

The Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959) Struggles, Experiences, Teachings (16)

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It would be an omission not to speak of the other basic characteristic of our ever-memorable Elder, the great love and sympathy he had for his neighbour. In particular he loved the poor and those in trouble, and even more those who were suffering in soul, and for this reason they never stopped visiting us.

His last days were very painful, because his advanced heart condition interfered with his breathing and he got very tired. For us, however, this was a lesson and an opportunity to practice patient endurance. We were aware of his struggle, and while we tried to give him some relief, he would console us in appropriate ways with practical examples, speaking especially of the vanity of the world. He told us, 'The day for me to leave is getting near. The way I am now, I'm not good for anything, and I can't struggle any more either.' The ever-memorable Elder did not in the least forget his aim; and with various contrivances, at every pretext life provided he found a means to struggle and bring forth fruit. Being unable to move or to lie down because of his illness, he sat in a makeshift armchair – a folding one

- and wept constantly for the vanity of life. He awaited his release from this life as the greatest happiness that could befall him and murmured troparia for the departed, when he was not having too much difficulty breathing. 'Arsenius,' he said jokingly, 'When are we leaving? You're not praying, it seems, and we're delayed.' For almost forty days, his last days, he ate nothing: he just received Communion every day and took a little water-melon.

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