

Why a Special Status in Community Law for Mount Athos?
Mount Athos, 24-27 May 1992
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It is generally recognized that European integration has little to do with levelling the different cultures existing in the Member States. However, in those cultures can be found all the richness of a Europe, which is still young despite its age, and the dynamic force leading it towards its destiny. A return to our roots will ultimately bring about a better understanding and, consequently, we will be able to analyze the present better in order to embark on a common future.

In this context, Mount Athos is an invaluable part of the European heritage: it is a shrine of Christianity which in its turn is one of the great pillars of Western civilization; it is the workshop of orthodoxy protected from the passing centuries and from modernization. It is called 'the Gates of Heaven' or 'the Garden of the Blessed Virgin' who is the only woman allowed in this sacred place. Finally, it is not simply a Byzantine treasury of monuments and jewellery which has stood the test of time under the protection of the monks, it is also a huge reservoir as well as a laboratory of a variety of beliefs, governed by a way of life far from worldliness.

To rediscover Mount Athos, its history, its way of governing itself around its 20 monasteries, its special status in the Greek, Community and international context, its own role as well as that of orthodoxy in the European Community, these are the objectives of this mission which will take place on the spot and will allow participants to enrich their learning by means of the planned lectures and to experience a few days of monastic life. It will also give them the opportunity to converse with the abbots and monks who are specialized in various fields and who come from all over the world. See the dates of 24-27 May 1992 as a rendezvous with time in its eternal dimension.