

ST. GEORGE KARSLIDIS

Saint George Karslidis was born in the year 1901 in the city of Argyroupoli located in Asia Minor, and he was given the name Athanasios at baptism. He was the youngest of three siblings, the eldest being a boy, and the second a girl named Anna. Three months after the saint was born, his father was killed in battle while serving as a soldier of the Turkish army. Whenever a soldier was killed, the Turkish military had the custom of taking his blood-stained clothes and his wedding ring (if he happened to be married) to his family. In keeping with this custom, two soldiers brought his clothes and his wedding ring to his home. His wife and mother were shocked when they were presented with these items. In following, they also transferred the corpse to the home. Upon seeing her dead husband, the saint's mother bid him a final farewell, and not long after she also passed away, and they laid her to rest in the same grave with her husband.

The three orphans were then left with their paternal grandmother, who raised them with much love, effort, and pain, for she herself had already suffered much throughout her life. Their grandmother had given birth to three sons: the first one had passed away, the second one (the saint's father) had just been killed in battle, and the third one had gone missing without anyone knowing if he was alive or dead. Thus, the grandmother devoted the remainder of her life to raising her three orphaned grandchildren. When Athanasios was five years old, his older brother sent him to graze the few livestock they possessed. Unfortunately, he would mistreat and hit him frequently, something that grieved their grandmother very much.

As was customary in those days, the saint's older brother was married at a young age. His wife loved little Athanasios; his older brother, however, consistently continued to yell at him and hit him. When the saint's sister-in-law gave birth to their first child, the grandmother asked her eldest grandson, "Please, I very much desire for your brother Athanasios to baptize the child." His older brother accepted the request. On the day of the baptism, as Athanasios was approaching the baptismal font to baptize the baby, he unexpectedly turned around sharply and raced out of the church. His grandmother chased after him and called him, but he did not stop. Thus, they were forced to pick another sponsor for the baby. Later that same evening, when Athanasios returned home (still struck with fear), his grandmother reprimanded him. At that point, little Athanasios revealed to her why he had acted in this manner: "Grandma, the

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moment I approached the baptismal font, a large snake appeared and started to slither around the baptismal font. When I saw this, I was overcome with fear, and that's why I ran away." After hearing this, his grandmother went and related everything to the priest. He, in turn, confessed to her that this had taken place on account of a certain sin he had committed, and indicated to her that her grandson certainly had been granted grace and wisdom from God to witness such a thing. Thereafter, everyone had their eyes turned toward young Athanasios, who would sing psalms throughout the day and also offer incense to the Lord each day.

The grandmother continued looking after her orphaned grandchildren, Thanasi and Anna. One day she called them and said, "My little children, I am going to die soon. Thanasi, my child, take this small icon (it was a miniature depiction of the Mother of God holding Christ made from mother of pearl) and keep it with you everywhere you go so it may protect you. Never let go of it, and may you have my blessing as well." "And you, my dear Anna, can go to auntie's house (she was referring to a very good family that were neighbors). Stay with them, and respect them as if they were your own parents."

From the moment their grandmother realized that her health had taken a turn for the worst, she repeatedly began asking her next door neighbor, whom she considered a sister: "what will happen to these orphans when I die?" To this her neighbor replied: "I will take Anna into my home, and I will give her as a bride to my son. Thanasi can go live with his older brother."

Not long afterwards, their grandmother passed away, extremely saddened and concerned for the orphans she was leaving behind. She knew that her granddaughter Anna would have a good life; however, she was worried for Thanasi because he was only seven years old at the time and his older brother routinely mistreated him. After little Thanasi moved in with his brother, his brother became even more abusive. Each morning Thanasi would take his brother's livestock from the barn and lead them to the pastures to graze. When he returned home at night, his older brother would yell at him and hit him.

Meanwhile, the lady who had taken Anna into her home treated her like her own daughter. However, because Anna was still very young then, the lady and her husband decided that it was not time yet to consummate the marriage between her and their son. And because in those days there existed respect and uprightness, this couple said to their son: "My child, because Anna is still too young to be married, it is not proper for both of you to be living in the same house. Since this poor orphan is presently in need of our care and protection, it is

better for you to go somewhere else for a year, and when Anna becomes fourteen, you can come back home and we will have the marriage ceremony at that time.” This is exactly what happened. Their son went to a different village, while his parents looked after Anna as if she was their genuine daughter. Unfortunately, before the year was over, Anna became ill and passed away. The parents immediately notified their son, who returned home and deeply mourned the loss of Anna along with the rest of his family.

Three years passed. In that region there was a simple-minded Turkish man whom everyone would tease. This man had the habit of sitting on a certain hill every evening and looking toward the cemetery where Christians were buried. One night, as he was looking in that direction, he noticed a light. Gazing at it intently, he walked toward the cemetery until he came close enough to identify the grave from where the light was emerging. The following day he went and informed his imam. The imam did not believe him. This person, nonetheless, continued going to the hill every evening to look at the light, and he would frequently badger his imam concerning the matter. Ultimately, the imam became intrigued, and one night he took a group of Turks to the cemetery, where they also witnessed the light. They were all astonished, and the imam went and informed the local Orthodox bishop. In following, they all went back together and determined that the light was emerging from little Anna’s grave. Soon after, the bishop along with a many other Christians went to the cemetery, where they performed an evening service, and after lengthy prayers, they carefully uncovered Anna’s grave. To their great surprise, they found that her bones had taken on a deep yellow color, while her heart and her right hand had been preserved incorrupt, both covered with fine golden threads, resembling a spider web. The bishop then took the holy relics of Anna and secured them in the church.

When Anna’s former fiancée heard of this, he went to the bishop and said, “Please give me a piece of Anna’s holy relics. I am entitled to have them. I no longer plan on getting married nor having a family. I plan on going to the Holy Land to become a monk, and I want to have them with me.” Upon hearing this, the bishop gave Anna’s former fiancée a piece from her heart, and he kept her right hand for many years, up until Athanasios (the future St. George Karssidis) returned to Argyroupoli. By that time, Athanasios had become a hiermonk, and he took his sister’s right hand with him as he left for Russia, and from there he brought it with him to the monastery he founded in Sipsa, Greece.

MIRACULOUS EVENTS AND TESTIMONIES

I went to the Elder's funeral to pay my last respects. When I kneeled before his casket, he extended his hand out to me and I kissed it.

—Kyriaki Zahariadou

When the rebels killed my sister in Thebes, my father went to the Elder to share his grief. When he arrived at the monastery and saw the Elder, he began to cry and began to say, "Elder" But the Elder did not allow him to continue. "Stop," he said, "don't worry. I know. I have done everything: the funeral, the three day memorial service, and the forty day memorial service. I also did a forty-day Liturgy." "Elder, why didn't you say anything to us, since you knew?" "I didn't want to upset you. I saw everything. I also know how they killed her." I went and found people who were aware of how my sister was killed. When I returned home to Drama, I related everything to my father. He responded: "That's exactly how it happened, my child. The Elder told me the same thing."

—Angeliki Bogatin

Mr. Kostas was the chanter in our village. He went to test the Elder to see if he had the gift of clairvoyance. As soon as the Elder saw him, he said, "If you don't have faith in me, why did you come here?" Kostas asked for forgiveness and he became more faithful than all of us.

—George Ferentidis

One day I went to the monastery with my sister-in-law. Prior to our arrival at the monastery, the Elder had said to a lady who was there: "Shortly, two women will come here. Tell them not to come in." Despite this, we still entered the monastery and made our way to the Elder. When we approached him, without him looking at us and without him saying a word, he made a hand gesture indicating us to leave. We left and went to the guest rooms. At some point I said to my sister-in-law: "It seems that I am the sinful one, and that is why he told us to leave. Why don't you go alone to see him?" So she went to find him again. At that particular moment, the Elder was in the church, and he was relating my

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sister-in-law's entire life: how she argued with her husband, that she had stopped speaking to her next-door neighbor for seven years, how she had been the cause for couples to divorce, and many other things. When my sister-in-law heard this, she fell to her knees and started to cry. From that moment, she completely changed her conduct and way of life.

—Anastasia Kefalidou

My name is Eumorphia Vlahiotou, and I am originally from Drama. Presently I reside and work as a dentist in Athens. In 2007 I visited the Monastery of St. George Karssidis for a second time. I had a severe problem with my knee, and I went to pray and ask the saint to heal me. I even pledged to bring him a silver offering if he made me well. One month after returning to Athens my knee stopped bothering me. I was able to exercise again without the slightest difficulty. The following year I made another trip to the Monastery in order to bring my offering. My husband accompanied me. He was having a serious issue with his back. He had become quite sad at the time, because despite the fact that he was a powerful man, his back pain would force him to remain confined in bed. He had gone to see many doctors and taken various medications, without the slightest improvement. He had literally lost all hope. When he saw that my knee issue had resolved, he came to believe in the Saint. On all my previous visits to the Monastery, he would always remain in the vehicle; this time, however, he got out, he venerated the saint's relics and prayed to be healed as well. Within a month's time, he also was healed, and till this day, two years later, he has never had another problem with his back.

My name is Eleutheria Kimtsari, and I live in Drama. I visit the Monastery of St. George Karssidis often, and I love it. In August of 2008, when preparations for the Saint's canonization were taking place at the monastery, I asked the Abbess if I could help the nuns in any way. She then asked me to sift the soil that had been removed from the saint's grave, because, as she explained, it was full of grace since the Saint's body had remained there for an entire 38 years and decomposed in it. The soil had been stored in a small shed. I started this job on

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August 17, and as I was sifting, a certain fragrance began to emanate from it. One of the sisters asked me if I was wearing perfume. “No,” I replied. “What type of perfume can I be wearing? It’s this soil.” The soil began to give off more fragrance and this fragrance flooded the entire courtyard. It continued to give off this fragrance for ten consecutive days as I sifted it. One evening, as Fr. Nicholas Stathis and his presbytera were driving me back to Drama, the fragrance was so strong that it had overflowed into the vehicle. It was emanating from my clothes, which had been covered with fine dust from the soil. Fr. Nicholas called the Monastery the following day to inform the nuns that his vehicle was still fragrant. This was a huge blessing for me, and I thank the Monastery for assigning me this task.

My name is Aglaia Tzivnaki, and I am from the town of Kalabaki in Drama. I have to declare that Saint George made his presence known to me with his heavenly fragrance. I was at my friend’s house, and we were watching a DVD entitled “The Uprooted Saint,” which contained testimonies from various people concerning the life of the saint. At a certain point, I suddenly felt that the entire house was giving off an noticeably sweet scent, an exquisite aroma. I then turned to my friend and asked her if she had any type of aromatic air freshener in her home, but she denied it. I could not explain this phenomenon. Her house remained fragrant for half an hour, and this fragrance could only be sensed by me. This event flooded my soul with joy, and I thank the saint for visiting me in this manner.

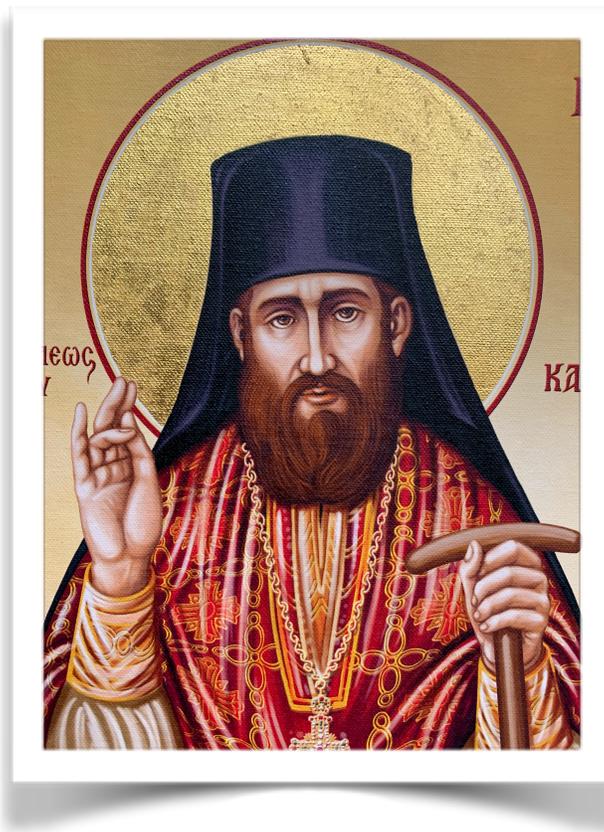
My name is Despoina, and I am from Drama. I visited the monastery for the first time at the suggestion of my spiritual father. During that time period in my life, during my pregnancy, I sustained a rupture of the amniotic fluid, and I was hospitalized for three months at the Hippocrates Hospital. Throughout this time, I was in communication with one of the nuns at the monastery, who would light a candle for me every day before Saint George, and simultaneously all the nuns were praying for me. With God’s help, I gave birth to a strong and healthy baby! It

was a huge miracle, because the doctors considered it impossible for any child to grow naturally within a womb lacking amniotic fluid. In 2008, I visited the monastery with my new-born baby to thank the Saint and the nuns. Ever since then, having witnessed first-hand the boldness he has before God, we call upon him continuously. I have another child who developed such a severe case of dermatitis from diaper rash that we had to take it to Athens to the department of dermatology, because all the creams we had tried were ineffective. Then, I took my child and brought it here to the monastery. I placed it on the tomb of the Saint and I also crossed it. The next day, my child was completely healed.

We named one of my children George, in honor of Saint George Karolidis, out of gratitude, on account of the many miracles he performed for our children! After my son George was born, while I was breast-feeding him, I developed a tumor on my right breast. This was confirmed by the initial medical exams. My doctor advised me to stop breast feeding and to have an MRI immediately, because I may have needed surgery. The baby was only twenty days old, and naturally I became deeply grieved. I went to Theagenio Hospital, and there the doctor who examined me told me I could wait until the child becomes forty days old, and then proceed with the treatment. I also spoke with Abbess Porphyria from the Holy Monastery of the Ascension (the monastery of Saint George), and she recommended that I cross myself frequently with his holy oil and that I read his Supplicatory canon. When I would wake up during the night to feed the baby, I would simultaneously read his canon. When I went to have an MRI fifty days later, the doctor told me, “My child, something is going on here. I don’t see anything. Everything is black!” At that moment I was panickstricken, thinking that perhaps the cancer had spread everywhere. Overcome with anxiousness, I took the results to my general practitioner. He was looking at the results of the MRI for half an hour perplexed. He did another ultrasound of the area, and in the end he said, “Very strange! I cannot locate the tumor, or anything else! It actually looks like someone went in and removed it. Can you tell me, what exactly did you do?” I confessed to him that I had been anointing myself with the holy oil of Saint George Karolidis, and he documented on his notes (on the page where he had previously written that I had a serious issue) that “a miracle occurred.”

My name is Dimitrios Paphliotis. I am from Peraia but presently reside in Thessaloniki. In 2008, when the canonization of Saint George Karslidis was taking place, I was at home and following the televised service on the channel 4E. From a young age I had developed bronchitis. As I got older, I worked for several years on a ship, and my lungs were adversely affected by the conditions at sea; this is why I suffered tremendously ever since. Day in, day out, I had dyspnea. I was constantly on antibiotics and inhalers, without any results.

As I was watching the canonization service of the Saint, I spontaneously got up and placed my chest on the television screen and said, “Please, do something for me too.” I immediately felt relief, and up until today, 2013, I see a noticeable improvement. There are times when I feel the onset of dyspnea, but it immediately subsides. Ever since then I acquired a strong faith in the Saint, and I thank him from the depth of my heart.



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