

Foreword

 What a holy privilege it is to participate with *Orthodox Witness* to bring to the attention of all Orthodox Christians in North America the life of Papa-Dimitri Gagastathis of Platanos, Thessaly, “The Man of God.” Born in our own days, living in our own difficult times, extraordinarily, this humble servant of God exemplified the humility of the great saints of the Church. He is an icon for all clergy serving the believers in Jesus Christ the Lord and a witness to married men and women on how to uphold the Mystery of Matrimony.

The numerous stories and episodes in the life of Papa-Dimitri will stir the heart of the true believer and strengthen his resolve to emulate this humble man whose wisdom in responding to the vicissitudes of life radiated light in his day, in ours and in that of generations to come. Married man, father of nine daughters, confessor, advisor, advocate for

others, an angel in guise of a man, this gentle priest was not afraid of the world nor of those whose hearts have not yet accepted illumination by The Light of the World. Stalwart in faith and secure in his voyage through the troubled waters of this “Sea of Life surging high with the storms of temptations,” Papa-Dimitri’s life will lead us also to calm havens.

His life is a reminder that it is from childhood that the spiritual formation of a person must begin and that this beginning is the sound foundation for living as a celibate, as a married person, as well as for one who serves as a clergyman. No matter then what trials and tribulations rise up before the well-formed Christian, he is strengthened by grace to take life hour by hour, day by day, and will arrive at the gates of the kingdom intact and holy. We must thank God for his servant Papa-Dimitri and implore his mercy on us.

† NATHANIEL, Archbishop

Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (OCA)

Jan. 12, 2009