

GORGOEPIKOOS ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

— Commemorated October 1st —



This icon is found in the Monastery of Dochiariou on Mount Athos, and it received the name Gorgoepeikoos (i.e. Quick to Hear) by the Mother of God herself, in the following manner:

Outside of the Monastery's common refectory there was an icon of the Mother of God depicted on the wall, which dates back to the 11th century. Despite the passing of many centuries, the icon neither faded nor deteriorated as would be expected after so many years.

As the monks would enter and exit the refectory, they would pass in front of this icon; the monk who was responsible for setting the tables, of course, would pass by the icon more frequently, night and day. During the night, he would need to light lamps in order to see.

In the year 1664, as the monk responsible for the refectory, whose name was Nilos, was passing by the icon as usual holding lit lamps, he heard a voice saying: **"Do not pass through here with lit lamps again, because the smoke blackens my icon."** Monk Nilos did not realize that this voice came from the icon. He thought that one of the other fathers was playing a prank on him; so he paid no attention and continued passing through this corridor with lit lamps. After a few days, Nilos heard this voice again for a second time saying, **"O you monk! How long will you continue to smoke and blacken my image so irreverently and dishonorably?"** Simultaneously, the poor monk lost his sight and became blind. Then he recalled the voice he had heard the first time and realized that he had ignored the request of the Mother of God.

In the morning, the other fathers found him lying on the ground before the sacred icon. Having heard what had taken place, they were overcome with fear. They proceeded to hang a vigil lamp before the icon, and they appointed a new monk to serve in the refectory, ordering him to cense the icon every evening. The blind monk, in the meantime, no longer returned to his cell, but remained before the icon night and day, pleading with tears and sighs for forgiveness from the Most-Holy Mother of God, and asking for his vision to be restored as confirmation of his pardon.

Indeed! His hope was not put to shame, because some days later the compassionate and merciful Mother of God voiced the following words from her sacred icon: **“O monk, your request has been accepted. You are forgiven and may you receive your sight as before. Tell your brothers that I am the Mother of God the Word, and after God, I am the protectress, helper, and powerful guardian of this sacred monastery of the Archangels. I care for it as an invincible governor. Henceforth, let the monks come to me for all their needs, and I will quickly hear them and all the Orthodox Christians who come to me with reverence—for I am called Gorgoepikoos (“Quick to Hear”).**



Immediately, the monk received his sight, and all who witnessed this wonder stood in awe and amazement. News of this miracle quickly travelled throughout Mount Athos, and many monks from other monasteries came to see the extraordinary miracle that had occurred. Henceforth, they forbade access to the refectory from that corridor, and they walled off the area in front of the icon. They also proceeded to build a small chapel dedicated to the Gorgoepikoos Mother of God just to the right of the icon.

Through her holy intercessions, may we all receive succor and salvation. Amen.