

## **Feast of the Holy Icon Axion Estin (It is Truly Meet)**

An account of the miracle recorded by Hieromonk Seraphim Thynolos, Protos of the Holy Mountain, in 1548.

*Translated from the Athonite Patericon  
(Moscow: 1897), vol. I, pp. 482-485.*

Not far from Karyes, in a steep ravine, there stands among the monastic habitations a certain kellia with a small church dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God and in this kellia lived an elder with his disciple.

It came to pass that the elder, desiring to hear the all-night vigil for Sunday in the church in Karyes, departed thence: but the pious disciple, having received from him a command to perform the service at home, remained to watch over the kellia.

As night fell, he suddenly heard a knock at the door of the kellia and, opening it, beheld a monk unknown to him, whom he received cordially and with honor. When the time came to perform the service, they both began with fear and reverence to offer prayerful psalmody unto the Lord God.

The night service passed in its usual order and, on finishing the canon, standing before the icon of the Mother of God, they began to chant: "More honorable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim..." The resident monk, full of heartfelt reverence for the all-hymned one, sang the customary ancient hymn composed by St. Cosmas, bishop of Maium, beginning with the words "More honorable . . ." But his wondrous guest, beginning the moving song otherwise, chanted thus with an angelic voice: "It is truly meet to bless thee, the Theotokos, the ever-blessed and all-immaculate and Mother of our God..." --- and to this he added "More honorable than the cherubim..." and the rest.

"How wonderful!" exclaimed the resident chanter, moved to tears by the new hymn and also amazed by the unearthly quality of the hymn that he was hearing for the first time. "Marvelous! But we sing only 'More honorable,'" and neither we nor those who came before us have ever heard of such a hymn as 'It is truly

meet' until this time. But I beg you," he said to the miraculous stranger, "write down this hymn for me that thus I too may magnify the Theotokos."

"Very well," assented the stranger. "Give me paper and ink, and I will write down this hymn for you from memory." "Forgive me, brother," said the monk in a spirit of humility and simplicity, "occupying ourselves with prayer and manual labor, we rarely have need of paper and ink, and therefore we have neither the one nor the other at this time." "Then fetch me, at least, a slab of stone," continued he who had appeared.

When the monk had brought him a slab, the stranger began to write on it with his finger all of the above-mentioned hymn to the Theotokos. Having inscribed all the words of the hymn legibly and clearly on the stone, he handed it to the monk and said, "Henceforth and forever sing in this manner: ye and all Orthodox Christians." And in an instant he vanished. It had been Gabriel the Archangel.

Joyous trembling seized the humble monk on seeing the miraculously inscribed slab of stone. Reading through the words of the hymn several times, he committed them to memory, and by dawn the new hymn sounded on the lips of the pious anchorite. On returning home, the elder was impressed with the new hymn and questioned his novice as to where he had learned thus to sing. Then the latter related to the elder all that had taken place, showing him the slab itself, replete with miraculous inscription.

The elder listened attentively to his disciple's extraordinary tale of the strange visitor's appearance in the cell, and long examined the slab inscribed by the angel, reading over the wondrous inscription many times. Later, taking the stone, they showed it to the council of elders and informed them of the details of the wondrous event. Then all, with one mouth and one heart, glorified the Lord and His all-pure Mother, and changed the new hymn to her.

Thenceforth the angelic hymn "It is truly meet..." has come into general usage in the Orthodox Church. The icon before which she

was hymned by the archangel was transferred to the Protaton in Karyes, where even to this day it can be seen in the High Place of the sanctuary.

The stone slab upon which the hymn was inscribed was taken to the patriarch and emperor in Constantinople when report was made of what had occurred.

The kellia is known on the Holy Mountain, even until the present time, as "Axion estin...", in memory of that miraculous event, and the event itself is commemorated and celebrated on Athos on the eleventh of June.