



My Beloved Ones,

On November 9th, our Church is blessed to commemorate one of the great Saints of our age. *Agios Nektarios of Aegina* was born Anastasios Kephthalas on October 1, 1846. His parents, Dimos and Maria, were poor, but very pious Christians, and from an early age, his mother encouraged in him a love of God's Word. He nurtured this love, and by the age of twenty, he traveled to the island of Chios as a teacher, where the islanders greatly loved and imitated his humility before God.

By the age of 30, he became a Monk at the Monastery of Nea Moni. So great was his example of obedience and ascetic practice, he was ordained a Deacon one year later. One especially wealthy islander recognizing the young Deacon's potential, supported him to finish his studies, obtaining a Theological Degree. Shortly afterwards, arriving in Alexandria,

Egypt, Nektarios was ordained Priest, and then consecrated Metropolitan of Pentapouls. As Metropolitan he was given the responsibility of acting as the Patriarch of Alexandria's secretary, as well as shepherding the Church of St. Nicholas in Cairo.

Despite using these events only to glorify God, it happened that there were some in the Patriarchate who were grieved and envious of Nektarios, and the love the laity held for him. Hardening their hearts, these clergy began to whisper evil things against this humble Servant of God, particularly, that His Eminence wished to take the Patriarchal Throne for his own. Remembering only the instruction of Christ to "*...love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...*" (*Matthew 5:44*), Saint Nektarios made no defense against their lies, and when he was removed from the Episcopal Throne, he departed quietly for Athens.

Despite his hardships, isolation and poverty, he found when he returned to Greece, St. Nektarios did not despair or retreat—he acted. As the administrator of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School, young seminarians found a man who was learned in knowledge secular and patristic, and who was kind but firm. Although his duties to the school, and his liturgical life as a clergyman gave him the opportunity for contemplation, he wished to return to the monastic life.

Therefore, when spiritual children encouraged him to found a women's monastery on the island of Aegina, he welcomed the chance as a gift from the Lord. From 1904 to 1907, St. Nektarios personally supervised the establishment of Holy Trinity—both in its physical construction, as well as his offering the Divine Services, and spiritual instruction of his children. Eventually the fame of this hard-working, but humble clergyman spread throughout the region, and many came to him, seeking confession, as well as the healing of soul and body. He continued to write many texts, and to instruct

his spiritual daughters in the ways of charity, even during the First World War, when there was great need.

Even in these later years, there were many who were not inspired by the Saint's angelic way of life but were driven to slander him. Again, he bore their abuse without complaint, just as he did not tell anyone of the great pain and sickness he experienced until a year before his falling asleep. After praying before an icon of the Theotokos, he instructed his followers that his time was near. Though he was taken to an Athens hospital, he reposed in the Lord on November 8, 1920.

Despite all the great difficulties this Holy Father endured with true Christ-like love and patience, over time, our Church has recognized his saintliness that was not evident to weak human eyes. His relics still perform miracles for those who pray for him to intercede to God. St. Nektarios was formally recognized as a saint in 1961, and in the year 1998, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, recognizing the historical error of the former persecution of this Man of God wrote, *“Taking into account the resolution of the Church to rank Saint Nektarios amongst the saints because of his innumerable miracles and his acceptance within the religious conscience of Orthodox Christians throughout the world, we appeal to the mercy of the ever-charitable God. We hereby restore the ecclesiastical order of the Saint of our Century, Saint Nektarios, and grant to him all due credits and honours.”*

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta