



# WHERE ARE YOU, ADAM?

FILM BY ALEXANDER ZAPOROSHCHENKO  
& ALEXANDER PLYSKA



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DOCUMENTARY UNCOVERING THE OBLITERATED WISDOM  
OF GENUINE MONASTICISM IN THE DOCHEIARIOU MONASTERY

**PÖFF 23**

BLACK NIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL  
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## CONTACTS

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Title	<i>Where Are You, Adam?</i>	Oleksandr Plyska production
Year of production	2019	Shot and directed by: <b>Oleksandr Zaporoshchenko</b>
Duration	80 min.	Produced by: <b>Oleksandr Plyska</b>
Country of production	Ukraine	Composer: <b>Svyatoslav Luniov</b>
Genre	Documentary	Sound mix and design by: <b>Oleksandr Pustarnakov</b>
Shooting format	Digital Full HD	Edit by: <b>Oleksandr Zaporoshchenko</b>
Finish format	DCP 2K	Subtitles translate by: <b>Vladimir Telizhenko, Roman Kulchynskyi, Martiriy Kuhkhunen, Nektaria Mac Lee.</b>
Aspect ratio	1.85:1 Flat	
Sound format	5.1 surround and stereo	
Language	Greek	
Subtitles	English, Russian.	

A dimly lit, ornate dining hall in a monastery. The walls are covered in intricate frescoes of saints. Monks in dark robes and black hats are seated at long tables, eating and talking. The lighting is warm and focused on the tables, creating a sense of intimacy and tradition.

## LOG-LINE

This film immerses the viewer in the daily life of one secluded monastery on the Greek peninsula of Mount Athos. The images of monastic life are full of authentic characters and everyday saints, and come to us freed from the wrappings of mundane priorities.

What emerges is a fascinating glimpse of the unparalleled life of a thriving monastic community in the midst of the twenty-first century.

## SYNOPSIS

*WHERE ARE YOU, ADAM?* is set at the ancient Dochiariou Monastery on the western shore of Mount Athos, the Aegean peninsula dedicated to Eastern Christian monasticism. Images of nature alternate with the monks' almost ceaseless round of work and prayer, creating a rhythmic bond between man and the natural world that hints at a paradise we all dimly yearn for.

The jewels of this rich Byzantine setting, however, are the monks themselves, whose warmth and authenticity has been captured through a revelation of their daily lives, each with its joys, hopes and frailties. By inviting the filmmakers into their midst, the monks hope to encourage each viewer to awaken to his own resurrection. A central figure in the film is the monastery elder, Abbot Gregory, whose decades of leadership have given him a keen understanding of the souls under his charge and their desire to return to a state akin to the humanity of Adam before the Fall.





ΑΘΗΝΑΙ.

## DOCHEIARIOU

**D**ocheiariou Monastery, founded in the tenth century, is one of twenty Orthodox monasteries on a Greek peninsula in the Aegean Sea that is known as the Holy Mountain or Mount Athos.

The Athonite «monastic republic» is governed as an autonomous polity within Greece, requiring a special visa for any man who wishes to visit. Traditionally, women are not allowed, except for the unseen presence of the Virgin Mary – the Mother of God – who the monks believe to be the defender and «abbess» of many generations of men who have come to live and repose under Her protection.

Empires, states and rulers emerged and fell, while Mount Athos and its distinctive monasticism has outlived all of them, remaining practically unchanged for centuries.

Today, around fifty monks live in one of these monasteries, Docheiariou (dedicated to the Holy Archangels), in the south-west of the peninsula among orchards and groves. It ranks tenth in the hierarchy of Athonite monasteries and houses the icon of the Virgin «Gorgoepikoos» or «She Who is Quick to Hear [Prayers].» Over the past half-century, Docheiariou has been revived through the efforts of its abbot Archimandrite Gregory (Zumis) and the monastery brotherhood.

Geronda Gregory reposed in the Lord in October 2018. Only the first eleven years of his life (out of seventy-six) were spent outside the walls of a monastery. In the 1970s, he received an invitation to move with other brothers from central Greece to Docheiariou Monastery. Shortly upon his arrival on the Holy Mountain, Archimandrite Gregory was chosen as the abbot. The monastery, which was in decline and slowly disintegrating, revived under his leadership and new brethren gathered.

As a marked departure from Athonite practice, Abbot Gregory allowed the film-making crew to live within the monastery walls and film intimate scenes of daily life. After the film's completion, he sanctioned a preview screening of the documentary inside the monastery.

## STORY-LINE

An abbot on Mount Athos, nearing the end of a long life, reflects on the physical and spiritual work, and even on the pain of feeling disregarded, that is necessary to live peaceful lives in an earthly, and some day in a heavenly, paradise.

He and his community, the monks of Dochiariou on Eastern Orthodox Christianity's Holy Mountain accept the hardship, toil, and suffering involved in a life lived for Christ and for the monastic ideal. Their life, as their music, is a touching, authentic cry to God on behalf of man and nature that cannot help but draw the viewer in.

Within the rain, the sea, the earth and trees, this community discerns a calling to profound stillness, and they distill that stillness into joy through the worship of God. Just as they build of stone and draw their food from the raw elements of nature, these fathers also form their spiritual lives from the building blocks of exhausting physical labor, obedience, and all-night prayer services.



We see that the monks are rough men, capable of building a retaining wall against the sea through sweat and muscle and prayer. The sea is a metaphor for the world, the wall a metaphor for the monastic *politeia*, or civilization. The ringing of the blacksmith's hammer echoes the wood-on-wood cadence of the call to prayer – yet soon it is back to work again!

Abbot Gregory reflects on the life of the monks in direct on-camera discourse with the filmmaker. Great effort and labor is needed, he tells us, or the monastery will become «a pile of stones».

The elder confesses that he regrets many things in his life; most of all, becoming a priest and an abbot because of the responsibility inherent in these spiritual offices for the sins and falls of others. He tells us that he cries every day for the brethren and the monastery.

More is said about the meaning of the monastic life. The fight to build the sea wall continues. We imagine the reclaimed oasis of land behind this retaining barrier, and marvel at the pure labor undertaken throughout the monastery.

A nighttime vigil unveils the starry night in full glory. Holiness; kneeling; prayerful preparation: the miracle-working icon of the monastery, a jewel renowned throughout world Orthodoxy, is brought into the main church. It is a rare event.

The monastery houses the icon of the Virgin Mary Quick-to-Hear, and yet





the abbot also reminds us of the goodness of having the answer to our prayer delayed.

The Resurrection is proclaimed, and all is light and joy! Bells peal, and so does laughter.

We enter an empty chapel on the top of Mount Athos into which the snow has invaded. We are reminded again of the truth of the abbot's words. Without major effort, the monastic way of life will be lost. The film closes with an inversion: until now, the monastery and its life had been the subject. Now, it is the viewer who is asked,

«**WHERE ARE YOU, ADAM**»?









## IDEA PRODUCER

For the viewer, the experience of deep immersion into the events on the other side of the screen was achieved because, first, all of the characters are real people; and second, the idea and desire to create such an experience by the film's producer, Deacon Alexander Plyska. For a decade before the film was made, Alexander spent three months of each year in Docheiariou Monastery. There, he lived side by side with the monks, sharing their routine and labour. This closeness to the monastery and its brotherhood made possible the authentic filming of the rich and hidden daily life of this secluded Athonite monastery.

The idea of creating such a documentary dates back to December, 2005, when Alexander met with the main protagonist of the future film, the (now deceased) leader and elder of Docheiariou Monastery, Abbot Gregory (Zumis). It was this incomparably cheerful, loving, and charismatic man who eventually became the pearl of almost every scene setting, and whose many years of experience endowed him with a deep understanding of the human soul and our common striving to return to the paradisaical state of Adam before the Fall.



## IDEA DIRECTOR

The idea for this documentary originated in the mind of my good friend, film producer Protodeacon Alexander Plyska, who, in the decade before making *Where Are You, Adam?* spent three months each year visiting Docheiariou Monastery to share the daily routine and manual labor of the Athonite monks. His visits allowed him to immerse himself in this unique monastic abode, and later, to share its unique and rich ambience with the outer world.

Similarly, my own exploration and understanding of Athonite cenobitic monasticism has grown since my first visit in 2015. From those first days on the Holy Mountain, I focused on two commitments: evading a superficial perspective and attempting to capture this inner reality with as much care and attention as possible.

The monks before my eyes are men of flesh and blood, neither hovering in mid-air nor walking on water. They begin each day with common prayer in the middle of the night, followed by work in the kitchen, in the orchards and gardens, or at monastery construction sites, all the while offering uninterrupted hospitality to their many guests. I could not understand how these monks could undertake such physical and emotional effort with a standard of productivity only equaled in the world at an exceptionally well-paid job.

It was as if they were doing this for the sake of some kind of secret jackpot, of which I was unaware. So, I decided to film what I was seeing, hoping that the answer would reveal itself as we went on. And so it did...

## A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Alexandr was born in 1976 and raised in the city of Nikolaev in the south of Ukraine. His art career began at Viktor Marushchenko's photography school in Kiev, where Alexandr became interested in documentary photography, not only as art but also as a language that connects people of different nationalities, religions and points of view. From there, he went on to work as a freelance photographer at PHL, a Ukrainian photo agency.

After graduating from the Kiev Institute for Advanced Studies of Radio, Television and Media, Alex worked as a camera operator for several Ukrainian TV channels.

**In 2008** he covered the military conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia for Ukrainian television. Together with journalist Andrew Tsaplienko he provided live coverage from Tskhinvali town, and also shot footage for the film *Anatomy of a War*.

**In 2009-2011** Alex worked on a social project concerning children with Downs Syndrome.

**In 2010**, he worked on the project *Countdown*, a 12-part documentary series about the preparation for a boxing match between Shannon Briggs and Vitaliy Klitschko. The shooting took place in Florida, USA, where the American boxer was training.

**2010-2012** – Director of Photography (DOP) on the documentary *SICKFUCKPEOPLE*, a film about a flock of homeless teenagers. The film received awards at several film festivals, including:

- **Heart of Sarajevo for Best Documentary Film, Sarajevo Film Festival, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013.**
- **Best Documentary Feature, Raindance Film Festival, London, 2013.**
- **Best International Documentary, DOCsDF International Documentary Film Festival, Mexico City, 2013.**

– **Vienna Film Award for Best Documentary, Viennale Festival, Vienna, 2013.**

– **Erste Bank MoreVALUE Film Award, Viennale Festival, Vienna, 2013.**

– **Best European Independent Documentary, The European Independent Film Festival 2014**

**2011:** DSLR camera operator working on the feature film *Match*, produced by Ukraine and Russia.

**2012-2013:** Studies at the national Polish film school in Lodz PWSFTViT [http://www.filmschool.lodz.pl/Cinematography and Television Production Department](http://www.filmschool.lodz.pl/Cinematography%20and%20Television%20Production%20Department), Poland.

**2013** – DOP on extra shots for the feature *Luka*, a film about the legendary surgeon Luka Voino-Yasinetskij, recently canonized as a saint by the Russian Orthodox Church.

**2014** – Began filming the documentary, *Where Are You, Adam?* Alexander works as a director, cinematographer, and editor.

**2015** – Work on a documentary film *Enticing, Sugary, Boundless or Songs and Dances about Death*. «This movie is about awareness of death. The story is built on documentary and fiction narrative techniques blended together». Filming took place in Ukraine, the United States, Italy and Georgia and shot on digital cameras and 16-millimeter film. Film was selected for «Ji-hlava film festival».

**SICKFUCKPEOPLE** – Documentary feature film. Cinematographer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luvdF9J8jU0>

**Anatomy of War.** TV documentary.

(ukrainian language) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5tWQijtcoE>

Music video. Cinematographer.

<https://vimeo.com/90313863>

Documentary feature film. Cinematographer:

**Enticing. Sugary. Boundless or Songs and Dances about Death**

<https://vimeo.com/220666383>

**Where Are You, Adam?** Director, cinematographer, editor.

<https://vimeo.com/225685772>

Instagram – @WAYA\_doc\_movie

Facebook – Adam Denpeirazei

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