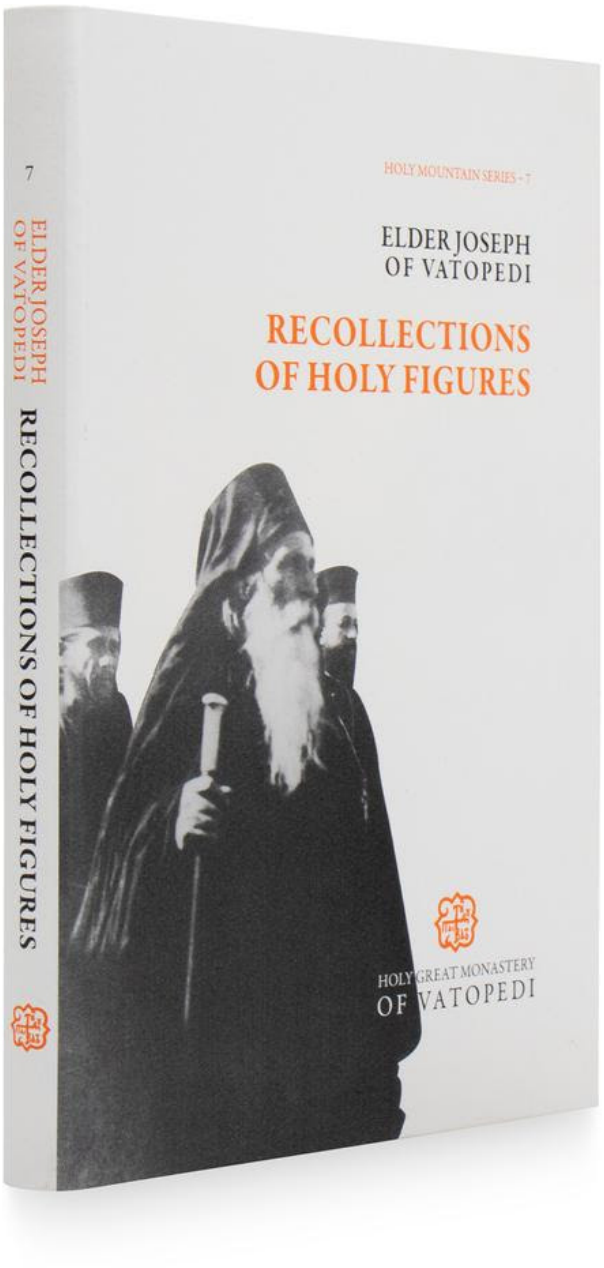
24 Νοεμβρίου 2026

Recollections of Holy Figures, Elder Joseph of Vatopedi

Ξένες γλώσσες / In English



Volume seven of the Holy Mountain Series contains short accounts of the lives of virtuous monks—holy figures—that lived on the Holy Mountain and in Cyprus, the majority of whom were known personally by the author, the ever-memorable Elder Joseph of Vatopedi. It is a beneficial and necessary “small Gerondikon” for our

difficult times of universal upheaval, disorientation, and irrationality. The lives of these elders make clear that sanctification is still possible in our own days, and whoever desires a higher and more perfect spiritual life may look to them as a model to follow.

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21.5 x 14.5

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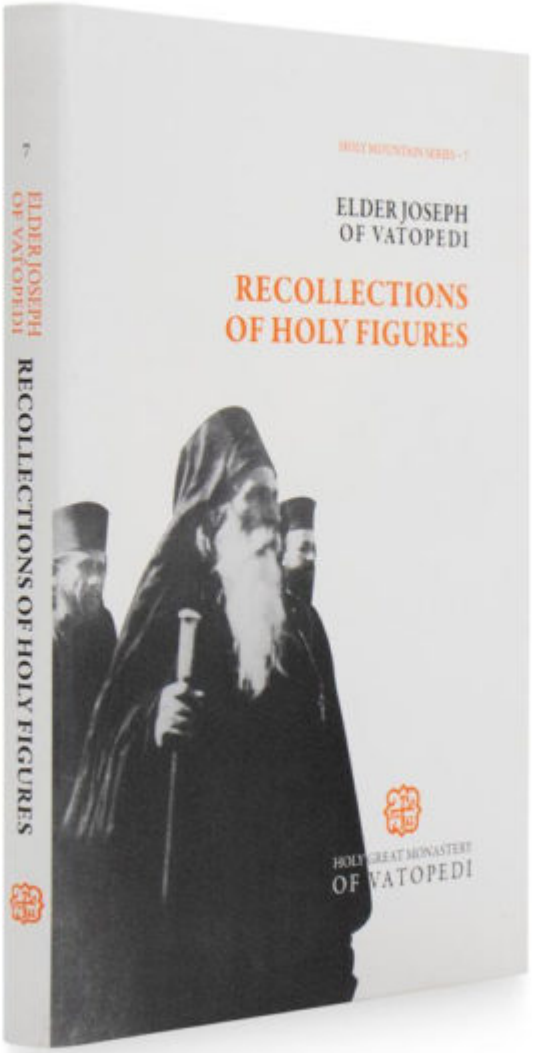
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ELDER JOSEPH OF VATOPEDI
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him to reveal something about his state there. As he later recounted, he saw the blessed Elder in a dream, in divine rest with great glory in a luminous palace, in a beautiful garden with fruits. Father Joachim then asked him in astonishment what those things were and how he came to be there, and the Elder joyfully replied, "This is all mine, Father Joachim. Our heavenly Father granted this to me because of His abundant goodness and love for man." Father Joachim later wrote about this to the Holy Monastery of Longovarda on the island of Paros, where Elder Averkios was from and where he became a monk before coming to Mount Athos, so that his first spiritual guides would learn that he truly honored them by his precise life and conduct.

Elder Melchizedek

The late Elder Melchizedek also reposed in blessedness in this skete. He was a man of spiritual struggle, full of divine fear and faith. This devout Elder was adorned with the grace of priesthood, which he honored with a pure and precise life. Particularly, he strived in fasting, and his mourning was continuous. Recognizing that solitude and stillness are essential elements of mourning and weeping, he always tried to sit in remote and unknown places, avoiding unnecessary interactions and distractions. Through experience, he understood that *philoponia* is the source of Grace and did not shy away from toil and deprivation, following the example of our Fathers of old who tirelessly bore the cross of our Lord Christ.

He wore light clothing during the winter, which was almost beyond nature due to the Athonite climate. Some had

the boldness to ask, "Elder, why do you wear such minimal clothing? It's evident that you are cold." He would shyly reply, "What can I do, my fathers? If we don't toil, how will we receive our reward? Look, I sit like this, and when I exert myself and become weary, mourning comes upon me, and then I weep, remembering my sins."

This most holy Elder hailed from Ephesus in Asia Minor. He was born in 1875 and became a monk in 1908 in Palestine. There, he also received ordination to the priesthood and zealously practiced fasting, even complete abstinence from food. Father Joachim Spetsieris recounted that once, in Jericho around 1929, the Elder decided to fast for forty days. When Father Joachim met him, the Elder had been fasting for 33 days without eating anything at all. His usual places of asceticism in Palestine were the desert of Castellion, which was utterly inhospitable and arid, and the areas around the Dead Sea, where he ceaselessly prayed and practiced silence. He arrived in 1933 on the Holy Mountain, specifically at our skete, and resided in a small hut in the hermitage beyond the tower of the skete, toward the sea, without any consolation. However, he did not stay there continuously, but would frequently go into the depths of the forest where he had found a small and low cave close to a nearby stream. He modified it so that one could go inside, for it was very small and low.

I personally became familiar with this cave because at one time I stayed in his small hut, and, during the summer, I visited the cave for stillness. I marveled at the Elder's *philoponia* and the flame of divine zeal that burned in his holy soul that allowed him to stay in such a place; due to the humidity, it was an unhealthy and unsuitable place for living. There was



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