

ST. GENNADIOS OF CRETE, GREECE (+1983)

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It was late at night. Beside the humble Chapel of St. Anna, inside his even more humble cell, Monk Gennadios taught his visitors with simplicity, and everyone could sense the grace in his voice.

Among other visitors was Monk Theodosios from the near by Hermitage of St. Anthony, his brother in life, and some others whom he took in for that night. At night, in the early hours, heavy running steps were heard and a voice - calm at the beginning, wild and hostile later - was calling Gennady's name.

“Who are you?” asked the Elder, *“what do you want? Go away.”*

Silence followed. The next morning, after the morning service, Fr. Gennadios reassured his visitors of everything they had heard and added:

“Thank God you didn’t say anything, because they could easily have taken your voices. They cannot do this to monks. It was a visit of evil spirits”.

Another time, the evil one came to the Elder in a human shape and asked him:

“Why are you still fighting me?”

“What wrong have I done to you?” replied the Elder.

“You are teaching the people. Don’t teach the people”.

“But people are thirsty for teaching and are eager to listen”.

“Do not teach” continued the visitor. *“You are illiterate, you don’t know anything. Let them listen to the Deacons, to the Priests, and to Theologians. You should say nothing.”*

“But they want to listen to me too” - admitted the hermit - *“because people want to hear about their salvation and I am obliged to inform them. He who knows the truth and doesn’t share it, hides our Lord Jesus Christ”.*

As soon as he heard the Holy Name, the evil one vanished. *“He got burnt”*, explained the Elder a little latter, with an innocent smile on his face.

Who was this elderly monk?

Who had this kind of experience, facing the enemy of humanity (in battle).

Who is this monk who, in a supernatural, mystical, unearthly way, transferred himself without any kind of transportation to the place of the tragic accident that took place in Georgioupoli (Chanea, Crete) in 1972, when 21 students were drowned?

Who is he that in a similar way, was found in America, in the civil war of Lebanon and during the war between Iraq and Iran?

Who is this monk, who sailed the sea on his cloak, as another St. John the Hermit or like St. Laurence of Megara (while he was living in the Monastery of Koudouma)?

Who is this monk (considering all the facts), who like another Apostle Paul, was taken to Heaven and heard amazing things that people are unable to describe or comprehend (II Corinthians 12, 4), and who like St. John the Evangelist saw the burning lake (Apoc. 21,8)?

He was a valuable, spiritual pillar of the Orthodox Faith who became a Saint and enlightened a local region of the Greek island of Crete.

He was a very recent Holy Father of the Orthodox Church, who served the people with his gifts of foreseeing things and prophesying, together with preaching to repent and return to faith.

The following pages, blessed with the fragrance of holiness, describe the life of this blessed monk, based on the valuable notes of Stylianos Papadogiannakis (a Teacher of Theology at Rethimno, Crete) and other declarations of trusted people (*“he who sees should speak”* John 19, 35). We follow his testimony and humbly dedicate it to the Church for the glory of God (John 12,42).

The early years of the blessed Elder Gennadios

The future hermit Monk Gennadios was born as John Tzekakis in 1887, in the village of Actouda, in the province St. Vasilios, in the county of Rethimno, Crete. His parents Emmanuel and Katherine were very poor farmers but ardent Christians, who raised eight children. John grew up in deprivation, in poverty, in hardship, among his companions, his brothers. In this way God prepared him for his future ascetic life, so that he could willingly resist vain earthly delights. On the other hand, poverty was the reason he remained illiterate. He only managed to finish the second class of primary school, and then he went to work as a servant to a Christian family in the village of Prine, where he worked as a shepherd. From there he departed at the age of 14 for the Monastery of Koudouma.

His choice was not dictated by the difficult conditions of his life, his poverty, or by the pressure of the Ottoman ruler (under whom they lived), but from a genuine attractions of his pure soul towards our Lord and his love for Him.

At this point we must mention an event which proves that he was destined to become a Monk and to reach holiness, as God had planned for him even from the womb (Gal.1, 15). When he was young, while gathering olives on a tree, he carelessly fell. Just under the tree was a deep pit of water. It was certain that if he had fallen in he would have drowned. But just as he was falling into the pit, a power grabbed him by his hand and prevented him.

Young John left Prine for the Monastery of Koudouma on foot and shoeless. On his way, a little beyond the village Megali Vrysi, a rider felt sorry for him and took him on his horse up to the village of Vagionia. From there he continued his journey through a rough and difficult path among the mountains of Asterousia to Koudouma. There he placed himself under the protection of the Most Holy Theotokos and under the obedience of the Elders Parthenios and Eumenios, who were brothers in real life.

St. Gennadios as a novice Monk

When young John reached the Monastery of Koudouma, the Abbot of the monastery was St. Parthenios (+ 1905). His brother in flesh St. Eumenios (+ 1920) served as a priest. Both of them accepted young John with a special love and assigned his spiritual guidance to the Elder Vasilios. The experienced Elder tried to determine what the real intentions of young novice John were. So he asked him:

“Why have you come here?”

“I came to be a Monk and save my soul”, replied John.

“It is a very hard task - added the Elder - monastic life is a difficult way of life. Will you be able to handle it?”

“With God’s help” replied John.

His answer was mature and satisfied his spiritual guide. His first assignment was to graze sheep. Meanwhile his spiritual father rested in peace (probably in September of 1902) and St. Parthenios took upon himself his spiritual guideness. After a while he tonsured him as a Great Schema Monk, after going through all the relevant procedures.

In his communal life Monk Gennadios was tested in obedience. *“I was looking at the almonds, the figs and the grapes and craved them”,* he used to say. *“I was burning with desire to eat, but I*

respected my Elder and never ate in secret, so I didn't fall into disobedience and secret eating”.

After a while he was assigned the task of cooking for the brotherhood and in this task he demonstrated to the rest of the monks his loyalty and pure love to them.

At the monastery Monk Gennadios, through his struggles, reached high standards of virtue and holiness, and God allowed a remarkable miracle to make known the virtue of his servant. They had to perform an all-night vigil in a nearby church, but they only had a boat for transport. So they started to get on the boat, but there was no room for the Elder, so he was left outside. The man of God felt very sorry, but he made the sign of the Cross, put his cassock on the water, sat on it and reached his destination sooner than the boat with the rest of the brothers. When the boat arrived and they saw him at the church, although they had left him behind, everyone was astonished.

Similar incidents are reported from the Lives of St. John the Hermit (one of the 99 Holy Fathers of Crete) and St. Laurence of Megara (he who rebuilt the Monastery of Phaneroumeni Theotokos on the island of Salamis).

The help of the Most Holy Theotokos was displayed in another incident. There was a dangerous rock at the Monastery's beach, from

which there was a great view, according to the other brothers. So one day the Elder decided to climb it to see the view. He climbed it, stayed on it for a while, prayed and then tried to climb down. But it was very difficult, he began to feel dizzy and anxious and wondered: *“Who told me to get up here? Who is going to help me get down now?”* Remembering his beloved Most Holy Theotokos, he started praying loudly: *“Help me, O Lady, and I will read for you a canon”*. Her grace immediately intervened and he was found on the ground safe and sound.

St. Gennadios was forced to leave the Monastery of Koudouma around 1918, with the blessings of Abbot St. Eumenios, after staying there for 17 years. The reason for his departure was his bad health, due to the climate of the area. Some say that he left because of the jealousy of some monks, who couldn't stand the comparison between their lives and his.

St. Gennadios as an ascetic

St. Gennadios returned to his homeland the same way he had left, on foot. After facing some discomforts, he reached the small Chapel of St. Anna, in the area of Giallia, at the village of Akoumia. The area is peaceful. It is located 12 kilometers from the village. The area is a valley

that ends at the sea, at the amazing beach of Giallia, full of olive trees and cypresses. In the valley there is also the Hermitage of St. Antonios the Great (where the blessed Monk Theodosios Dambakerakis lived his life) and many other small country Chapels like St. John's, the Holy Apostles', the Virgin Mary's, the Prophet Elijah's and others.

Initially he thought of staying at the Chapel of Christ the Saviour, but because the water was far away, he decided not to stay there. He chose to stay at St. Anna's Chapel and with the help of some villagers built a small cell, where he struggled for the next 65 years, till the end of his life.

St. Gennadios was of humble appearance, medium height, with a slight hump and pure white hair. Always quick in his movements, willing and ready to welcome, to bless, to offer wooden handmade crosses for blessing or small booklets of the lives of saints, he never refused to bless people with the sigh of the Cross. Most of the time, people who visited him found him studying the Holy Scriptures or the Lives of Saints or other religious books.

His food was simple and frugal; he was against any kind of waste. His clothes were old, patched, but not dirty. He hardly wore shoes, only a plastic boot on one foot and an army boot on the other. He

never wasted time, his time was always devoted to good causes – praying, studying, teaching, preaching. *“It’s better for me to teach than to eat”*, he used to say.

His teaching was simple, well put and understandable. Sometimes he taught very happily and without any loud sounds, other times he taught with cries of agony or in total silence. Whenever he talked about the love of God, he was very calm. It was the same when he talked about the blessings of the Righteous and the beauties of Heaven, *“where it is always daylight and never darkness and there is always joy”*.

He was full of anxiety when he referred to the apostasy from God. There were cases when he kept silent, because his visitors had visited him only out of curiosity, with no spiritual agony in their souls.

St. Gennadios was a truly solitary person, he did not seek human company, for human company is usually the reason why God is silent.

Most of the hours of the day, he stayed in his cell and this greatly helped his inner search for salvation. He preferred the presence of the trees, of the mountain and of the silence of the night, and with them he praised the Lord.

In his cell or outside of it, under the protection of the roof, at the root of an olive tree or inside the small Chapel, many souls heard his teaching,

prayed together with him, received his blessings and were driven led on the path of salvation. For those who experienced moments like these, they are among the most valuable memories of their lives.

According to the Fathers of our Church, the stage of sorrows is necessary for those who are struggling to attain virtue. St. Gennadios also went through this burning fire and shone as melted gold shines. Since his early years he had known poverty and deprivation in his own family. Then he lived as a servant, away from his family. This was followed by the 17 years of ascetic life at the Monastery of Koudouma, where he fought in obedience and continuous sacrifice to the brotherhood. His accommodation at St. Anna's wasn't solitary at all, but it was a constant fight with the evil one and his agents. He couldn't go to the desert because the desert was for higher spiritual beings. The blessed Monk didn't have to face thoughts of this kind.

Attacks from the evil one are for novices. He went to Gialia spiritually prepared. That was why the devil insulted him with his appearances. As when he presented himself in the shape of a serpent. St. Gennadios wasn't scared nor he did he stop praying, but he let the holy Name of our Lord chase the intruder away.

Another time the evil spirits in the shape of scorpions filled his humble cell, the roof of the cell, even his wooden bed. Again with the power of his prayer he dissolved the evil appearances. Another time while he was sleeping, the evil one pressed on his chest with such an awful, unbearable weight that he couldn't even breathe nor move, but he could pray. The moment he whispered the words of the Prayer of Jesus, both the evil one and the weight disappeared..

The evil one fought the Elder with his agents as well. During the years of the German occupation, he was visited by two Greek Police Officers and their chief in command. The Elder welcomed them peacefully, prepared food for them and put them up, as he used to do. After they had eaten and got warmed at the fire, they treated him badly and one of them even hit the Elder with the butt of his gun. The Saint didn't bear him a grudge, but the person who heat him found a tragic death during the war. Once (with evil one's help) while he was cutting some wood for his fire, a branch hit him in his eyes and he lost his eye-sight.

The Saint felt sadness and fear and agony over what would happen to him, and who would have control over him. *“Who will find me over here? How will I live the rest of my life? Will they feed me like a child? How will I read my Holy Scriptures?”* It was

this above all that worried him, being deprived of the possibility of reading his Holy Scriptures and the necessity of leaving his cell and living in some village near people who could help him. When he felt a little better, he remembered a miracle of St. Demetrios the Great Martyr, when he restored the sight of a blind believer. He prayed to St. Dimetrios with all his heart, his prayers were heard and miraculously he recovered his sight and returned to his cell.

In August of 1980 St. Gennadios left for the first and last time the island of Crete and went to visit Holy Mount Athos as a pilgrim. During his return, while in Athens, he was hit by a car, but his life was saved miraculously, although he was hit in the legs. Mrs Heleni Makrakis (a very loyal Christian, born in the village of Agia Galini, Rethimno, a resident of Athens), took the Elder to her house, after he had stayed in the hospital for 20 days. She had a very close spiritual relationship with the Elder and offered him great care.

Among all these temptations, above all through his prayers and his constant asceticism, he displayed a form of holiness that was unique for our times. *“Labours bring wreaths, pains and sorrows bring glory”*, St. Gennadios used to say.

The charismatic man of God

St. Gennadios was a true carrier of the Holy Spirit, pure in soul and blessed to receive remarkable visions and revelations. He served the people of God as a proactive and visionary spiritual guide to those who needed help. We can mention a few cases:

The Holy Water of the Most Holy Theotokos at Almiri

On the 15th of August 1978, according to the Old Calendar, at the feast of the Assumption of the Most Holy Theotokos, St. Gennadios among other believers was worshipping in an all-night vigil service at an ancient church devoted to the Most Holy Theotokos at Almiri, a village in the centre of the island. Inside this church there is an old well. During the night the faithful uncovered the well and Mr. Stylianos Papadogiannakis heard voices saying "*Holy water! Holy water!*" "*Into my mind - he says - came thoughts of infidelity, which I kept to myself. "Holy water in the well?" I thought. Since there was no Priest among the company, it was hard to understand. Then he thought again: "O Lord, Thou art so powerful, even without Priests you can sanctify everything - the well and the seas"*.

The next morning, after the end of the service and while we were returning back to Akoumia, I asked the Elder if he enjoyed the night Service and

he replied: *“Didn’t you notice the fragrance when they uncovered the well? The whole place was filled with the holy fragrance.”* As soon as I heard this, I was stunned, because those words answered my thoughts which only I knew and had shared with no-one else. I thanked our Lord and praised Him for giving to His servants all this grace.

Predicting the flood (1979)

In November 1979, the Elder was staying as a guest in the house of the teacher Andreas Stamaterakis at Misiria of Rethimno. Contrary to his custom, he asked if he could call Helei Markaki in Athens on the phone and told her. *“Do not leave your house without praying first. This month a great disaster will come upon Athens and many people will be in great danger”*. Indeed eight days later, the great flood of 1979 happened, during which many people drowned, houses and properties were destroyed and even the dead were unearthed when the stream swept through the cemetery of Kokinos Milos. The area of Agii Anargyri, where Mrs Makrakis lived, suffered the most.

The case of Bishop Irenaeus Galanakis

In 1980, while he was staying at the house of Heleni Makrakis and while she was cleaning his injured leg, the Elder told her: *“Why are you*

cleaning and looking after my leg, wondering if it is going to heal? At Chanea everyone is upset, there is chaos, the people are upset by Irenaeus who came from Germany, but Timothy is innocent, he is not to blame for anything that will take place”.

Indeed, after the return of Bishop Irenaeus Galanakis from the Metropolitan See of Germany to the See of Kissamos in Crete, while the Archbishop of Crete was Timothy Papoutsakis, sad events took place in Crete, which exposed the local Church and scandalized the people. St. Gennadios, without reading newspapers or listening to the radio, was aware through the grace of God of the events that were taking place. At the same time and in the same place, three remarkable incidents took place in Crete.

Relish from demonic influence

Doctor Sravroula Laskaris, under the guidance of the Makrakis family, came with other faithful people to meet the Elder and ask for his blessing. Before they left, they asked him to blessed them with the sign of Cross. The Elder responded to their request and made the sign of cross over each one of them, but he refused to bless a young girl. This refusal elicited comments and her sister started crying. On their way out Mrs Makrakis felt

sorry for them and told them: *“Don’t go yet, I’ll ask the Elder to bless you with the sign of the Cross”*.

“Father “,-she asked the Elder. “why you didn’t give your blessing to the girl? She and her sister are very sad. Please, Father, they have come from the far end of Athens, to listen to you and ask for your blessing. Give them your blessing, so that she won’t leave saddened.”

“Yes,” replied the Elder, “but she is under a spell, and instead of running to the Church to become well, she turns for help to the magicians”.

When his words became known to the girl, she humbly admitted that everything was true, admiring the Elder’s clairvoyance. Finally St. Gennadios blessed the girl and she left very happy. Some days later the girl called Mrs Markakis and told her that for almost a year she had seen a black cat wandering around her, without any one else seeing it, but after she had been blessed by the Saint, the cat disappeared. In this way God showed the girl, that she was free from the demonic influence, through the prayers of His servant, St. Gennadios.

Demonic insult due to blasphemy against Jesus Christ.

One evening a group of educated people visited the Elder, while he was staying at Mrs Makrakis’.

One of them was an atheist (and probably a Jehovah's Witness) and supported the case that Christ has not yet come, but was going to come. The Elder got upset, stood up and with a very strong voice, full of resentment, said to him:

“Jesus, is the true God, Who has come for our salvation. The Gospel is His teaching. Everyone who tries to burn the word of God, will be burned himself”

That night the Elder couldn't sleep. When he was asked *“what was wrong?”* he replied: *“Satan won't let me sleep, because we allowed that man to talk against Jesus. We didn't throw him out of the house and Satan gathered strength and said, “that stranger spoke well, because he is educated, he is the one who knows well, he should talk, not you. You are illiterate, you don't know what you are saying.” He is grinding his teeth against me and asking me not to teach the words of Christ”*.

“They think I have died”

This incident took place at Mrs Makrakis' residence at Agia Galini of Rethimno. When the Elder returned to Crete after he was wounded in Athens, Mrs Makrakis invited him to stay at her country house for a few days, in order to rest. Suddenly, on Thursday morning, the Elder asked his hostess to drive him to his cell at Agia Anna.

“Father Gennadios, what are you saying?” she complained. “Didn’t we agree that you would stay here for eight days?”

“Yes,”- replied the Elder, “but if you don’t take me to Agia Anna, some people will break the door of my cell, because they think that I am inside and there is something wrong with me. They will wait until night falls and if we delay any longer, they will break the door”.

They left for Agia Anna in the evening. When they got there, two excited young men were waiting. As soon as they saw the Elder, they told him: *“Father, we would have waited for another half an hour and if you hadn’t come, we would have broken the door, because we thought you were dead inside.”*

Other people’s grapes

A man named Emanuel Papamihelakis, from the village of Sacturia, came to pay a visit to the Elder, and in order to thank him, he brought with him a small basket of grapes. The Elder pick some of the grapes and gave the rest of them back to the man, saying: *“Take these grapes back where you took them from, because they are not from your vineyard.”*

Truly this was a fact. Papamihelakis had taken the grapes from a nearby vineyard, which was not

of his property. He admired the Elder and left, asking to be forgiven.

Invisible flames

One summer evening, while coming back from his village of Aktounda , he saw great flames outside the village, towards the olive trees, where the church of St. Nicholas was standing. He also saw smaller flames around the villages of Vrises and Platane. When they reached Akoumia, he asked about the fire, but no one knew anything. Later the Elder explained the phenomenon himself, saying that sad events would soon take place there owing to the sins of the Christians living there. And in fact a great fire broke out later, which burnt the southern part of the mountain Siderotas and was stopped with the help of his prayers, when he turned the holy icon of St. Anna towards the fire.

Appearance to a blind woman.

Alexandra, a blind Christian woman, friend of the Makrakis family and a resident of Athens, heard all about the Elder and felt a great desire to meet him. One night he appeared to her in a dream and told her: “I am Gennadios. When you come to Crete, you will meet me first.” After a long time, the blind Alexandra accepted an invitation to come to Crete, in order to visit the Makrakis family and stay

with them at their country house at Agia Galini. While there, and although it was on their schedule to visit the Monastery of Kaliviani, they found out that the Elder was at Akoumia, so they rescheduled their programme and instead went to Akoumia to meet the Elder. This is how Alexandra's dream came true and first of all she met the Elder.

A meeting before death (1982)

In August 1982 St. Gennadios, Helen Makrakis and other Christians went for a pilgrimage to Panagia Almiri. While they were reading the Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos, the Elder approached Mrs Makrakis and said to her: "*Hurry up and finish the prayer, we have to leave for Kaliviani.*" As soon as the supplication was finished, he was the first to enter the car. Everyone was very curious to know what all this rush was about.

When they reached the monastery and before they even had a chance to sit down, the Archbishop of Crete Timothy came for a short visit. The two men met with great joy, since they were bound by a friendship of many years. The very odd thing was that they didn't exchange a single word. There was total silence. Of course the Elder knew that this was their last meeting. That was proven by what the Archbishop said that same day to the

Spiritual Father of the Monastery, Archimadrite Nectarios Papadakis: *“This is the last time I am visiting Kaliviani”*. And indeed, the next year, 1983, he reposed. The same year Ft. Gennadios died also. This is the reason why the Elder was so anxious to reach the monastery, so that he could say farewell to his friend.

Foreseeing a monastic dedication

The Elder kept a close loving relationship with the Monastery of Kaliviani. A relevant incident is the following: Sisters Ghrisoula and Maria Georgalis, well educated and very loyal, had decided to devote themselves to the Monastery. The Monastery was very famous for its social and charity work and both sisters had decided to help it, by staying there and helping with the community’s work.

When years before they had visited the Elder to ask for his advice and blessings he told them: *“Yes you will go to Kaliviani, but for a short time and then you will come back here again.* At that moment the sisters didn’t believe him, but in a month’s time after they had gone to the Monastery, they got sick due to the climate and on Archbishop Timothy’s initiative they returned to Athens.

A Miraculous increase of food

The Abbess of the Transfiguration Monastery at Rethimno, by the name of Pansemni Augoustakis, reported the following incident:

“Many years ago, in my early teens, I went to St. Anna and while I was following the Gospel read by the Elder. I was very tired and rather hungry and wondered to my self, “When will it be over?” When it was over, I expected enough food for me and the others. But unfortunately, instead of all the food I was dreaming of, I could only see a plate on the table. So I thought to myself, “Who is going to eat first?” We began eating and satisfied our hunger, but the food never ended! I was amazed! He truly was a Saint and had truly blessed the food”.

The Miraculous extinction of a fire

Once a fire broke outside the village of Agallianos. Due to the force of the wind the fire spread rapidly and burned all the south side of the mountain Siderotas and threatened Gialia. Thousands of olive trees were in danger and with them hundreds of families. A woman named Antigone Papamihelakis from the village of Vrises, ran to the Elder and told him: *“Father Gennadios, Gialia will be burnt down, we will be destroyed. Please, Father, do your prayer and beg St. Anna to save us or else we are lost”.*

“It is God’s anger,” replied the Elder, *“the wrath of God upon us because of our sins”*.

Then he entered the Chapel, took the icon of St. Anna and walked towards a small hill, praying and turning the icon towards the fire. In a few minutes the direction of the wind changed and so did the fire in the direction of the sea, where it went out.

The Fragrance of Holiness

Another time, while Elder Gennadios was staying as a guest at the house of the Teacher Andreas Stamaterakis at Akoumia, the widow of the Priest Antony Papadakis was passing the road and she was heard to say in wonder: *“What a great saint, what is happening ? I wonder what it is?”* *“It wasn’t perfume and it wasn’t incense,”* remarked a man who was present at the time named Stylianos Papadogianakis. It was the fragrance left by the Elder who had passed down that same road a while ago. God allowed it to be sensed by that woman alone.

“He who walks on the wings of the wind” (Psalm 103)

Truly, spiritual asceticism and holy humility proved to be forces that lifted Elder Gennadios up.

This Saint of God literally didn't walk on the earth. There are at least two testimonies of this fact.

When the Elder was hospitalized after his injury in Athens (1980), he left the hospital to visit a Monastery in the area of Loutsas, Attica. He was in the company of Mrs. Helen Makrakis, who was taking care of him. While he was leaving the Monastery, the sisterhood asked him to bless them. It was then that the sisters saw him standing above the ground, while he was giving his blessing.

A similar incident was observed at the house of the Makrakis family at Agia Galini. It was the time when the Elder stayed with the family for eight days, after his injury. On one of these days they saw him coming down the stairs without stepping on the steps. Instead he was hovering until he reached the ground floor.

But there are also verified cases when the Blessed Elder was found in other places, without using any kind of human means or transport.

The students' accident at Georgioupoli, Chanea

In May of 1972 a terrible student accident took place at Georgioupoli, Chanea, which shook the whole Greece. Twenty one students from the High School of Spili, Rethimno, were drowned during a school trip, inside the small harbor of

Georgioupolis, when their boat capsized. Among the victims were the two daughters of a very loyal Christian named George Doulgerakis from the village of Myxourema, Rethymno.

Human nature is very weak especially after such a strike. The tragic father almost lost his mind from the loss of his children. In order to help the salvation of this brother, St. Gennadios called him and revealed to him that in a strange and supernatural way he was found at the port of Georgioupolis at the exact time the students were boarding the boat. The Elder begged them not to get in the boat, but they didn't listen to him; some of them even laughed at him. *"I don't know, I really don't know how I got there on the beach"*, he said, describing the sad event to Stylianos Papadogiannakis. *"The girls were getting on board and I was telling them not to enter, but they wouldn't listen to me, they were as if drunk. Then the boat started to sink. I went into the sea up to my neck, but I couldn't save them. It was God's will. Then I saw your girls in heaven, crowned with the wreaths of virginity"*.

According to the testimonies of the girls who were saved and of other witnesses who were at the port the tragic time of the accident, as well as newspaper reports which covered the event, they admitted the presence of a Priest on the beach

from whom some of the girls asked for forgiveness, but who disappeared soon after the incident.

When the tragic father heard the really incredible information from St. Gennadios, because of his loss, he challenged the Elder by saying to him: *“If you want me to believe everything you said, pray to God to turn my children to pigeons and while I am plowing they can come to me, so I can see them”*.

All this was told us by the tragic father George, who was crying and trembling, while talking in 1986 outside the historic Church of Panagia Lambini, to a group of Orthodox Christians from Chanea. Among others there was the writer Ant. Markou and his wife Maria, the Psychiatrist Stylian Doxakis and his wife Helen, Teacher of Philology at the High School, Anthony Vavoulakis and his mother Eleutheria, Basil Hatzioannou and his wife Anna and other believers. We stress the professional opinion of Stylian Doxakis, because as a specialist he didn't diagnose any kind of mental disorder in the narrator, brother George.

“My brothers,”- he continued, “while I was plowing, I saw two white pigeons circle over the field ! “My Lord, I said, if they are my children, let them come to me, so I can pet them”. And they came to me and I could pet them! After that, I came to my senses and subjected myself to the will of my Lord!”

All the above is unbelievable, but such was the confidence before God of Elder Gennadios.

At this point, someone might ask, did the souls of the girls really turn into pigeons? We asked a well-known Spiritual Father of our days and he told us: *“Don’t you know that according to the Apostle Paul, “the Saints shall judge the world” (I Cor. 6,2). Our Church’s writings are full of similar incidents, even more awesome and more paradoxical. There is great power in the prayers of the Saints. And of course the souls of the two girls did not become pigeons. We can accept, though, that the guardian Angels of the two girls, according to the will of God, took the form of the birds in order to ease the unbearable pain of the father”.*

Saved from suicide

In another case, a married woman named Maria (for obvious reasons we do not reveal her other data), was very disappointed with her life, and was driven by the evil one to despair and decided to commit suicide. So she took a basket with a rope inside, left the village, got in the field with her own olive trees and started to look for a tree to tie the rope to hang herself. Fifty metres in front of the tree she had chosen she stumbled and fell. When she got up, there in front of her stood St. Gennadios (we have to remark at this point that

the distance from St. Anna to that place was about an hour by car).

“*Are you the one who made me stumble?*” the woman asked.

“*No, not me,*” replied the Elder, “*but your guardian Angel. I was sent by God in time to prevent you from doing what you have in mind, to prevent you from committing suicide.*”

The woman admired God’s Providence in the presence of the Saint. She glorified God, repented and lived a Christian life afterwards.

Visiting America without leaving Crete!

Dimitrafrom the village of Chromonastery, Rethimno, declares that St. Gennadios was seen in America! “*I went to America,*” admitted the Elder with his characteristic simplicity to Stylianos Papadogiannakis. “*I took a book, but couldn’t understand their language and had difficulty in communicating. I also saw Dimitra from Chromonastery and she was running to catch me to greet me, but I slipped away from her. How I got to America and how I came back I don’t know*”.

Stylianos Papadogiannakis met Dimitra later on at Rethimno, in the house of Zacharoula Vournazis, who was present and heard the conversation between them. Truly, Dimitra had been to America, where she stayed for fifteen years

and she truly saw the Elder. *“I suddenly saw him and I ran to greet him,”* she said, *“but he left and I lost him.”*

A spiritual vision of the war in the Middle East

For a certain period of time the Elder was pale and very sad and didn't want any food. When he was asked the reason of his sadness and fasting he replied:

“When people talk to me, I can't hear them well, and yet I can hear the war in Lebanon and Persia and Iraq. I can hear the cannonballs exploding and the cries and groans of people calling their mothers. When people talk to me, my ears do not hear, they hear those who are fighting in the war and suffering”.

To put it simply, St. Gennadios had a spiritual vision of the civil war in Lebanon and the conflict in Persia. And as a matter of fact he was physically present at those battles, and the bullets were falling like rain around him. At first he was frightened that he would be killed. But then he noticed that the bullets were avoiding him and this gave him courage. He understood that it is not the bullets that kill the people but their sins.

After-death experiences

Extremely important are the experiences of the Elder in relation to the after life, both heaven and hell. Twice during his holy life it is said that he was taken to Heaven. The first time in some inexplicable manner he found himself in a hole in a rock which seemed to be some kind of animal nest. He narrated his experience as follows:

“I heard Angels chanting, I saw beauties that I cannot describe. There was heaven. I stayed there for five minutes. How I got there and how I came back I don’t know”.

It certainly was an amazing experience, like that of the Apostle Paul’s assumption to Paradise (which he describes in his second Epistle to the Corinthians). St. Gennadios had the same experienced; he humbly and gratefully described it to his visitors, not out of pride, but in order to support their fragile faith, so that they could build up their trust in God.

During his second assumption, blessed Fr. Gennadios saw and recognized Christians who had died and who during their lives had been faithful and prayerful. He also mentioned their names (which we can not reveal in this project for logical reasons). It was like the Gospel story of the rich man who suffered in Hades could see Abraham holding Lazarus in his bosom a long way off (Luke 16, 19-31). “He who is spiritual judges all things,

yet he himself is rightly judged by no one (I Corinthians 2.15).

There was also a third assumption. The Elder found himself in a horrible and unbearable lake. There he could hear people groaning, wailing and moaning. “*Who are these people?*” he asked. “*In here,*” he heard an unworldly voice, “*are the adulterers and the fornicators who did not repent of their sins.*”

The Elder carefully avoided saying whether he had seen any Christians or if he recognized any souls. Since that experience, his face often darkened and tears ran down his wrinkled face. We wonder if he was able through his prayers to release any souls from hell (like for instance is reported from the life of St. Gregory, Pope of Rome in his Dialogues). Anyway, St. Gennadios experienced those states either physically or spiritually as they are also described by the Apostle and Evangelist John in the Apocalypse (21,8).

The confession of the Blessed Elder

On the issue of the authenticity of the Orthodox Faith, the Blessed Elder was very strict. He deeply respected and accepted the traditional Calendar which he received after his repentance at the Monastery of Koudouma. The introduction of the papal innovation of the new calendar into the

Patriarchate of Constantinople and the local Church of Crete (the first move in the imposition of the heresy of Ecoumenism) took place in 1924.

The change found him serving in the humble Chapel of St. Anna, where he had been staying since 1918. The Elder was especially saddened by the schism of the two Churches.

“We are divided by the enemy,” he used to say. *Woe to the innovators. They left the truth and followed the darkness.”*

He saw the great miracle of the third appearance of the Holy Cross (in the area of Holargos of Attica, in 1925) as a diving confirmation that the struggle of the True Orthodox Christians was sacred. He often mentioned the appearance of the Cross to his visitors and earnestly recommended that they return to the Orthodox Calendar.

Moreover, the fourth appearance of the Holy Cross, above the mountain of Kofinas in Southern Crete (1937), during an all-night vigil that had been organized by the strict and ascetic monks of the Monastery of Koudouma was another fact that convinced the Elder. We do not know whether he was present at the service. However, he was a witness of the miracle since it was visible throughout central Crete. He also shared the news of this astonishing event with other faithful

Christians, as a further proof of God's will, and as a second confirmation of the sanctity of the struggle the True Orthodox Christians concerning the Faith.

The Blessed Elder confessed and received Holy Communion from the hands of Fr. Kallinikos Seliotakis, who has been ordained by Archbishop Andrew of Athens (TOC of Greece) in 1979. Fr. Kallinikos also had the honour of burying him.

The Saint's Repose

God's Blessed one Gennadios came to the end of his earthly life in March 1983. In January of the same year he fell ill, and a devoted Christian from Akoumia, named Chrysi Manarakis, offered to nurse him in her home. Later on he was taken to the home of Eleutheria Papadogiannakis. There he joyfully received his visitors and taught them God's will, even though he was 97 years old! He was serene, ate regularly and his spiritual strength was flourishing. The winter of that same year was extremely cold, with lots of snow and ice everywhere. Yet many believers visited the Elder to receive his blessing, sensing that his end was near.

At the end of February, he displayed certain symptoms that were taken as harbingers of his death. He became restless, ate very little and started to lose his strength. It was then that he

asked for the company of his good friend Stylianos Papadogiannakis. On Sunday 28th of February he woke up as usual, prayed, read Mattins and asked the Police Officer of Akoumia Police Station, the Secretary of the Province and Stylianos Papadogiannakis to take in charge some personal matters of his, some kind of will. From this we deduce that he foresaw his end three days before.

At noon on Tuesday the 2nd of March, he returned on foot to the house of Chrysi Manarakis. There he was visited by some Teachers from Rethimno, Andrew Stamaterakis, Styliani Fotakis and Pagona Fotakis (a kindergarten teacher). The Elder received them pleasantly, spoke to them some words of salvation, blessed them with his wooden Cross which he always carried on his chest, and let them leave.

The heavenly citizen and Elder had recently been to confession (the previous week) to Hieromonk Kallinikos, but hadn't received Holy Communion, since the Liturgy had been celebrated far away, in the Hermitage of St. Anthony.

On Wednesday the 3rd of March, the Elder started to feel uncomfortable. Immediately Hieromonk Kallinikos was asked to come, so that the Elder could receive Holy Communion. But the Priest was hospitalized in the Venizelion Hospital in Heraklion, because he was suffering from

asthma. But on his own initiative he left the hospital and with the help of John Klisarhakis got into a taxi. Despite the very bad weather they headed for Akoumia.

The news that the Elder was in his final hours had spread throughout the village and many people went to the house and waited for the Priest. Everyone was worried if the Priest would come in time to give Holy Communion to the Elder. “*Be quiet*”, the Elder told them, with his eyes closed and indeed in five minutes Priest Kallinikos with his escort John entered the house.

St. Gennadios confessed for the last time and received Holy Communion with his spirit in complete clarity. He waited for his end peacefully, with his face shining. He did not talk, only from time to time he opened his blessed eyes and smiled. “*What has he seen?*” everyone wondered. The Elder received Holy Communion on Wednesday 3rd of March, at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, and although it seemed that he was leaving this world, his blessed soul didn’t leave his body. It was if he was waiting for something. At one point Fr. Kallinikos asked if he was wearing the Great Schema. “*No*”, they replied. So they sent and brought it from St. Anna’s cell by car, as quickly as they could.

Stylianos Papadogiannakis, among other witnesses of the Elder's death, describes the end of the Elder as follows: *“Monk Theodosios brought the Great Schema and put it on the Elder's chest. What a surprise! What a sweet miracle! What an amazing event! The very same moment that he put on his Schema, that same moment he bent his head, closed his eyes and let his soul fly to his Lord and eternal King! The time was 8:30 in the evening, 3rd / 16th of March 1983. Everyone was deeply moved. “He was a true monk!” they said “He will become a saint!” others said”.*

St. Gennadios had expressed the desire to be buried outside his cell, at the Chapel of St. Anna where he had already made a place for his burial. He wanted the Service of his funeral to be carried out by Hieromonk Kallinikos. Everyone who was connected with him were notified, and especially the sisters of the Monastery of Kaliviani, whom he loved and cared for as much as they did him. The day of his death was very difficult from the point of view of the weather. It had snowed, it was extremely cold and it was snowing or raining all day. The next day, the day of his funeral, was “the Lord's joy”, it seemed like a sunny summer day. Maybe this is how God and his Angels were welcoming in heaven this true fighter for virtue. Nature was participating in this joy, the weather

changed, and everyone from the surrounded villages could come and show their respects to him.

Many of the faithful stayed up all night at the house of Chrysi Manarakis, reading the Psalms for St. Gennadios, in accordance with tradition. The funeral procession started at around 2:00 pm on Thursday, at the Chapel of St. Anna. It was led by Ft. Kallinikos in the presence of the Priests of the surrounding villages, who respected and cared about the Elder. The funeral speech was delivered by Archimandrite Nectarios of the Monastery of Kaliviani.

After-death testimonies

“Elder Gennadios,” writes Stylianos Papadogiannakis, “left earth for heaven. But he hasn’t abandoned people. He prays with the other members of the triumphant Church for our souls’ salvation. He has gained our Lord’s confidence. St. Gennadios has departed from this vain world physically but not spiritually. His humble tomb outside St. Anna’s chapel accepts the reverential pilgrimage of the people who come to light a candle at his tomb and ask him to pray for their problems to our Lord”.

There are many testimonies to his intervention after his death in the lives of many Christians.

Among the after-death testimonies there is one that relates to the authenticity of the Orthodox Faith and to the genuine Orthodox Confession of belief. It is about a woman from a nearby village facing a serious health problem. She was praying to St. Gennadios to help her with her problem. One evening after her prayers, he appeared to her in her sleep and, using the Cretan dialect, said to her: *“What can I do for you, since you follow the New Galendar?”*

The Sacred Relics of St. Gennadios

In 1990, with the blessing of Archbishop Andrew of Athens (TOC), there took place the Translation of the sacred Relics of the Elder. The planned memorial Service was performed by Fr. Zacharias Tsikritsakis in front of twenty people. During the translation the Relics of St. Gennadios were found joined (the bones were connected having a yellowish color), while his Great Schema and the rest of his clothes were intact. The Saint's honored head was presented without any skin connected to the rest of his body! Some of the people present sensed a sweet smell coming from the tomb and the Relics.

The sacred Relics were not moved from the grave during the translation. When Archbishop Andrew was informed of the condition of the Relics,

he ordered them to be put in a coffin and moved to the church of the Holy Trinity (TOC) in Heraklion, the capital city of Crete. But unfortunately his order was not obeyed.

Today parts of his Holy Relics are to be found in the following places:

- a. Metropolitan Kyrikos' collection (TOC of Greece), in St. Catherine's Church at Koropi, Attica.
- b. In the Paramythia Hermitage at Menidi, Attica (TOC of Greece).
- c. In the chapel of St. Xenia the Fool for Christ of Ant. Markou's family at Mandra, Attica (one of his hands and a part of his right foot). From there about 20 small parts have been donated to various monasteries, churches and church people all over the world.
- d. In Metropolitan Gerontios' collection (TOC of Romania).
- e. In Metropolitan Parthenios' collection (TOC of Cyprus).

The conscience of the Church

The Hermitage of Gialia is deserted today. The Chapel of St. Anna is preserved by the local Christians who maintain it in a really good condition. The cell of St. Gennadios is closed as well, but is always freshly painted, with a new

door, eliciting unforgettable memories in those who have met the hermit. The cypress trees, the olive trees, the carob trees like are thereas in those blessed times of his teaching. They surround his simple grave, which accepts the tears and the pain of the people who suffer and visit it for help. Faithful people from Acoumia and the surrounding villages and even from far away places on the island of Crete come to visit the grave, light his oil lamp and give incense at St. Anna's Chapel, a place which accompanied the Elder in his straggle for 65 years. They kneel at his grave asking for help, believing that they will receive God's mercy.

Saint Gennadios is honored locally by the faithful people of the local Church, then by all those who knew him and can testify to his holy life and his after-death appearances. The fame of his holiness has already exceeded the local boundaries of Crete and has spread not only in Greece but also in Cyprus, Romania, England, Canada and other places.

An icon of St. Gennadios (possibly the first), was painted by Fr. Loukas Panidis (an Iconographer Monk of St. Demetrios Church at Menidi, Attica), in fulfilment of an order by the writer's family and has been placed in the Chapel of St. Xenia the Fool for Christ at Mandra, Attica.

The first prayer to the Saint was composed by Stylianos Papadogiannakis. A full Service to St. Gennadios and also a Canon to him was written by Antonios Markou in 2010.

We celebrate the memory of St. Gennadios on the day of his departure, on the 3rd of March.