

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL OF MANTAMADOS

The Monastery of Archangel Michael located in Mantamados, on the island of Lesbos, Greece, is renowned for its miraculous icon of Archangel Michael. The feast day of this Archangel is celebrated on the Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-bearers because the present day church (which was reconstructed upon the foundations of the dilapidated original church) was consecrated on the Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-bearers on May 8, 1888.

Thousands of pilgrims flock to the island each year in order to celebrate this feast, seek the intercessions of the holy Archangel, and thank him for his prayers and protection. For, as one hymn states: ***"Wherever your grace casts its shadow, O Archangel, there the devil's power is repelled; for the fallen Lucifer cannot endure in your light."***

The icon of the Archangel of Mantamados is not a typical icon painted on wood, but rather an icon formed in bas-relief. The account surrounding the creation of this icon is associated with pirates who raided the monastery during the 9th or 10th century. Tradition states that all the monks were slaughtered by the invaders, except for one novice monk, who managed to climb to the roof of the church. However, the pirates noticed him and climbed to the roof to kill him as well. At that point, the Archangel Michael appeared in front of the pirates holding his sword, thus forcing them to retreat in terror. Thanks to this miracle from the Archangel, the novice monk survived. Having witnessed the Archangel Michael in all his fury and glory, upon descending to the courtyard the novice monk reverently gathered up the earth that had been soaked with the blood of the martyred monks and shaped it into the icon-sculpture of the Archangel while everything was still vivid in his memory.

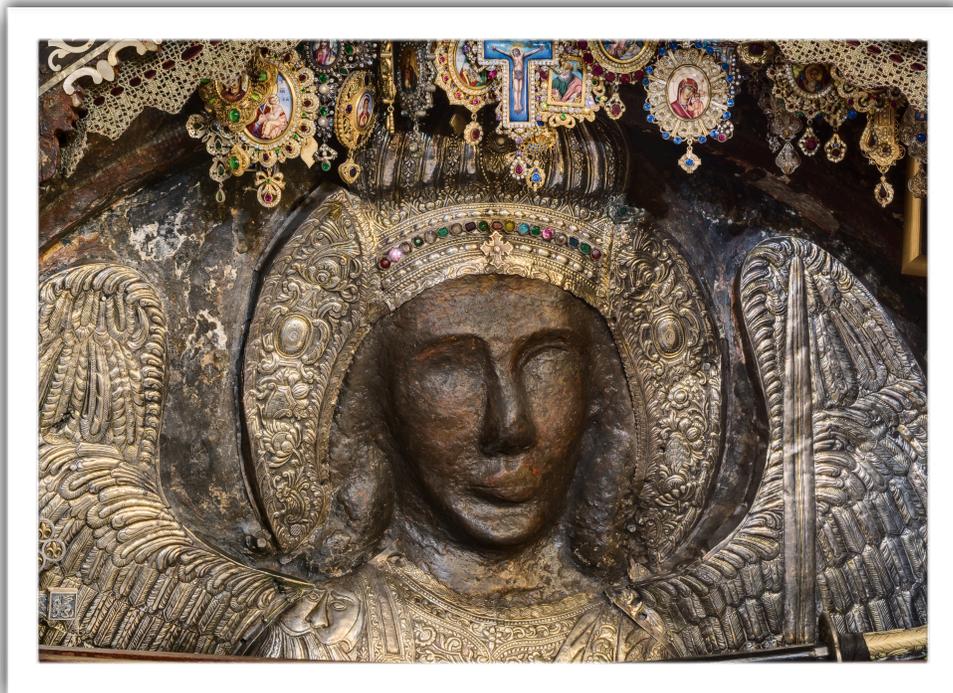
Centuries have passed since then, and countless pilgrims have revered the icon; however, the icon remains unscathed by time. Many faithful even attach metal coins to the forehead and on the cheeks of the icon, which leave marks on the face; nonetheless, the marks quickly disappear, and the icon still persists in its initial condition.

People who approach to pray before this icon may receive unique and different reactions from the Archangel Michael. His face may change from its normal color to a healthy shade of red, and may be accompanied by a joyful smile. In other instances, the Archangel Michael's face darkens and becomes fierce. On yet

other occasions, some people feel an invisible force holding them back and preventing them from approaching. The expression on the face of the icon can range from stern, to sad, or to happy, depending on the message the Archangel wishes to convey to a particular pilgrim.

Furthermore, two other miracles take place from time to time with this icon when the Archangel's eyes are filled with tears, and when beads of perspiration surface on his face. In both instances, Christians wipe away these tears and sweat with pieces of cotton, which they keep as blessing.

Thousands of faithful declare to have had personal experiences of miracles being granted to them by Archangel Mantamados—something that is clearly evident from the numerous cabinets full of *tamata* (gifts) to the Archangel housed within the church.



The icon of Archangel Michael Mantamados