

The Creation of the Matthewite Hierarchy

On the 26th of August 1948, Bishop Matthew of Bresthena together with only a handful of clergy consisting of only one archpriest, six archimandrites, seven hieromonks and two priests (hardly anything compared to the remaining four bishops and 300+ Old Calendarist priests alive in Greece at this time), decided that Bishop Matthew was permitted to create a provisional "Holy Synod" with himself as president and four priests (who he was to select) to be members. Bishop Matthew selected the four priest-members of his provisional "Holy Synod" to be Fr. Gideon Pasios, Fr. Eugene Tombros, Fr. Athanasius Anestis and Fr. Callistus Makris.

On the 28th of August 1949, Bishop Matthew together with the four priest-members of his provisional "Holy Synod" took part in the election of one of the members, Fr. Gideon Pasios, to fill the roll of "Bishop of Trimythus in Cyprus." Bishop Matthew then performed the consecration with five archimandrites, seven hieromonks and one archpriest serving as "witnesses" in the place of a second bishop (since Bishop Matthew was the only bishop present at the consecration, just as he was the only bishop present at the election). The consecration took place at Prophet Elias chapel, Kroniza, Attica. At the consecration, Fr. Gideon was renamed Spyridon, so that he became "Bishop Spyridon of Trimythus."

In the next few weeks, Bishops Matthew of Bresthena and Spyridon of Trimythus took part in the elections and consecrations of Bishops Andrew of Patras, Demetrius of Thessalonica and Callistus of Corinth.



**Standing (left to right): Bishops Callistus, Demetrius, Andrew, Spyridon.
Seated: Bishop Matthew of Bresthena**

Not only the election, but also the consecration of Bishop Spyridon of Trimythus was uncanonical due to the following reasons:

1. Bishop Matthew elected a bishop to fill a vacant diocese that did not belong to him, but was a diocese of another Local Church. As a local bishop of the Church of Greece, Bishop Matthew had no canonical authority to consecrate a Bishop for the Diocese of Trimythus, a Suffragan Diocese belonging to the Church of Cyprus.
2. Bishop Matthew performed the consecration outside of the canonical territory of his diocese. Since Matthew was Bishop of Bresthena, a suffragan diocese of Laconia in Peloponnesus, he could only canonically perform the ordination of priests (let alone bishops) within the canonical territory of the Diocese of Bresthena. However, Bishop Matthew performed the consecration in Keratea, Attica, a diocese not belonging to him, since he was never consecrated Bishop of Attica.
3. Bishop Matthew performed the consecration single-handedly, which is permissible in extreme economy and according to ecclesiastical history, but only if the election had already taken place by a number of bishops. But in this case, both the election and the consecration took place by only one bishop, which means that such a consecration, although valid from the point of view of hierarchical grace, is nevertheless invalid in terms of authority, and requires a future Synod to regularize the act.

These consecrations were approved, confirmed, recognized and regularized by way of cheirothesia (prayer of absolution and laying-on of hands) by two ROCOR bishops in 1971, in order for there to be a liturgical “witness” of two remaining hierarchs to make up for their absence in 1948.