impossible for me to ask how to go to the Monastery. I started to enter into small roads, climbing over fences and trying to communicate with my fellow countrymen. But, as I mentioned, I could not speak the language. I tried with signs to make them understand where I wanted to go and they guided me. As I found the main road, I saw once again the clergyman standing at the same spot, as I have seen him from the port. He did not move at all. But, when I began to run towards him, he surprisingly began also to keep a safe distance from me. I was young and a very good runner. I tried many times to run and approach the clergyman, but he still remained in a safe distance.

At the top of the hill, the road turns. I was alarmed, because I did not know how the road was after the corner and I was afraid that I might lose the clergyman. So, I ran even more quickly. When I turned, I was very discouraged, because the clergyman had disappeared. I could not see him. I tried to find him in

the small Monastery of Ss Peter and Paul, which is situated in the small forest on the corner of the hillside. But, he was not found.

The Monastery of All the Saints is in front of me. Now, I feel safe. I began to climb the mountain hill and few minutes I entered the Monastery. The nuns welcomed me. I tried to give them to understand who I was. I reminded them about my grandfather, Fr Michael J. Lamapadarios. They were excited, for they knew him very well, as he was the confessor Father of St Savvas.

They asked me, *“How did I find my way to the Monastery”?*

I replied describing them the clergyman, whom I saw and that he showed me the way to come.

The Mother Superior said: *“It was St Savvas, who led you here”*.

After many years, in 1986, I became ill; I was paralyzed because of malignant cancer in the spine. In this condition I remained for two whole years, unable to move my legs. I was in the Hospital of “Evangelismos” and afterwards in that for the “Restoration of Disable Persons” at Agioi Anargyroi. During that period my father, Pantelis M. Lampadarios, was very ill, so I asked to go and see him. In Kalymnos I stayed one day, but after I returned back to Athens, my father passed away.

That period, the local Orthodox Church was planning to replace the relics of St Savvas in a new silver relic container. As I was praying and stood during the

service in the midst of the Royal Doors of the Altar in the Church of St John Chrysostom, a very strong wind of divine fragrance came directly to my face exactly at the moment, when Fr Iakovos Syriotes placed the holy body of St Savvas in the new relic container. Only I felt that wind. Those around me witnessed that they did feel or smell anything.

That night, I saw St Savvas in my dream. He was lying on a table in the main Church of St John Chrysostom. When I entered into the Church through the Holy Altar, he invited me to approach him. His eyes opened. They were so clear. I never have seen anything like them. St Savvas began to invite me saying:

“Welcome! Approach, I was expecting you”!

He then tried to stand, but was knocked back, as though his head struck on a window. It was around 04:30 am. I woke up and gave thanks to God and His holy Saint. At 07:30 am, I visited the Holy Monastery and venerated St Savvas for his love and kindness.