

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Hosios Ioseph Gerontogiannis (A paragon of single and married life)

Commemorated August 6

The visitor to the southeastern Crete will come across an impressive monastic complex, the Holy Monastery of Timou Prodromou Kapsa, which nests in the middle of grey-red rocks. The monastery was built either in the thirteenth or the fourteenth century. It was the hermitage of ascetic and God-bearing Father Ioseph Gerontogiannis. His real name was Ioannis (John) Vintsentzos.

Hosios Ioseph was born at the village of Lithines, Siteia, in particular at the chapel or Kapsa in 1799, when his parents, Emmauel and Zambia Vintsentzos, had gone there to pay their respects to St. John the Baptist. The Saint was baptised a few years later in the same chapel and was given the name Ioannis.

Ioannis was an astute and clever man. Since no schools were allowed to function during the Turkish occupation, he was educated by clerics. In addition, he had an extensive knowledge of the Orthodox service and was soon to become an assistant chanter and eloquent participant in debates concerning Church matters. At the same time he occupied himself with the family property; he worked in his fathers fields and tended the family's flock of sheep in the area of Kapsa, Siteia.

As soon as he reached adulthood, he married a pious young maiden from his village. The young woman was so beautiful that she attracted the attention of the Turks. To protect their daughter from the Turks, they would hide her in remote caves of southern

Crete, and ultimately find a man for her who would be able to protect her. This man was Ioannis Vintsentzos. Their marriage was officiated at the Monastery of St. John the Baptist, which was in ruins.

The surname Gerontogiannis or Gerontakis was attributed to the Saint by the family of his wife Ioannis and his wife lived happily at the village of Lithines and devoted themselves to the upbringing of their children. Ioannis enjoyed the respect of his fellow men because of his hospitality, generosity and philanthropy. On Easter Friday (4-5 April) 1841 Ioannis fell in deep sleep and all efforts to wake him up failed. Forty-three hours later Ioannis woke up to find his family and a number of friends at his bed side. He then related to them his experience during his short hibernation. He said that he had been taken up to heaven where he saw and heard things wonderful which cannot be put into words. Later Ioannis shared his experience with the bishop of Ierapetra and with the local commander.

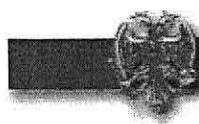
Taking his vision as a sign from God, Ioannis decided to leave his family and village and devote himself completely to God. As a place of practice, he chose his birthplace, where he was also baptised and got married. He was ordained monk and named Ioseph (Joseph). He practices abstinence and penance. At the same time, he refurbished two cells of the local monastery to accommodate visitors, while he lived in a cave located over the monastery, on a steep slope in the gorge of Pervolakia. He lived there for 17 years. During that time novice, monks and laymen

consulted him while he also found time for the complete refurbishment of the monastery. The fame of Hosios Ioseph attracted numerous people in the area who wished to receive his blessing and advice. Owing to his fame and virtuous life he received an invitation by the head of the Monastery of Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) at Armenous, which was almost in ruins from Turkish attacks? Hosios Ioseph took over the reconstruction of the monastic complex. He rebuilt it entirely from the ruins. The reconstruction work lasted five years (1866-1870). In 1870, the Saint returned to his hermitage where he died four years later, August 6, 1874, at the age of 75. On May 7, 1982 there was a panegyric removal of the Saint's relics following an all night devotions in a vigil celebrated by the Metropolitane of Ierapythis and Siteias Kyros Filotheos and by Bishop Methodios Petrakis, clerics and a large congregation. The relics were placed in silver shrines and deposited in the church along with the Saint's skull.

The faithful people of Siteia and all active Christians of the Lassithi county take pride in the fact heir homeland is the place of such an eminent personality of the Church. Hosios Ioseph, a paragon of married and celibate life, blesses all those who resort to him and are pure in heart or come in penance. The Saint is commemorated on August 6.

from **The Orthodox Messenger**, v. 9(7/8)
published bi-monthly by the SA Central Youth
PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

The Transfiguration (Metamorphoses) of our Saviour

By His Grace Bishop Joseph of Arianzos



From the 6th to the 15th of August, for eight consecutive days, the Church celebrates the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A little while before His voluntary Immaculate Passion and His death on the Cross, Christ isolated Himself for prayer on top of a hill (a mountain, as it is given geographically in Palestine), which is known by the name Tabor. With Him were present His three exceptionally loved and trustworthy Disciples, namely Peter, James and John.

If we are to accept the opinion of Eusebious of Caesaria, which Saint Nikodemus the Hagiorites also agrees with, as well as other Holy Fathers of the Church, this event must have taken place forty days

before His Passion. However, the exact number of days, for us, is not of great significance. What is important is the reality of the event itself.

"And while He was praying, the appearance of His countenance was altered" writes the Evangelist Luke "and His raiment became dazzling white" (Luke 9:29). According to Matthew and stated more explicitly: "And He was transfigured before them and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light" (Matthew 17:2). Likewise appeared, in front of the eyes of the Disciples, Moses and Elijah, who were conversing with Jesus, they were overshadowed by a bright mist, a luminous cloud. And from this mist, a voice was heard, which said: "This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased! Listen to Him!"

This event constitutes a **triple divine revelation**, when the identity of Jesus is revealed to the Apostles. That is not only the strange change in His appearance and the inundation of light which emanated from His face, but the witnessing of the voice of the Father and the presence of the two most holy people from the "other side", that is, Moses and Elijah are confirming without a margin of doubt that Jesus is not just a simple person, or a wise teacher, a virtuous reformer of some new-wave of life-style, a charismatic miracle-worker, or even, a Prophet or a Saint, but **He is the Son and the Word of the Living God!** True God from True God! light from light! The true and eternal light, which illuminates and sanctifies "every person who comes into the world". It is revealed in a triumphant way that He who lived with them for a whole three years and asked: "who the people say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13); the One Who treated them as friends and brothers, Who in a short while will be driven to the awesome Golgotha, the (place of a skull), where He will be crucified and die; and the One Who was buried in a stranger's tomb, like a common mortal, a foreigner, rejected by the people, even as one of the departed! He who will appear insignificant and weak, without "stately or comeliness". **He is the One True God, the only worthy of worship, Adonijah, the Lord, Elohim, Jehovah** - as some may prefer!... Thus, when they will see Him on the Cross, suffering and dying, according to His second nature, the

human one, this should not cause them to be scandalised and loose their faith, but to comprehend that His Passion and His death were voluntary, a further emptying of Himself, an overflow of His love for Man and his salvation. Furthermore, to preach to the entire world that He, truly He, the One Crucified, Buried and Resurrected, Jesus Whom they saw and acquainted themselves with, in His company, heard and felt with their hands, is the reflection of the glory of the Father which so beautifully the Kontakion (hymn) of the celebrated day underlines:

"You were transfigured on the mount, and Your Disciples, so far as they were able, beheld Your glory, O Christ our God; so that, when they should see You crucified, they should remember that Your suffering was voluntary, and could declare to all the world that You are truly the effulgent Splendour of the Father"!

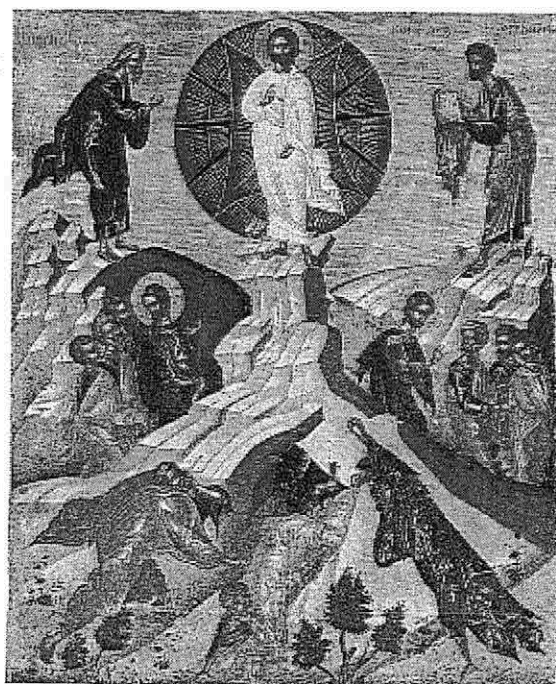
Hence, the Transfiguration of Christ is a revelation of His divine identity and certainly within the limits which the Apostles could uphold "so far as they were able". It is impossible for someone to see God in all His glory and grandeur, and to survive!... The dazzle, the surprise, the awe and the excessive joy - if one is purified, like Peter, James or John and all the Saints throughout the ages - or the sadness, if he is unclean and unrepented - like the majority of us, will destroy him. It will yield to him apoplexy!... This is why the All-Merciful God suitably organises the things and reveals only a portion of His light, of His magnificence and of His glory, as much as His Disciples can endure!... Then again, as He reinforces them spiritually, in an exceptional manner, transforming their inner-self and not allowing them to remain in their usual state, that of a weak everyday human!...

Furthermore, **the Transfiguration of our Saviour is a revelation of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity**; The Son and Word of the Father is present bodily on Tabor, as the God-Man Jesus Christ. The Father is heard to be saying: "This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased". The Holy Spirit appears in a paradoxical form of a bright mist. A bright cloud is an oxymoron! However, the Comforter makes His presence perceivable in a "holy-paradoxical" and most "God-properly" manner, above and beyond every "logical" or "normally occurring" event!...

This truth is expressed marvellously in the most theological "Exapostelarian" hymn of the Matins of the celebrated day: "O You Word, untransformable Light, the Light the unborn Father, by Your light which has shown today on Tabor, we have seen the Father's light and the Spirit's light, lighting the whole creation".

In the Byzantine iconography, I mean the Orthodox iconography, the icon of the Transfiguration of Christ clearly expresses this revelation of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity. Christ appears on Tabor in two successive bright figures, "glories" - as they are called. An oval or circle, which symbolises the bright mist, and another shape in a form of a rhombus or something like an isosceles triangle with rays emanating from its base, depicting symbolically the voice of the Father. Therefore, the holy icon of the Transfiguration is for us, the Orthodox, simultaneously **an icon of the Most-Holy Trinity**!

The Transfiguration of our Saviour reveals something more! **It reveals what is to become of us**, the faithful, provided of course we love Him sincerely and keep all His commandments and proceed in accordance with His divine wishes, and labour with



honour His orders of deliverance, enforcing His Bible unadulterated, and living the life of the Church in purity, and correct worship in communion with all the Saints, equally with those of the "Triumphant", and those in the "Militant" Church, who constitute the non-deceived teachers and leaders of those wishing salvation.

The divine alteration that occurred to the three Disciples on Tabor during the time of the Transfiguration of the lord will happen to us too and we will be worthy to become "God-viewers", like them and all the Saints of the ages. The light which they received from the strange and the not-created light of His Godliness not only to their human eyes but throughout their whole body and soul, as far as the depths of their existence, which made them lighted and "God-similar", we will also receive!

That unspeakable joy which was foretasted, and made the always enthusiastic Peter to say: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, we will make three booths here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah." (Matthew 17:4). let us stay here, he wanted to say, forever on Tabor, never to descend to the daily routine of contemporary reality and the earthly afflictions!... This God-given joy, the only true and inalienable joy, will also come to us... The eternal beatitude which Moses and Elijah enjoyed and erected to the right and left of the God-Man, will be granted to us too... We will become "communicants of the Divine Nature" (2 Peter 1:4) and partakers of the eternal life... Saints from the sole Saint!... Righteous from the only Righteous One and lights from the only true Light!... Small gods, by the Grace of God, and not because of our worthiness!... Gods with a lowercase initial 'g', from the Only God, the Great, the only One worthy to be written with a capital initial 'G'!... The beginningless Father, the equally beginningless Son and the co-eternal All-Holy Spirit!

The certification and credibility of that field are our Saints, the ones to whom this already has occurred. They have already achieved Theosis (Deification) and shine as luminaries into the spiritual firmament of the Church, radiating the light of the knowledge of God and the true Theology. Our Saints with the miracles they perform are partakers of the Divine Grace and communicants of God, and through their holy relics, which are full of the Divine Grace and allow us to keep them as a priceless treasure and venerate them feeling their inexpressible fragrance which they give forth!... We see how these holy relics cure the ill and cast away the unclean spirits which are visible samples of unification with God, thus giving a truthful witnesses that "those who have excelled and peaked in virtues - like themselves - will obviously be worthy of the Godly glory"....!

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



Dormition (Keemeesis) of the Theotokos

Celebrated August 15

The dominions and the thrones, the rulers, the principalities and the powers, the cherubim and the fearful seraphim glorify thy Dominion (Vespers Sticheron, Tone 1).

The sacred Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos marks her repose, which was followed by the translation of her sacred body three days later into heaven. This feast, therefore, marks her soul being commended into her Son's hands and the short sojourn of her body in the tomb. Unlike the Resurrection of Christ, the mysterious character of her death, burial, resurrection and ascension were not the subject of apostolic teachings, yet they were recorded by the tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church and writings of the Church Fathers.

The Dormition of the Theotokos took place while Apostle Thomas was preaching the gospel in India. The other Apostles had been caught up from various lands on the clouds of heaven, and were transported to Gethsemane, to the bier of the all-blessed Virgin. This was permitted by the will of God, so the faithful might be assured that the Mother of God was bodily assumed into heaven. For just as they were more greatly assured of the Resurrection of Christ, through the disbelief of Thomas, so did they learned of the bodily assumption into heaven of the all-pure Virgin Mary through the delay of Thomas.

On the third day after the burial St. Thomas was suddenly caught up in a cloud in India and transported to a place in the air above the tomb of the Virgin. From that vantage point, he beheld the translation of her body into the heavens, and cried out to her, "Whither goest thou, O all-holy one?" She removed her girdle and gave it to him saying, "Receive this, my friend." And then she was gone.

He then descended to find the other disciples keeping watch over the sepulchre of the Theotokos. He sat down beside them, with the girdle in his hand, greatly saddened that he had not been there when she reposed, as had been the other Apostles. Hence, he said, "We are all disciples of the Master; we all preach the same thing; we are all servants of the one Lord, Jesus Christ. How, then, is it that ye were counted worthy to behold the repose of His Mother, and I was not? Am I not an Apostle? Can it be that God is not pleased with my preaching? I beseech you, my fellow disciples: open the tomb, that I also may look upon her remains, and embrace them, and bid her farewell!"

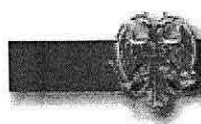
The Apostles took pity on St. Thomas and opened the tomb. All were aghast when they found it empty, not realizing that moments before she had been bodily transported to paradise to be the mediatrix of Christians. All that remained were her burial clothes, which emitted a wonderful unearthly fragrance.

The Feast's kontakion speaks of her as an unfailing hope and mediation, reminding us of her intercessory role in paradise. Neither the tomb nor death had power over the Theotokos, who is ever watchful in her prayers and in whose intercessions lies unfailing hope. For as the Mother of Life she has been translated unto life by Him Who dwelt in her ever-virgin womb.

after **The Life of the Virgin Mary, The Theotokos**

published by Holy Apostles Convent and Dormition Skete, Colorado USA, 1989, ISBN 0-944359-03-5

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Stamatios the Neomartyr

Memory celebrated 16 August

In his voluminous classic, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the English historian, Edward Gibbon, observed that "All taxes must, at last, fall upon agriculture." More than a thousand years later, after the decline and fall of the mighty Byzantine Empire, that remark about taxes still held true in seventeenth century Greece, whose largely agrarian economy, never robust in its best days, suffered grievously from the burdensome taxes imposed upon it. A man named Stamatios had the courage to protest the heavy-handedness of the Turkish tax collectors against the Greeks not only as citizens but as Christians as well. The courage of this patriot of the late seventeenth century was exceeded only by his unshakable faith in Jesus Christ.

Born in the village of St. George in Volos in the province of Demetriados, Stamatios came from the hardy stock that had already endured more than two centuries of Turkish oppression with a resolve to retain its Christian spirit for as long as it could draw breath. Although both the Roman and Byzantine empires were to dissolve, the latter lasted longer by far and today Greece is still Greece because of the character of its people and the strength of the Orthodox faith.

Stamatios bristled at the sight of the tax collectors who exacted tribute for the faceless Turkish authorities now firmly entrenched in the ancient city of Byzantium, still referred to as Constantinople. The protest against the excessive taxes fell upon deaf ears and when he could bear it no more, Stamatios organised a dedicated group of villagers and led them in presenting their case to the Sultan himself in the distant capital city. Looked upon by the most optimistic as an exercise in futility and by others as a foolhardy venture whose end result would be debasement and even death, the small group marched undismayed toward the capital, led by the indomitable Stamatios.

They reached their destination without incident but never got beyond the outer offices of the Sultan, playing into the hands of a grand vizier who not only took delight in heaping indignities on any hapless Greek who dared to utter a complaint but took even greater delight in torturing a Christian to a point where the latter would at last disavow the Saviour and embrace the Muslim faith. This was the ultimate triumph, a choice bit of news that could be brought to the Sultan himself, thereafter to parade the harried convert in public.

It is one thing to voice a protest and then withdraw into oblivion when denied, and quite another to stand one's ground in the presence of an oppressive ruler with the power to crush anyone or any-thing who dared to defy him, but nevertheless that is precisely what Stamatios did. When all seemed hopeless, his contingent withdrew in disgust and frustration, but Stamatios insisted on seeing the Sultan, producing a list of grievances to substantiate his claim of unfair treatment. The grand vizier saw in this lone figure the provocations which would justify whatever he chose to do, and he chose to do his worst.

The routine condemnation at a mock trial was followed by a period of several weeks in a squalid jail cell from which the bedraggled but still defiant Stamatios would be dragged for the interrogation and treatment referred to today as brainwashing. When this failed, there commenced a series of inhuman tortures calculated to break the spirit as well as the body of this courageous Christian. Following this failure, the prisoner was brought before the grand vizier who did an

about-face by sympathising with the wretched prisoner and beguiling him with promises to restore him to a proper place in society. All he had to do was declare himself to be a Muslim. Stamatios scorned this place in society, preferring the society of Jesus Christ, and repeated that cajolery could not shake him from this high resolve.

Their efforts exhausted, the authorities demanded the death penalty. This noble Greek was dragged to the grand Cathedral of Aghia Sophia and before one of its massive doors he was mercilessly beheaded. The rare Stamatios died for Christ 16 August 1688, thereafter to become one of the many sainted laymen in the glorious Orthodox roll of honour.

from **Orthodox Saints**, v. 3
by Fr George Poulos, Holy Cross Orthodox Press

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



Sts Eutychlos and Eutychlanos Cassiane

Commemorated August 17

Sts Eutychlos and Eutychlanos Cassiane were brothers of Cretan origin. While young they chose the ascetic life and established themselves in a remote and dry place in southern Crete. Soon Eutychios was appointed Bishop of Gortyn. He was persecuted for being very active and an uncompromising Christian. Later he, his brother and sister were exiled from the hometown. During the exile, they lived in a cave for the rest of their lives. The cave today is referred to by their names. To honour their memory, St. Ioannis the "Xenos" built a Church there. Today their relics are kept at the monastery of Odegetria. We celebrate their memory on August 17 each year.

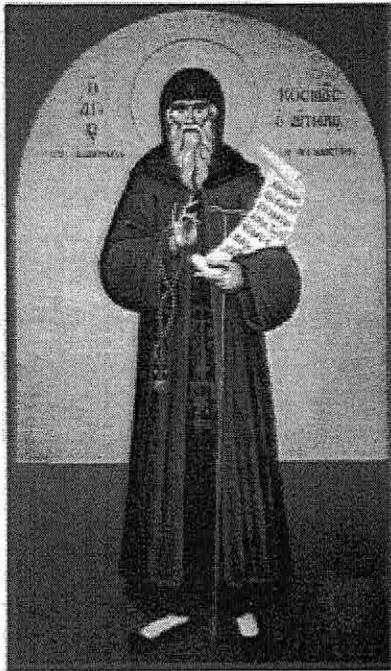
from **The Orthodox Messenger**, v. 9(7/8)
published bi-monthly by the SA Central Youth
PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



St Kosmas of Aitolia

Commemorated August 24



Seventeen centuries after the eminent St. Paul travelled across Greece, a solitary man of God traversed the sandy country from border to border, sea to sea, and island to island in a magnificent religious tour de force which stoked the fires of Christianity and the flickering hopes of a people straining under the yoke of Turkish oppression and despairing of a return to their ancient culture after nearly four centuries of brutality. This rare specimen of Hellenic Christianity was named Kosmas, a man whose devotion to God and country brought about a resurgence of the Christian spirit of Greece and anticipated the revolution which was to cleanse this proud country of the oppressors with which it had too long been infested.

St. Kosmas was not only a priest but a prophet, scholar, patriot, and miracle-worker as well, and each of these to a degree that merited sainthood. The beginnings of Kosmas were inauspicious enough; he hailed from a village called Mega Dendron, Aitolia, where he was born in 1714, the son of a simple weaver whose wife was extremely devout and who undoubtedly influenced her son in his selection of a religious career. He was baptised

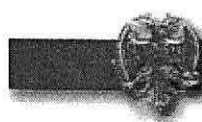
Konstas and attended public schools, thereafter to be tutored by a family friend, Archdeacon Ananias. After spending some time as a teacher, Konstas decided to attend a school at the Monastery of Vatopedi on the Holy Mountain of Athos, after which he entered the Monastery of Philotheou where he was tonsured a monk and given the name Kosmas. In rapid succession he became a deacon and then priest.

Kosmas had made up his mind to do missionary work, and he could think of no better place to do so than in his homeland, particularly in the remote corners of the rugged peninsula where the lack of churches and flight from persecution had dimmed the light of Christianity. He was determined to revitalise the Christian spirit of every isolated village of Greece and to bring back to the forlorn the age-old Hellenic pride which the Muslims had ground into the dust. He prevailed upon Patriarch Seraphim II to give him a carte blanche to travel wherever he may be needed for whatever period of time necessary for his mission, and as a preacher at large was given a patriarchal blessing to carry out his noble purpose without interference and with complete independence of action. In some of the more remote villages, where no priest had been seen for years, Kosmas found adults who had not been baptised, a situation which he remedied and which gave him added impetus in his crusade. When word of his valiant missionary zeal reached his old monastery, one of his fellow monks saw fit to make public Kosmas' prophetic powers. Some of his prophecies the people of the time could not comprehend, for Kosmas is not only on record as having predicted that people would be able to converse with each other even though they were miles apart (the telephone), but he also foresaw in the eighteenth century that man would devise a means of flying, and while in flight, unleashing a powerfully destructive force. Over a period of twenty-five years of undiminished zeal, Kosmas travelled not only throughout Greece and its beautiful islands, but he even journeyed through neighbouring Albania.

His prodigious feats in the name of the Lord included the founding of over, 200 schools, charitable institutions, and small churches in rural areas where itinerant priests could conduct the sacred liturgies as often as possible. Wherever he preached he had a habit of planting a cross, as a result of which his crosses dotted the countryside and served as reminders to passersby that somebody cared what happened to them and that God had not forsaken them.

St. Kosmas had trod on Muslim toes, and in the area of Ioannina he was arrested on spurious charges of conspiracy, found guilty, and hanged on 24 August 1779. On 21 April 1961 he was canonised a Saint by the Church -- although he had been revered as one since his death in ceremonies presided over by the late Patriarch Athenagoras who had always admired the gallant Kosmas.

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Apostle Titus

Feast celebrated August 25

According to tradition and the information of the New Testament (2 Corinthians , Galatians, 2 Timothy , Titus, and other Epistles of St Paul), the venerable bishop Titus was of Greek origin. His parents were nobles from Crete. Soon Titus became the disciple and follower of the Apostle of Nations. He followed Paul in his ecumenical and missionary journeys. As a matter of fact Apostle Paul took Titus to Jerusalem to attend the proceedings of the Apostolic Synod. Titus gained invaluable experience from this Synod. Soon afterwards, around 55-56 AD, while Paul was preaching at Ephesus, Titus was sent to Corinth to assist the local church with matters of utmost importance. Having fulfilled his task, he left for Philippi where he met his master. Titus gave a full account to Paul of his journey to Corinth. In the fall of the same year, Titus was dispatched to Corinth once more to conclude his teaching. Apostle Paul was very proud of his pupil. In Corinthians B' Paul refers to Titus as "partner" and "fellow helper" to his missionary work.

Titus proved one of the best disciples and partners to Paul. The Apostle entrusted him with the organisation of the Cretan Church and appointed him bishop. Titus was installed (took office) in Crete between 62-64 AD, i.e. following the release of Paul from Rome, where he had been brought to stand trial as reactionist. Although the Gospel had already been delivered to Crete by Cretan missionaries, yet certain schism matters needed immediate attention. In addition, the organisation of the Church was deficient. Christian communities suffered internal conflicts on account of false teaching. Thus, the task of Titus was very delicate and difficult. In spite of this Titus managed to resolve the conflict and restore peace among the contending parties. As an instrument of divine justice, Titus distinguished himself as a paragon of piety and an eradicator of impiety. The influence of St. Titus was such that a great many heretics and idolaters revoked their heresies or abandoned their idols to become followers of the Cretan Saint. According to legend, St. Titus, the agent of Paul, died at Gortyna of Crete at the age of 94, after many years of service to God. During the fourth century the Church declared Titus saint and since then his memory is celebrated on August 25. In addition, he was recognised as patron of Crete.

During the 6th century a wooden roofed basilica was built in his name at the place where his holy relics had been deposited. However, when Crete was conquered by the Saracens (Arabs) in 824 AD, the basilica was demolished and since then it remains in ruins. The saint's skull was salvaged by devout Christians. Following the recovery of Crete by the Byzantine general Nicephoros Phokas in 961 AD., a stately Metropolitan church was erected in the town of Heraklion (Chandax) where all holy relics were kept. When the town of Heraklion fell to the Turks in 1669, the saint's skull was transported to Venice and deposited in the Basilica of St. Mark. The skull of the saint was returned to Crete following a series of negotiations with the representatives of the western church which lasted from 1957 to 1966. On the morning of May 15, 1966 hundreds of devout Christians gathered at the port of Heraklion to honour the arrival of the holy relics. It was an extraordinary experience for all Christians. The Church celebrated the event with a stately joint liturgy at the Cathedral. The memorable Archbishop of Crete, Eugenios, eulogised the saint's skull as "to dokimwvtero upevr crusivon kai timiwvteron livqwn polutelwvn qhsaurwvn". Since then the relics have been a blessing for the Church of Crete.

In conclusion, Apostle Titus invites us all to become the disciples of true teachers and with the grace of God turn fervent missionaries in our land. In this day and age thrive heresies and false

religions. Their teachings have a charming effect on Cretans, particularly on the young. We only need assimilate the teachings of Apostle Titus and follow his example in order to avert the danger of falsehood.

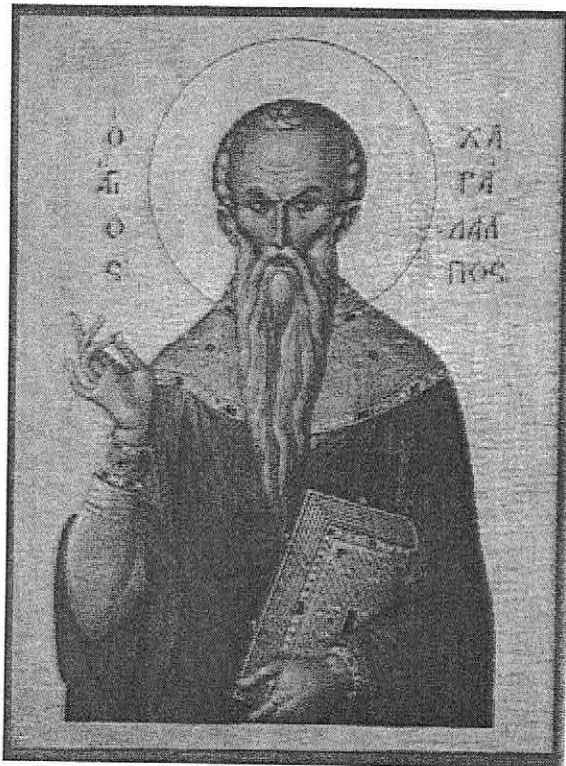
from **The Orthodox Messenger**, v. 8(7/8), July/Aug 1997
published bi-monthly by the SA Central Youth
PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



Hosios Charalambos (the servant of the Virgin Mary and the people)

Commemorated August 28



The rich and historical village of Dafnes in the province of Temenous of Crete has been the birthplace of notable individuals who became the glory of their land and country. One such individual was Hosios Charalambos who lived during the last years of the Turkish occupation.

He was born at the village of Dafnes on August 3, 1723 and had three brothers. Since early childhood he showed signs of celibacy and his friends and relatives noticed that, as a child, he would retreat to a cave, during rest hours, and pray to God. His burning desire for asceticism and conscious devotion to the Commandments made him worthy of visions of the Virgin Mary. His visions led him to the monastery Kalyviani dedicated in Her memory where he became Her faithful servant. When he reached the monastery, near the Turkish occupied village of Kalyvia, he met a number of monks who were not dressed in the traditional cassock for fear of the Jenissaries. They were crypto-Christians and passed off as poor men.

As soon as the Saint established himself at the monastery he took an active role in promoting the free practice of faith, uncompromising his principles and in spite of the threats from Jenissaries. At that time, the lush and fertile valley of Messara was at the hands of the Turks. The Orthodox Christians were deprived not only of spiritual but also of corporeal nourishment. The presence of Hosios Charalambos soothed the pain, he alleviated the grief of the Christians in the area, and his intervention were very effective. Gradually the Christians acquired more and more concessions by the Turks.

The Saint served our Virgin Mother and the local population for more than twenty-five years. The indefatigable servant of our Virgin Mother's monastery begged Her mercy. The Mother of God lent a willing ear on his burning requests and fortified him to stand up against the demands and threats from the Jenissaries. On August 28, 1788, the Saint passed away at the age of 65. We became aware of the details of his arduous and manifold work by the pious nuns of the monastery. Our Church celebrates his memory on August 28 each year.

The nuns of the monastery are the best sources of information about the life and legend of Hosios Charalambos. They can tell us wonderful things, their personal experiences and about their work of love, which St. Charalambos left them as a blessing and legacy. However, we must shed our

biases; we need to go through a personal purgatory. It is not enough to simply read about the lives of Saints; we must also internalise their principles. Jenissaries are lurking in the dark; they take the form of passions, idols and fads - the modern plague of our society. Actions speak better than words; therefore, the best way to pay honour to our Saints is to follow their example. We must sacrifice our ego on the altar of the common good.

from **The Orthodox Messenger**, v. 9(7/8)
published bi-monthly by the SA Central Youth
PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Beheading of John the Forerunner

Memory celebrated August 29

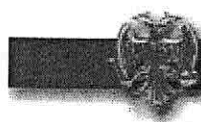


John the Baptist, was the son of Zachariah, a temple priest, and his wife Elizabeth, who was a cousin of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was born when his mother was advanced in age, after the foretelling of his birth and the choice of his name by an angel. He began his mission of preaching and baptizing in the river Jordan at about 27 AD. His way of life closely resembled those of some Old Testament prophets, such as Elias. His message was one of repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom. Among his disciples were the Apostles St. Peter and St. Andrew. John baptized Jesus and recognised Him as the Messiah when he saw the Spirit come down on Him.

John also denounced the incestuous relationship of Herod Antipas with his niece and brother's wife, Herodias, and was imprisoned for doing so. His death was brought about by the hatred of Herodias and the weakness of Herod. When Salome, her daughter, had greatly pleased Herod with her dancing, he promised her anything she wanted. She demanded John's head on a dish. The executioner Machaeus beheaded John and presented his head to Salome, who passed it on to her mother.

John the Baptist was believed to be buried in Samaria where he was honoured in the 4th century, but the tomb was desecrated by Julian the Apostate. The death of the Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist is remembered on 29th August, and the Church keeps a strict fast on this day.

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

St Alexander Patriarch of Constantinople

Commemorated August 30

Many great figures of Christianity came to be identified with the classic confrontation with heresy which brought about the historic Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea in 325 AD. However, only one man was selected to be the personal representative of the Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, at whose bidding the momentous meeting was convened. The man chosen by the

Byzantine leader was Fr Alexander of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, a highly respected spokesman for the Church of Christ whose voice against heresy still echoes in the chambers of Christendom. The concept of the Holy Trinity, the cornerstone of the Christian faith, holds that Jesus Christ is part of the eternal existence of God in the infinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for which there is no beginning and no end and in which Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega of life. When the doctrine of Arianism, so called for its sponsor Arius, an aging Alexandrian priest, was introduced, it found acceptance with an alarming number of good Christians who failed to see the menace posed by what can only be called this heretical approach. It was ready to fall prey to the Arian teaching that Christ was a creation of God and that, therefore, there was a time when He did not exist. It was the task of Fr Alexander and other members of the Council to make clear to the finite minds of all Christians that Arianism undermined the pure and basic concept on which the Christian faith is founded. Furthermore, an acceptance of any modification of the Trinity would so tarnish the golden truth of Jesus Christ as to lead to the eventual elimination of Christianity as the most invisible force in the history of man.

Fr Alexander's early life remains obscure except that it is noted that he was cast in the classic mould of scholar and thinker and that he never strayed from the honourable path that led him straight to the Patriarchate itself. In this hallowed hall of Orthodoxy, he distinguished himself with such patient dedication and genuine reverence that he came to be known as the alter ego of the Patriarch Metrophanes, by whom he was singled out to be brought to the attention of the emperor as a qualified spokesman for Christianity through the high office of the patriarch and, thereby, the spokesman for Jesus Christ.

At the Synod of Nicaea, Fr Alexander earned the respect of that great body of prelates assembled to determine the fate of the Christian Church. He was privileged in this historic conclave to have the company of such great men as St. Athanasios, who was, according to the historian Edward Gibbon, better qualified to rule the Byzantine Empire than any of the sons of Constantine. It can be added that Fr Alexander proved himself at Nicaea to be eminently qualified to lead not only in the battle against Arianism but in the fight against all the forces of evil that menaced Christianity. It was the eloquence of Fr Alexander, among others, that stemmed the rising tide of Arianism at Nicaea and led to its ultimate elimination.

Patriarch Metrophanes had a dream in which it was made clear to him that he would soon die and enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and forthwith named Fr Alexander to be his successor. When the Metrophanes' dream became a reality as foreordained, Fr Alexander became Patriarch Alexander, and as the spiritual leader of the millions of Orthodox Christians proved himself a worthy vicar of Christ.

St. Alexander served as Patriarch for 30 years and died happy in the knowledge that Arianism would never again menace the sacred Orthodox dogma.

[Return to homepage \(framed\)](#) | [Return to homepage \(no frames\)](#) | [Return to home page](#)