

THE MOTHER OF GOD APPEARS TO SAINT JOHN KOUKOUZELIS

Saint John Koukouzelis (commemorated October 1st) lived in the 14th century. He was a gifted singer with an angelic voice. On account of this, he was much loved by the Emperor and had a prosperous future waiting for him within the royal palace. However, he abandoned all this worldly glory and went to become a monk on Mount Athos, where he tirelessly served the Heavenly King.

Living in solitude six days a week, he would go to the main chapel of the Monastery of Great Lavra on Sundays and all other feast days to chant with zeal and compunction. During one Saturday of the Akathist, after chanting the *idiomela*¹ and the canon of the Theotokos with utmost care and diligence, he felt extremely tired and briefly fell into a light sleep while standing in his *stasidi*.² At that moment, the Queen Theotokos 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. John then awoke to find an unexpected marvel: the coin in his right hand! As his eyes filled with many tears and his heart flooded with infinite joy, he thanked the Mother of God and proceeded to show the coin to the other fathers, who in turn took it and placed it in the church, where it performed many awesome miracles. Henceforth, he was never absent from the right choir, where he would chant eagerly and praise the Lord and His Virgin Mother tirelessly.

With time, due to his continual effort and prolonged standing, one of his legs developed an infection and began to discharge pus. The all-powerful Mother of God, however, healed him from this ailment, just as She had healed Saint John of Damascus. She appeared to him and said, “From now on you will be healthy,” and immediately his leg was restored to complete health. Having thanked the Mother of God for Her intervention, he lived the remainder of his life with fasting, all-night vigils, and, above all, with great humility, without ever becoming sick until death.

May we have his holy blessings, and the intercessions of the Ever-Virgin Mary. Amen.

¹ An *idiomelon* is a hymn with a unique musical melody.

² A *stasidi* is a wooden stand with arm-rests and a seat.