

THE KOUKOUZELISA ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

This miraculous icon of the Mother of God referred to as *Panagia Koukouzelisa*, is found in the Monastery of Great Lavra on Mount Athos. It received this name on account of the following event:

Saint John Koukouzelis, who lived in the 14th century, was an exceptionally gifted chanter. He had acquired the nickname Koukouzelis as a result of his ascetical diet during his years at the royal school, where he would eat fava beans (*koukia*) and green peas (*zelia*). Later, when he became a monk on Mount Athos, he lived in solitude six days a week, while on Sundays and all other feast days, he would chant from right choir at the Monastery of Great Lavra.

During one Saturday of the Akathist, after chanting the canon of the Theotokos, he felt extremely tired and briefly fell into a light sleep while standing.

At that moment, the Mother of God appeared to him and said,

“Rejoice my child John! Chant to me and I will never abandon you.”

Having said this, She gave him a gold coin. When Saint John Koukouzelis awoke, he found the coin in his right hand! He proceeded to show the coin to the other monks, who in turn took it and permanently placed it in the church, where it performed many awesome miracles. Henceforth, this icon was referred to as *Koukouzelisa*.

