

***ICOSIPHINISSA* ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD**

This icon of the Mother of God is found in the Holy Monastery of Icosiphinissa, located on Mount Pangaion, in northern Greece. The founder of this Monastery is Saint Germanos of Jerusalem, who lived during the first half of the 6th century.

Tradition states that when Saint Germanos had completed the construction of the chapel, which he dedicated to the Mother of God, he sought to find a suitable piece of wood upon which he could write an icon of the Panagia. He found a large tree, which he cut down, and then he handed the log over to certain carpenters who sawed the necessary piece from the timber. Unfortunately, as they were sanding this board, it split down the middle and was no longer useable.

Saddened by this unexpected development, Saint Germanos retired to his cell to pray. As he was praying to the Mother of God, his room filled with a brilliant light and the Panagia appeared to him, informing him that her icon would be depicted in an extraordinary manner on that very same piece of wood that had developed the crack. During that same moment, a deaf boy who was at the Monastery encountered a beautiful lady, whom he had never seen before, holding a young child in her arms. The lady said to him, “The piece of wood is very suitable to be used for my icon, and it is in vain that the workers are searching for another piece.” The boy quickly ran to Saint Germanos and the carpenters, and—miraculously!—he spoke and related everything to them.

Having witnessed this miracle, the Saint and the craftsmen rushed to inspect the piece of wood, where they witnessed a second miracle. They were awestruck when they noticed that upon the cracked wood an icon of the Mother of God had formed. Moreover, the icon was glowing and emitting a reddish light. This reddish light is the reason that this icon became known as *icosiphinissa*.

The miracles this icon performs are innumerable. Perhaps the most well known miracle is the punishment of a Bulgarian officer that took place in the year 1918. During a time of war, this officer attempted to pillage the offerings which he found hanging on the icon; however, as he was stretching out his hands to take

the offerings he dropped dead. After falling to the chapel floor, an imprint of his boot and his pistol were formed upon the marble tile, and remain clearly visible up until today, serving as confirmation of the miracle.



A more detailed account of the above miracle states that 3,000 Bulgarian soldiers and four officers made their way to Mount Pangaion with the intention of looting the offerings and the Icosiphinissa icon of the Mother of God. They camped in a nearby forest, and planned to invade the monastery the next day.

During that night, however, the chief officer dreamt that the Mother of God appeared to him and gave him the following warning: “Are you planning to steal my icon from the Monastery of Icosiphinissa tomorrow morning? Be very careful. Do not attempt to remove it because your blood will be spilled on the marble column, and your boot and pistol will remain on the marble tile in the Church.

The Bulgarian officer related the dream to the other three officers, but they did not take it seriously. They brushed it off as merely a dream. In the morning, the soldiers remained outside the monastery as the four officers entered the church. The chief officer who saw the dream was the first to enter the church, as the other three officers followed behind. But before the three officers were able to enter the nave of the church, Jesus Christ appeared to them as a twelve-year old boy in the narthex, and He said to them: “Do not enter because you will be punished.” They immediately stopped in the narthex.

In the meantime, the chief officer had entered the nave and was placing his hand on the miraculous icon of the Mother of God. Instantly, an invisible force thrust him violently into a marble column located to the left of the icon, which resulted in a fatal blow to his head and the termination of his life. The blood that was spilt from his wounded skull, his boot, and his pistol were imprinted upon the marble floor of the church, where they remain visible up until today.

The three other officers in the narthex who witnessed this through the open door leading into the nave began to tremble fearfully. At that very same moment, another miraculous incident took place. A peculiar person appeared to the soldiers who were waiting outside the monastery’s gates. This man was wearing a band that had the words “Saint Nektarios” written in gold letters, and he said to them: “Do not advance any further. Or else I will punish all of you.” The three thousand soldiers did not take even one step toward the monastery, but left along with the other three officers empty handed.