

# Saint Athanasios the Athonite

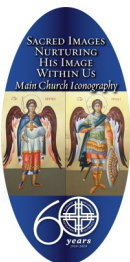
July 5



Athanasios the Athonite was a Byzantine monk who founded the monastic community on Mount Athos, which has since evolved into the greatest centre of Eastern Orthodox monasticism in the world.

Born in Trebizond and patronized by Michael Maleinos, he studied at Constantinople and became famous there as Abraham, a fervent preacher who held great authority with Michael's nephew, Nicephorus Phocas. By the time Phocas ascended the imperial throne, Abraham changed his name to Athanasios, and joined the monks at Mount Kyminas. In 958, he relocated to Mount Athos. He helped defend the hermits there against the Saracens, and also started to incorporate the sketes there into what would become known as the Great Lavra, which Athanasios built with the financial assistance of Nicephorus. Three other foundations followed thereafter. Athanasios met with considerable opposition from the hermits already at Mount Athos, in the construction of his monasteries. They resented his intrusion and his attempts to bring order and discipline to their lives. Upon Nicephorus' death, the enemies of Athanasios prevailed and he had to leave Athos for Cyprus, where he lived until the new emperor resumed the patronage of the Great Lavra, and bestowed upon the monastery its first charter. Athanasios, spurred by a divine vision, returned at once to Athos as an abbot, and introduced a typicon for cenobites, based on those compiled by Theodore Studites and Basil of Caesarea.

*Apolytikion: The Angels' ranks were awed by thy life in the flesh, how, though corporeal, and clad with earthly clay, thou didst set forth with courage to invisible wars and wrestlings and didst boldly smite the hordes of the demons with mortal wounds. Wherefore, Christ rewarded thee with abundant gifts in return. Entreat Him that our souls find salvation, O most renowned Father Athanasios.*



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