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## MAFA NEWSLETTER ISSUE 5 – April 15, 2022

In spite of the pandemic and its ensuing upheaval in our personal lives and around the world, MAFA not only continued in its mission of support for the Holy Mountain in 2021, but also began extending its range of activities and its outreach.

### Letter of Blessing from His Eminence, Archbishop Elpidophoros,

We began the new year celebrating the blessing of Archbishop Elpidophoros, with whom members of the MAFA board met at his offices in New York City on December 7<sup>th</sup>. The Archbishop, expressing his enthusiasm for MAFA and its mission, looks forward to supporting those efforts in the future. We invite you to read his letter, on the MAFA website ([www.mountathosfoundation.org/About/Documents/Elpidophoros2021/](http://www.mountathosfoundation.org/About/Documents/Elpidophoros2021/))

### Financial Report for 2021

MAFA Treasurer Roger McHaney reports that,

*Considering the unusual year with the pandemic impacting those living on the Holy Mountain, as well people across the globe, MAFA enjoyed a year of record giving. Cash donations totaled \$39,984 and a stock gift valued at \$22,251.20 was provided by a generous donor. \$14,327.88 was provided to grant recipients which included the Axion Estin Appeal, Grigoriou Monastery, and the Prodromos Convent in Anatoli, Agia, Greece. \* Plans for continued support of healthcare on the Holy Mountain are in place with donors providing over \$10,000 for emergency care. The year concluded with a cash balance of \$40,914.19 and stock valued at \$22,251.20 which will form the basis for additional future grants. Among the 2021 donations designated by their donors for specific MAFA funds or appeals are: The Mount Athos Emergency Fund (\$10,465), the Grigoriou Appeal (\$400), and the Prodromos Convent (\$575). MAFA's operating expenses for the year were \$4,244.68. Since the organization completely relies on volunteer labor, expenses primarily relate to website maintenance, insurance, banking fees, and advertising. In other developments, the MAFA Board opened a brokerage account which enables gifts of stock and other assets to be accepted.*

That is a great success story for MAFA. The grant total year-end balance of \$63,165.39 more than triples the balance at the end of 2020 (\$19,502.75)! We are thankful to all who have made this happen, especially in a year plagued by a pandemic!

The stock transfer mentioned in our treasurer's report is a kick-off contribution to MAFA's **Architectural and Ecological Conservation Fund** from John Campbell, who has consented to our sharing his name. Here are some excerpts from his correspondence with us that we hope may inspire all our readers:

John initially sent us a very simple email note:

*I would like to make a donation of \$20,000 to MAFA for the purpose of the "study, preservation and restoration of the historic buildings."*

When we suggested our **Architectural and Ecological Conservation Fund** he wrote back,

*I am a great fan of trusts and endowments. Many years ago I placed a tiny equity into a trust for my children's future education. In the end, notwithstanding various diversions and disasters, that sent two girls*

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\* Regarding MAFA donations to the Axion Estin Appeal, Grigoriou Monastery and the Prodromos Convent please see Newsletter 4, July 2021, accessible on the MAFA website (<https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/news/>).

*thru college, gave each a down payment on a house and set a precedent for future generations that continues today.... [after selecting this fund, John added the following, referring to the fund description – ] I would only add to "the study, maintenance and repair of the historic buildings and paths." In my memory of a very different Mount Athos, it was on the paths that some of my most memorable sights and conversations occurred. My gift is but a tiny drop in the bucket compared to the European Community funds that I see have been spent in recent years.*

We look forward to seeing this kickoff gift grow and contribute to many worthy works on the Holy Mountain. And, ecological conservation does, indeed, include the footpaths, which we continue to support through the Friends of Mount Athos and most recently through our grant to Simonopetra Monastery for a planning project to create improvements and conservation of its footpaths aimed at enhancing the pilgrimage experience with inspiring rest stops for pilgrims.

Thank you, John, for that thoughtful and generous start for our Architectural and Ecological Conservation Fund. Our goal for MAFA is to enable Americans to match the generosity of our European counterparts in support of the Holy Mountain!

## English Translation of the Mount Athos Panagion

ΤὸΝ ΕΝ ΑΘΩ ΑΤΙΝΟΝ Ο ΧΟΡΟΣ

Ἀθανάσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης, κτίτωρ μονῆς Μεγίστης Λαύρας († 1001/4)

Ἦ γέννησι τοῦ ἱδρυτῆ τοῦ Ἀθωνικοῦ κοινοβιακοῦ μοναχικοῦ ὁσίου Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτη τοποθετεῖται τὴν περίοδο μετὰ τῶν ἐτῶν 925 καὶ 930. Τόπος καταγωγῆς τοῦ ὀνόμαζε ἢ Τραπεζοῦντα τοῦ Πόντου καὶ τὸ βαπτιστικὸν τοῦ ὀνόματι Ἰβραήμ. Ὁ πατήρ του, μετ' οἰκονομικῆς καταγωγῆς ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀντιόχεια τῆς Συρίας, πέθανε πρωτοῦ ὁ γιὸς τοῦ ἔλθῃ ἐπὶ τῆς ἡσυχίας. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ μητέρα του, μετ' οἰκονομικῆς καταγωγῆς ἀπὸ τὴν Κολχίδα τοῦ Πόντου, δὲν ἔζησε παρὰ λίγο μόνο μετὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὁλοκλήρωσε τὸ ὄφθαλμὸν τοῦ γιου της. Τὴν ἀποτροπὴν τοῦ ὀρφανοῦ παιδιοῦ ἀνέλαβε ἡ γυναίκα κάποιου συγγενικοῦ καὶ συντοπίτη τῆς μητέρας του, ὁ ὁποῖος λεγόταν Κανίτης καὶ συγκαταλεγόμενος μετὰ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν μελῶν τῆς κοινωνίας τῆς Τραπεζοῦντος. Σὺμφωνα μετ' τὸν δεύτερον βιογράφο τοῦ Ὁσίου, ἡ γυναίκα αὐτὴ ἦταν μοναχὴ ἢ ὅποια νοουθετοῦσε τὸ παιδί να ζεῖ μετ' σωφροσύνης καὶ ἡσυχίας.

Ἡ ἀρετὴ τοῦ Ἰβραήμου ἦταν φανερὴ ἡδὴ ἀπὸ τὰ παιδικὰ τὸ χρόνια, τὸ ἴδιο καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πρὸς τὰ γράμματα. Ἀφοῦ μαθητεύσει ἐπὶ κάποιου τοπικοῦ γραμματιστοῦ, μετῆς ἐστὶν Κωνσταντινουπόλιν γὰρ ἀνώτερος σπουδῆς τὸν καιρὸ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος βασιλεὺς Ἀ' Λακεπτινοῦ (920-944). Ἀφορμὴ στάθηκε κάποιος κοινοβιακός, δηλαδὴ εἰρησέβητος φέρων, ποὺ ὅταν πέρασε ἀπὸ τὴν Τραπεζοῦντα, προσέειπε τὸ ἥθος τοῦ νεαροῦ Ἰβραήμου καὶ τοῦ ζήτησε νὰ τὸν ἀκολουθήσῃ ἐπὶ βυζαντινῇ πρωτεύουσῃ. Συνδυάζοντας τὸν ἀσκητικὸν τρόπο ζωῆς μετ' τὰ διδῶν γὰρ τὴν γνώσιν, ὁ ἱερεὺς ἐν πρώτῳ συμπαραστάς ἐστὶν πνευματικὸν τὸν δρόμον τὸν ἐπιφανῆ στρατηγὸν Ζερωνίττη καὶ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ ποὺ ὁ συμβάλων ἐστὶν οἰκονομικῇ στήριξιν τῶν πτωχῶν του. Καθόδηγητὴς του ἐπὶ τῇ γνώσει καὶ ἐστὶν ἀρετῇ ὅτι γινεὶ ὁ Ἀθανάσιος, ὁ τότε «προσεβόμενος τῶν παιδοτέρμων τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Σὲ μικρὸ χρονικὸ διάστημα ὅστερα ἀπὸ ὁμίσην ἀπόφασιν τὴν δασκάλων

του καὶ μετ' αὐτοκρατορικῇ συναίνεσιν ὁ Ἰβραήμος θὰ ἀναλάβῃ διευθυντικὸν ρόλον ἐπὶ ἄλλο παιδοτέρμον. Χάρη ἐστὶν πόλιν τε καὶ κοσμητικῇ τοῦ παιδείας συνέβαλε ἐστὶν προσέκλινον πληθῶνας μαθητῶν, πράγμα ποὺ τὸν ἔκανε εὐρύτερα γνωστὸ καὶ κίνησε τὸ ἰδιαίτερον καὶ τοῦ τότε αὐτοκράτορα, τοῦ φιλομαθοῦς Κωνσταντίνου Ζ' Πορφυρογέννητου (944-959).

Ὡστόσο ὁ Ἰβραήμος, θεωρούμενος πᾶς ἡμέλει, κενεὶ ὁλοένα καὶ περισσότερο ἐπὶ κοσμικῆς τιμῆς καὶ φροντίδας, ἀποφασίζον νὰ ἀποχωρηθῇ ἐπὶ τὴν Κωνσταντινουπόλιν. Κατὰρχος συνίδρυσε τὸν τότε στρατηγὸν τοῦ Ἀιγαίου Πελάγους, Ζερωνίτη, ἐπὶ ταξίδι του ἐπὶ Ἀίγιον. Κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστροφήν του ἀντίκρισε γὰρ πρώτη φορὰ τὸν Ἰβραήμ, γεγονός ποὺ, γὰρ τὸν βιογράφο του, ἦταν καθοριστικὸν γὰρ τὴν μετέπειτα ἔγκριστάς του ἐπὶ αὐτό. Μετ' τὴν ἐπὶ ἐκείνου τὴν Κωνσταντινουπόλιν θὰ γνωρίσῃ μόνον τοῦ ἴδιου στρατηγῶν τὸν Μιχαὴλ Μαλέντιν, ἡγουμένο ἐπὶ τῇ μονῇ τοῦ Κοιμητῆ ἐπὶ Βελονία. Ἐκεῖ θὰ γνωρίσῃ μετ' τὸν ἀνερπὸ τοῦ τελευταίου, Νικηφόρου Φωκά, ποὺ τότε ἦταν ἀκόμα στρατηγὸς τοῦ θεματοῦ τῶν Ἀνατολικῶν. Στὴ μονὴ τοῦ Μιχαὴλ ὁ Ἰβραήμος θὰ καλεῖται μοναχὴς μετ' τὸ ὄνομα Ἀθανάσιος. Ἀφοῦ ἔζησε ἐκεῖ γὰρ τέσσαρα χρόνια, αἰσθάνεται τὴν ἀνάγκη τῆς περαιτέρω ἡσυχίας καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἀποφασίζον ἐπὶ τὴν περιοχή μετ' τὸ ὄνομα Κισκλίσιον.

Στὸν τόπον αὐτὸν θὰ δεχθῇ τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν τοῦ Νικηφόρου Φωκά, ὁ ὁποῖος ἐπέδωκε τὴν ἐπιτομήν νὰ γινεὶ πνευματικὸν παιδί τοῦ Ὁσίου. Τὸ ἴδιο συνέβη μετ' τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ μαγιστροῦ καὶ κοινοβιακοῦ Ἀλόνου Φωκά. Οἱ πνευματικὲς του ἀρετὲς συνέβαλαν ὥστε ὁ Μιχαὴλ Μαλέντιν νὰ τὸν ἀποκαλέσῃ διδάχον τὸν, πράγμα ποὺ ὁ βιογράφος του ἡρμηνεύει ὡς ὡς διδασκὸν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον, δηλαδὴ ἐπὶ τῇ μονῇ τοῦ Κοιμητῆ, ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ τὸν τρόπον. Ἐπειδὴ ὅμως ἔχον πᾶς δὲν ἦταν ἴσως νὰ ἀναλάβῃ τὴν πνευματικὴν αὐτῆς εὐδοκίαν ἡ γὰρ λόγους ἄλλους ἀδυναμία, ὁ ὁποῖος Ἀθανάσιος θὰ ἀπομονωθῇ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ καὶ θὰ



Ἄγιος Ἀθανάσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης, συγγραφεὴς, μαζί τοῦ Πρωτάτου, Μανουὴλ Πανσελίνος (ἑκδοξ.), περ. 1300

As announced in *Newsletter 4*, MAFA has joined with the Mount Athos Center (Agioritiki Estia) to publish an English translation of the Mount Athos Center's spectacular 415-page volume, *Hagiorite Panagion. The Chorus of the Saints on Athos*, under the editorship of the respected and internationally recognized scholar, Symeon A. Paschalidis (<https://www.agioritikiestia.gr/en/hagioritikon-panagion-ton-en-atho-ho-choros>). The above image (from the original Greek version, pages 52-53) shows the beginning of the life of Athanasios the Athonite, founder of the Great Lavra Monastery († 1001/4), illustrated by the icon of Athanasios from the wall of the Protaton church attributed to the painter, Manuel Panselinos.

The translation is proceeding beautifully; we have had a chance to read some of the first translations of the lives of the Athonite saints by Andrew Philip Hendry, and they are beautifully written. This is a 3-year project, and we look forward enthusiastically to its completion in 2023/24.

## MAFA SCHOLARSHIPS

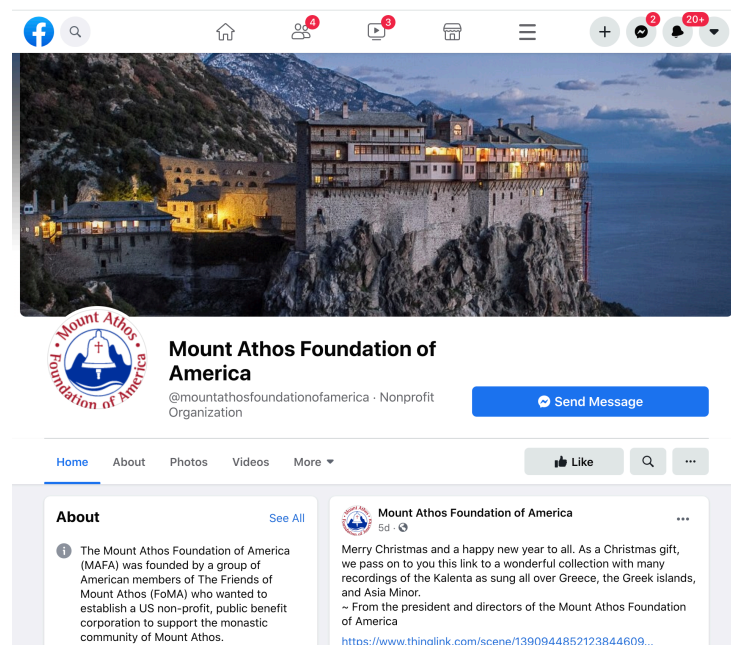
MAFA is pleased to announce its 2021 scholarship: to Professor Kostis Smyrlis (Ph.D., the Sorbonne), a researcher for the National Hellenic Research Foundation in Athens (<http://www.eie.gr/>) and the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris (<http://www.cnrs.fr/>). We are especially appreciative of our partnership with **The Mount Athos Center in Thessaloniki**, which provides invaluable support for our scholarship winners, assuring the best chance for success of their projects.

Prof. Smyrlis is the head of a four-person team of scholars working on the edition of the archival documents of the Holy Monastery of Zographou as part of the *Archives de l'Athos* series. Each volume in this series includes an extensive introduction dealing with the history of a monastery and the topography of its territorial holdings during the medieval period. The team directed by Prof. Smyrlis is conducting a survey of the areas where the Zographou Monastery held landed property, namely the Athonite peninsula, various locations in Halkidiki, and the Strymon River Valley, comparing today's topographical and archeological data to the information found in the archival documents, and identifying the location of the estates, where possible. Our MAFA scholarship is funding travel and related expenses for this survey.

The publication of the medieval archival documents of the monasteries of Mount Athos in the *Archives de l'Athos* series, that began in the 1930s in Paris and continues to this day, has contributed enormously to the study of the social, economic, and religious history of the Byzantine Empire. More particularly, the accompanying studies on the landed holdings of the monasteries have been of particular importance for understanding the historical geography of the Holy Mountain and its broader area, and for studying the history of the landscape and the environment, as well as human settlement, demography and toponymics. The holdings of the monastery of Zographou, the subject of this project, are of particular importance, since they extend in areas not too well covered by previous volumes on other monasteries, for example the estuary of the Strymon river.

We wish Prof. Smyrlis every success and are honored to be able to support him in this important project.

## MAFA on Facebook



**Dionne Katinas**, our website designer ([designsbydionne.com](http://designsbydionne.com)) and her colleague, Rich Frongillo, have performed superb service for us maintaining our ever-changing website and developing our new **MAFA Facebook Page**.

**If you haven't yet seen our Facebook page and "liked" or "followed" us, please do so!** Then our postings will be passed on to your friends, helping MAFA achieve wider awareness in 2022 of the Holy Mountain – also part of our mission. Thank you, Dionne and Rich, for your continuing service to MAFA!

## Looking Ahead....

Much of our work at MAFA this year has been devoted to laying foundations for the future. I would like to briefly list some of this work, inviting you to stay tuned as we continue to develop these initiatives.

**Photographic exhibition.** MAFA is working in collaboration with the Mount Athos Center in Thessaloniki to bring to the U.S. a photographic exhibition to open in September at the Maliotis Center with a celebratory inaugural symposium devoted to raising public awareness and understanding of the Holy Mountain. The exhibition will then be available for other venues in the U.S. Watch for developments on our Facebook page!

**St Paisios Society.** With great honor and pleasure we announce the establishment The St. Paisios Society. We have established this Society as an Honor Society for those persons who have made outstanding contributions to MAFA to support its mission on behalf of the Holy Community of Mount Athos. It is our way of honoring this special group of persons who will bear the venerable title of Saint Paisios' name.

**MAFA Annual Book Prize.** MAFA is pleased to announce the inauguration of an *Annual Mount Athos Book Prize*. This prize, to be judged by a distinguished panel of scholars unaffiliated with MAFA, is meant to honor the best scholarly work on Mt. Athos on a topic related to the Holy Mountain and its rich historical, literary, theological, architectural and iconographic traditions. The winning author or authors will receive an award of \$500, and the Foundation will publicize the award and the winning book on the MAFA website, in its newsletter, and in press releases. Special thanks to board member Chris Deliso for initiating and planning this new program! We look forward developing a growing book list on our MAFA website where you will be able to see all relevant entries plus other publications related to Mount Athos.

### **Memory Eternal – John G. Demakis, M.D.**

We begin the new year remembering MAFA board member John Demakis, who passed away in August. John brought tremendous enthusiasm, energy and creative thinking to our board when we were just getting started. John treasured the memory of his time on the Holy Mountain and, like all of our board members, devoted himself to giving back what he could in appreciation for that blessing. A life member of the Friends of Mount Athos, he personally published a guide for pilgrims who might follow in his footsteps. When we called on him to serve MAFA in its formative years, he was eager to take on that challenge. We take this occasion to celebrate his contributions to the Mount Athos Foundation with gratitude for his service. May his memory be eternal and may God rest his soul.

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If you are interested in becoming a member of the MAFA Volunteer Corps and are willing to contribute time and effort to help us carry out our mission of support for the Holy Mountain, please contact us at [info@mountathosfoundation.org](mailto:info@mountathosfoundation.org) or visit us via Facebook or our website, [www.mountathosfoundation.org](http://www.mountathosfoundation.org) to let us know of your interest. We would love to hear from you.

MAFA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charity, and donations to any of the above-mentioned MAFA appeals may be tax deductible. You can donate directly from the MAFA website at:

<https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/donate/>.

### **Summary of MAFA Accomplishments to Date**

MAFA grants and donations to date, enabled by the generosity of many donors, have supported the following:

1. 7 Scholarships for Athos-related research
2. Axion Estin Cell Restoration
3. Grigoriou Monastery Fire Recovery
4. Simonopetra Footpaths and Roads Rehabilitation Planning Project
5. Sisters of the Prodromos Convent on Mt. Kissavos in Anatoli, Agia in central Greece
6. English Translation of the Athonite Panagion in collaboration with the Mount Athos Center
7. The Athos Health Center (via Supporters of Athonite & Monastic Medicine (SAMM))

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I thank you all for your generous contributions that have made possible those accomplishments and such a successful year despite the persistence of the pandemic!

Robert W. Allison, President,  
The Mount Athos Foundation of America