



## **FOUNDATION of the SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN**

The Society was founded in 1986 by the late Major General (Ret.) Dimitrios Mourelatos, who served as the first and for many years President of the Society. The late reserve infantry captain Loukas Dimitriadis was the co-founder and first tour guide of the Society.

The late Dimitrios Mourelatos, both before and after the founding of the Society, gave dozens of speeches in Greece, Europe, America, and Canada under the title “Mount Athos, the Ark of Religious and National Traditions”, thus becoming the best ambassador of Mount Athos and of the Society.

Orthodox Christians of both sexes are enrolled as members of the society by submitting an application to the Society, which is examined by the Board of Directors at its next meeting.

## **PURPOSE**

The aims of the Society are:

- a. The development of closer ties with Mount Athos, mainly in the form of offering all kinds of services (health care, material and technical support, solutions for life-support issues, etc.).
- b. The visit to Mount Athos of the largest possible number of pilgrims, for their spiritual uplift, with the help and grace of the Athonite Fathers.
- c. The dissemination and consolidation among our fellow human beings of the Greek Orthodox principles and traditions of our nation.

The means for achieving these aims are:

- a. Organization of pilgrimages by men (which began in 1977) to the Holy Monasteries, Sketes and Cells of Mount Athos, in which the members of the Society are always received with joy and love.
- b. Sending to Mount Athos, mainly to the Kalyves, the Cells, and the Hermitages, food and work groups that provide assistance of all kinds.
- c. Organization of spiritual events, mainly of religious interest, to which Athonite Elders and generally persons noted for their spirituality are invited as speakers.
- d. Publication of the magazine “ATHONITIS”, with rich Orthodox and national content.
- e. Participation by members of the Society in the liturgical life of the Church and the strengthening of the bond between them, within the framework of our Greek Orthodox traditions.

## **ACTIVITIES**

The main activities of the Society are:

- a. The Annual Spiritual Event, which usually takes place in March.
- b. The three-day pilgrimage missions of men to Mount Athos (at least three per year).

**Όμιλος Φίλων Αγίου Όρους (OFAO) – (Greek) Society of Friends of the Holy Mountain  
Foundation – Purpose – Activities**

- c. The daily women's visits by boat from Ouranoupoli to the tip of the Athos peninsula, in which women can admire the shores of the Holy Monasteries, have a full tour and venerate Holy Relics, which Monks of a coastal Holy Monastery or Skete transport to the ship, where a Paraklisi Prayer service is also held.
- d. The Annual General Meeting, which is usually combined with the cutting of the Vasilopita cake in January.
- e. Celebration of the Paneguri on July 5th, the feast day of our Society's patron saint, Saint Athanasius the Athonite.
- f. Various gatherings and pilgrimage trips of our members to Monasteries throughout Greece and abroad.

**RESOURCES**

The Society's resources are:

- a. The annual membership fee (currently 30 euros)(\*), which also includes the magazine "ATHONITIS".
- b. Donations - sponsorships from individuals, businesses, and in general from any institution.

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(\*) Due to the temporary suspension of publication of the magazine "ATHONITIS", the annual subscription is currently 15 euros.

**THE SOCIETY'S BLOOD BANK**

The Society, to cover the blood needs of the Monks of Mount Athos, when they are in a hospital in Thessaloniki (mainly in 424 GSNE), maintains a blood bank at the AHEPA Hospital.

Donating blood saves lives, including for the Monks. The Monks pray for us throughout their lives. Let us, those aged 18-60, remember them once a year.

You can donate blood at AHEPA Hospital for the Blood Bank of the Friends of Mount Athos Society.  
AHEPA Hospital Blood Donation Call Center: 2310 993390.

**PAST CHAIRMEN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF OFAO**

1980- 2009 DIMITRIOS MOURELATOS (Founder of OFAO)

2009- 2011 STEFANOS GOGAKOS

2011- 2015 IOSIF PAPAMATTHIAKIS

2015- 2016 STEFANOS HATZIIAKOVOU

2016 – 2021 IOSIF PAPAMATTHIAKIS

2021- VASILEIADIS GEORGIOS

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