

Fr. Panteleimon, John Metropoulos, was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1935.

(It should also be pointed out that it was Fr. Panteleimon himself who first revealed that Patriarch Athenagoras [Spyrou] was his Godfather, in order to demonstrate that he did not join the Church Abroad to make an ecclesiastical career or to be ordained a bishop, but, rather, for matters of faith.)

As a young boy John Metropoulos began attending the Old Calendar church of St. Spyridon in Detroit.

From 1946 to 1950, the priest of the parish was Hieromonk Auxentius (Pastras), the future Archbishop of Athens. Actually, it was Fr. Auxentius who convinced the young John that the Papal calendar was an innovation which had been condemned by Orthodox Councils. And it was also Hieromonk Auxentius who chrismated the young John Metropoulos when he was 11 years old.

As Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston expressed it so eloquently to Archbishop Auxentius in his acceptance speech upon being nominated to the episcopacy in 1988:

“These words ‘Visit this vine, and perfect that which Thy right hand hath planted,’ apply to you in a special sense, because it was through you, Your Beatitude, while you were still a parish priest in Detroit, during the years 1946-1950, when he [Fr. Panteleimon] was still a young teenager, that he first learned of the evils of innovationism. You were the one who planted in his heart the seed of the love of unadulterated Orthodoxy. And this seed blossomed and grew in his soul and it brought forth fruit a hundredfold in the souls of those who were moved by his teaching to follow the path of true Orthodoxy. So the vine which you transplanted did not increase merely a hundredfold, but many thousand-fold.”

(Orthodox Christian Witness, Vol. XXII, NN. 1 & 3, 1988)

Fr. Panteleimon was tonsured a Rassophore monk at St. Panteleimon's Monastery on Mount Athos in 1957; and into the Great Schema in 1960, at New Skete on Athos.

Fr. Panteleimon was ordained to the diaconate in 1960, on Holy Saturday, by Bishop Athenagoras (Kokkinakis) of Boston, at the bishop's insistence, and with borrowed vestments, since Fr. Panteleimon had not intended to be ordained. The deacon's vestments were those of Fr. Haralampos (Robert) Stephanopoulos. Bishop Athenagoras (not to be

confused with the Ecumenical Patriarch, Athenagoras Spyrou) considered Fr. Panteleimon to be an Athonite hierodeacon, and, as such, **not** to be a clergyman of the Greek Archdiocese of America.

Once, when Fr. George Tsoumas, acting dean of Holy Cross Theological School, attempted to intimidate Fr. Panteleimon by intimating that the Archdiocese might defrock him, Fr. Panteleimon himself wrote a long letter to Fr. George, pointing out that he, Fr. Panteleimon, was never acknowledged officially by the Archdiocese to be their clergyman; that his name appeared on no lists of clergy nor in any Archdiocesan yearbooks; and that Fr. Panteleimon never received any remuneration or stipend from them as their clergyman. Further, Fr. Panteleimon requested that, if they were to defrock him, they be so kind as to give him notice of it in writing, which he could then have placed in his hand in his coffin to show on the Judgment Day that they themselves testified that he was not one of theirs!

Excerpt from Fr. Panteleimon's Introduction to the book *Papa Nicholas Planas*:

“In the fall of 1964, I visited the Holy Mountain, and it was decided by the synodia to which I belonged that I should be ordained to the holy priesthood. The times were critical (the Ecumenical Patriarch had already met the pope of Rome and prayed together with him in Jerusalem at the beginning of that year) and because our small monastic community in Boston was without a priest, it was imperative that I be ordained. Up to this time we had had to attend parishes on Sundays and feast-days in order to be present at the Holy Liturgy.

At times Fr. Georges Florovsky, who was then residing in Cambridge, Massachusetts, served for us in the monastery, but he was often away. We had a Serbian priest also living with us, Fr. Daniel Krstich, who was then studying at Harvard (presently, he is a bishop in Serbia), but he served a Romanian parish in Southbridge, Massachusetts on weekends.

Thus it was decided that I should be ordained. But where and by whom? Our fathers in New Skete as well as the Monastery of Saint Paul, of which the Skete was a dependency, at the time did not commemorate the Patriarch's name in the Liturgy because of his ecumenism. The bishops of Northern Greece commemorated the Patriarch, besides celebrating with the new calendar. It was decided, therefore, that I should go to Jerusalem to be ordained there, since the Church of Jerusalem still followed the ecclesiastical calendar and did not participate in the mutual prayers and blessings of pope and patriarch.

Thus it was that in October of 1964 I presented myself to the patriarch of Jerusalem with the request of Archimandrite Andrew, abbot of the Monastery of Saint Paul on the Holy Mountain, that I be ordained to the priesthood. The Patriarchate accepted the request, and on the feast of Saint Pelagia, October 8/21, I was ordained at the midnight Liturgy, “very early in the morning”, at the Tomb of Our Saviour, by Basilios, then Archbishop of Jordan.”

NOTE:

And it was also with the blessing and advice of our synodia at New Skete on Mount Athos that Holy Transfiguration Monastery sought to be accepted into the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. We still have in our possession the synodia's letter recommending that course of action to us.

<http://htmadmin.phpwebhosting.com/flyer.htm>

“Our community follows the coenobitic, communal rule, with elements of a hesychast (solitary) typicon. It was founded in 1961 here in the Boston area by Fr. Panteleimon, a monk of Greek descent, who became a monk on the Holy Mountain of Athos in Greece in the Russian Monastery of Saint Panteleimon. On the Holy Mountain he also learned much about monasticism under the hesychast fathers of New Skete. Fr. Panteleimon was the last and youngest disciple of the Blessed Elder Joseph the Cave Dweller and it was with Fr. Joseph's blessings that Fr. Panteleimon undertook the establishment of a monastic community in the United States. After the blessed repose of Fr. Joseph on the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God in 1959, his co-struggler Fr. Arsenius became the Elder of the community at New Skete, and hence, also of our fledgling community here. In 1964, Fr. Panteleimon, by the express wishes of Fr. Arsenius, was ordained a priest by a bishop of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and from that time the small community began an independent existence from the fathers at New Skete, as a metochion of the Athonite Monastery of Saint Paul's.”

For a more detailed account see Fr. Panteleimon's explanation written for the French mission:

http://www.homb.org/Archived_Docs_HTM/ElderJosephOnCalendar.pdf

Excerpts from the above-mentioned account by Fr. Panteleimon:
(*Orthodox Christian Witness*, December 2001, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4)
<http://nektarios.home.comcast.net/1511.html>

“Thus we come to December 1963-January 1964, when Pope John and Patriarch Athenagoras met in Jerusalem and prayed together and one

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

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

In the summer of 1962, on a visit to New Skete, the Elder Arsenius told me that I should think about ordination to the priesthood. When I asked why he had such a thought, since I was not of canonical age, he answered me, "One day we shall be separated totally from them. What shall you then do with your synodia in far away America without a

priest?" A year-and-a-half after this comment, in December of 1963, the occasion for our total separation took place. And towards the end of 1964, I was sent with the blessing of the Elder Arsenios and a letter from the Abbot of Saint Paul's Monastery, Archimandrite Andreas, to Jerusalem, to be ordained to the priesthood. A little later Archimandrite Andreas was deposed by Constantinople for not commemorating the Patriarch and exiled from the monastery. As for my sinfulness, I have never commemorated the Patriarch of Constantinople. Because of this I have been prohibited from visiting the Holy Mountain."

The Elder Sabbas' letter, mentioned in the account above, and his obituary, can be read here:

http://www.homb.org/Archived_Docs_HTM/ElderSabbasObituary.pdf

Thus, in 1964-65, when all the fathers of the Holy Mountain ceased to commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch in protest against his ecumenical activities, HTM also stopped the commemoration. Just as the clergy of the Holy Mountain were not disciplined or defrocked by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, nor was Fr. Panteleimon ever defrocked by them despite what others may report to the contrary. Alas, with the passage of several years, all the monasteries save Ephsigmenou resumed commemorating the Ecumenical Patriarch. Fr. Panteleimon and Holy Transfiguration Monastery never did.