

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

MIRACLES OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL OF MANTAMADOS

Testimony of Mother Stavritsa the Missionary (+2000)

My name is Stavritsa Zachariou, and I am a Greek American. In 1969 I went to Africa as a missionary. I am presently 75 years old, and I have spent 15 years in Africa, next to our suffering brothers, spreading the Gospel of Christ. I permanently reside in Nairobi, Kenya, frequently travelling to Kampala, Cameroon, and other places, where there is a need for Christ's Gospel to be sown.

I am a missionary of the Archdiocese of America. With the help of God and various benefactors, we built 12 holy Churches in Africa. We built the 10th holy church in honor of the Archangel Michael, and I wanted to paint his icon based on a prototype located on the north gate of the Patriarchate. One day, as I was nearing completion of the icon, the post office delivered a letter to me from Fr. Soterios Trampa. Fr. Soterios is an Archimandrite, who was a missionary for many years in Korea, and who served as a preacher in the Metropolis of Lesvos, as well as the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Athens from 1968 to 1973. Along with his letter, he had enclosed a small pamphlet on the Archangel of Mantamados. That is when I first learned about Mantamados, and the bas-relief icon of the Archangel Michael. Fr. Soterios wrote: "I am sending you a newsletter on the Archangel of Mantamados, so you may become familiar with his wondrous icon. Within this you will see one of his many miracles, which occur daily to the glory of God. I served there in the past, and I especially honor him..."

I began to read the booklet on the Archangel, which contained an account of the miracle of the sword. As I continued reading, I came to the section describing how the sword was given to Mr. Diamante by some unknown person, at which time there was a loud bang that came from the icon I had painted. I quickly turned to see what had happened—O my God!!!!—The Archangel depicted in the icon began to come to life, to take on flesh and bones! I was awestruck! I knelt before it and began to pray with tears, asking for his help and his protection. Shortly thereafter, the icon gradually began to return to its natural state.

I had arranged to go on a mission to Kampala. I had the custom of always bringing an icon of a Saint from my icon corner with me on every trip. That time, I took with me a small icon of the Archangel Michael of Mantamados.

We had arrived at the border of Uganda and Kenya. At that time (1988), Uganda was under military regime. When we speak of a “military regime” in the center of Africa, it means that human life has less value than the life of a blackbird!

As we were passing through, my driver (a Kenyan man who is also my *koumbaro*) did not notice that someone was signalling him to stop, and he kept going. Five fierce motorcyclists surrounded us in no time. They got off their motorcycles, drew their weapons, knelt, and were preparing to open fire at us, and, subsequently, to take possession of our vehicle and all our belongings. This was a common occurrence in that region ...

During that moment, I don't know how, but an unknown force opened the car door... Without thinking, I got out holding the icon of the Archangel in my hands, and shouted at them:

“For God's sake, stop! I have with me the Archangel of God, who is dark-colored like you. Come see him!!!”

Instantly, it was as if someone grabbed them by the hands. They calmed down, laid their weapons on the grass, ran to me, and took hold of the icon as if it was something sacred and venerable. They began to examine it carefully and then started shouting and screaming. Next, they bowed their faces to the ground, and holding my hands, they asked for forgiveness. I then noticed that one of them had sustained a severe injury to his hand from a knife. I took my first aid kit from the car, and proceeded to clean and bandage his wound. In the end, we became friends! The most impressive thing, however, is that during this encounter the word of God was sown, and all five of them accepted Christ, and became Christians!

After all this, I promised the Archangel to come to Greece, to Mantamados, to thank him. And today, I feel very blessed that the Lord made me worthy of fulfilling my promise. I thank Him from the depth of my heart!