

# The Precious Gifts of the Magi, and the Monastery of St. Paul

## The Gifts of the Three Magi

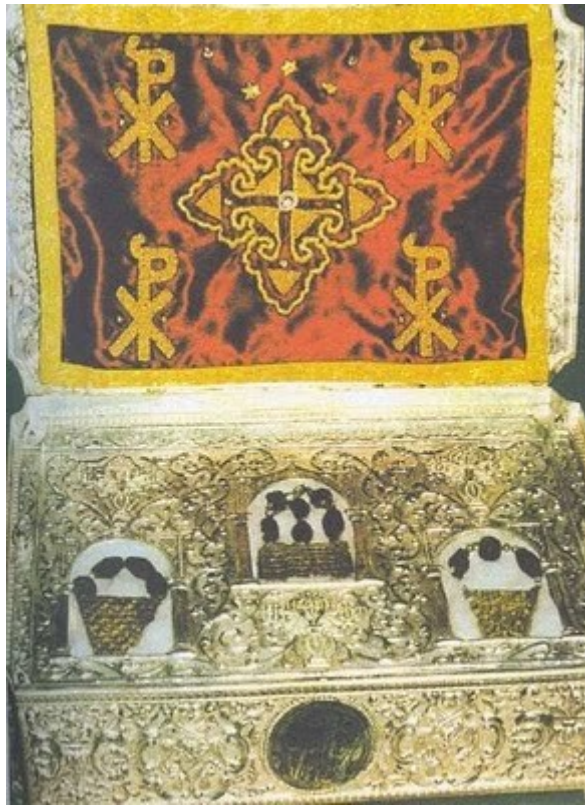
*Part of a document from the Holy Monastery of St. Paul, Mount Athos (amateur translation)*



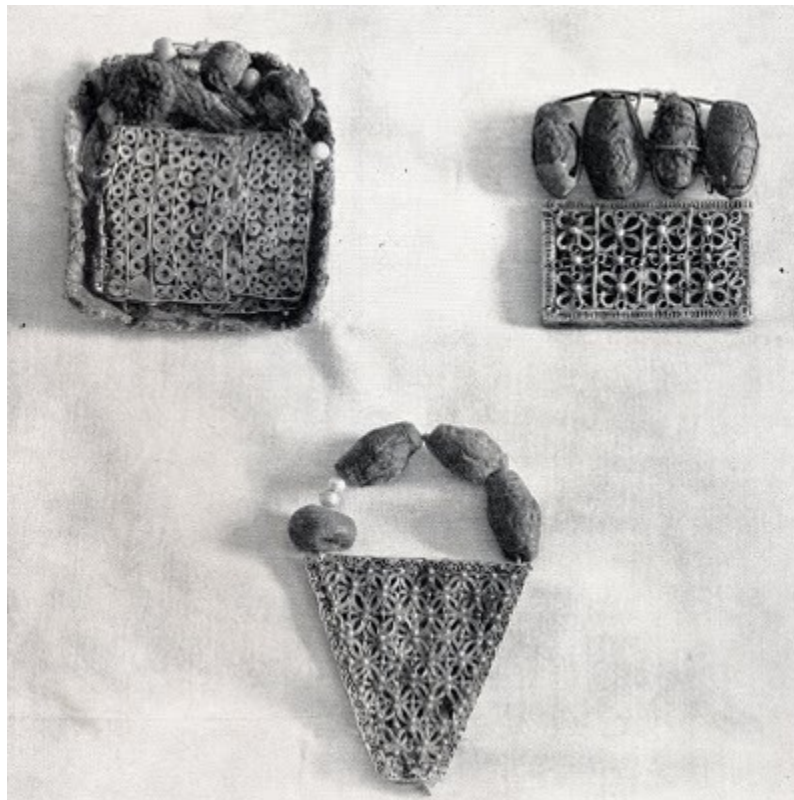
***“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11; icon taken from: <http://vatopaidi.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/adorat10.jpg>)***

Among the various treasures and very precious relics which are preserved with much piety in the Holy Monastery of St. Paul on the Holy Mountain, without a doubt among the foremost are the Precious Gifts which the three Magi from the East offered to the incarnate Lord as a Babe. These gifts, as is known, were gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gold is in the form of 28 pieces of carefully engraved coins, with various shapes (rectangular, trapezoidal, polygonal, etc.) and measuring about 5 X 7 centimeters. Each coin has a different design of different and complex artistry. The frankincense (1) and myrrh (2) take the form of mixtures in the form of 62 roughly spherical beads the size of a small olive.

Because the spiritual (foremost) and physical, historical and archeological worth of the Precious Gifts is incalculable, they are preserved with extreme care in the treasury of the Holy Monastery of St. Paul. For security reasons they are distributed in various reliquaries, only a part of them are presented for veneration in the Holy Monastery and are brought outside of the Holy Mountain as a blessing to various Metropolises.



**Picture of the authentic Gifts of the Magi, Monastery of St. Paul, Mount Athos** (taken from: [http://www.pigizois.net/pneumatikoi\\_logoi/TIMIA%20DORA.jpg](http://www.pigizois.net/pneumatikoi_logoi/TIMIA%20DORA.jpg))



**Close-up picture of the Gifts of the Magi** ([http://athos.web-log.nl/shared/image.html?photos/uncategorized/2009/01/04/athos\\_gifts\\_to\\_jezus031\\_2.jpg](http://athos.web-log.nl/shared/image.html?photos/uncategorized/2009/01/04/athos_gifts_to_jezus031_2.jpg))

The Evangelist Luke writes of the Panagia that she “kept all these words in her heart” (Luke 2:19, 51). It is believed from the theological studies that a large part of these “words”, the words and occurrences in other words of the life of the Lord, the Theotokos revealed to the Holy Apostle Luke, who included them in his Gospel. It’s without any doubt that among the holy “words” of the Lord,

the Most-Holy Theotokos “kept” everything dealing with the earthly life of the Lord, but also naturally the Precious Gifts.

Along with our historical-religious tradition, before the Dormition of the All-Holy Mother of the Lord, she delivered them together with the Holy Swaddling Clothes of Christ, and her Precious Robe and Holy Belt to the Church of Jerusalem, where they remained until 400 AD. In that year the emperor Arkadios brought them to Constantinople for sanctification of the faithful and protection and promotion of the Queen City. There they remained until the sack of the city by the Latins in 1204 AD. Then they were brought because of safety along with the other holy relics to Nicaea in Bithynias, the temporary capital of Byzantium, where they remained for about 60 years. With the departure of the Crusaders under emperor Michael Paleologos they were returned to Constantinople until the enslavement by the Turks in 1453 AD.



***The Adoration of the Magi*** (taken from: <http://vatopaidi.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/adoration-of-the-magi.jpg>)

After the Sack of Constantinople the most-pious Maro, the Christian wife of the sultan Mourat II (1421-1451) and stepmother of Mohamed II of Porthetou, brought them in person to the Holy Monastery of St. Paul of the Holy Mountain. This Monastery was known to her father George Brangovitch, despot of Serbia, who built the Katholikon of the Monastery in honor of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer.

According to Athonite tradition, as Maro approached from the port of the Monastery, the Lady Theotokos prevented her in a supernatural way her reaching the Monastery and thus preserving the non-entrance of the Holy Mountain [i.e. prevented any woman but the Theotokos from entering Mount Athos]. This she obeyed and humbly delivered the Precious Gifts to the pious monks and fathers, who placed in that place where the Theotokos appeared a cross that remains to this day and is called the “Cross of the Queen”. The document from the sultan with the relevant information surrounding the delivery of the Precious Gifts is preserved in the library of the Monastery of St. Paul.



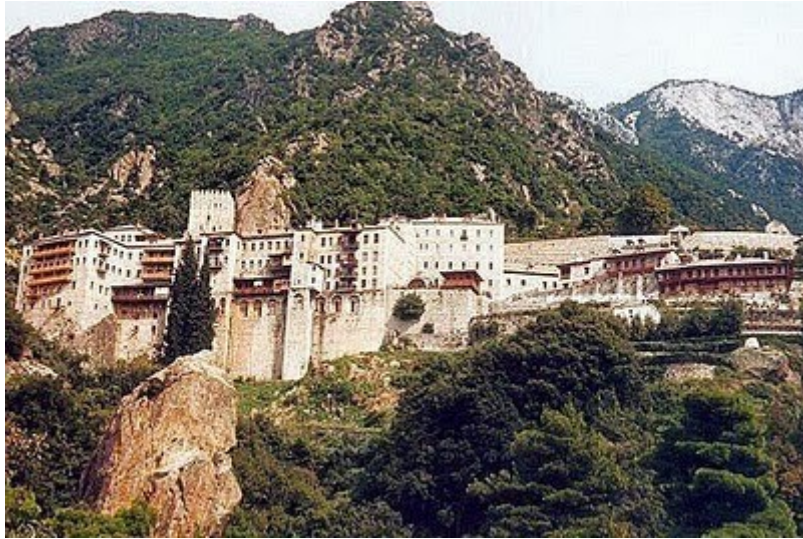
**Queen Maro delivering the Precious Gifts of the Magi and other Holy Relics to the Fathers of St. Paul Monastery** (taken from: <http://www.rel.gr/photo/displayimage.php?album=33&pos=130>)

The authenticity of the Precious Gifts is based on part oral tradition and the rest of the history. But what strongly confirms the authenticity of the Precious gifts is the indescribable aroma which is given off sometimes continuously and sometimes occasionally, and the rich healing and miraculous grace which pours forth even to our days.

(1) commonly incense or livanotos: aromatic oily resin of the *bousouellias* tree which grows in the sandy lands of Arabia, Somalia, India and Lebanon. It was used as incense for worldly and worshiping use since very old times (Egyptians, Babylonians, Hebrews)

(2) commonly myrrh: aromatic water-soluble resin of the myrrh tree of *kommiophorou* and other members of the family which grow in Arabia and Ethiopia.

(from Greek text: [http://www.pigizois.net/pneumatikoi\\_logoi/magon\\_dora.htm](http://www.pigizois.net/pneumatikoi_logoi/magon_dora.htm))



**Picture of the Monastery of St. Paul, Mount Athos** (taken from: <http://mountathos.gr/active.aspx?mode=enfbcac0a65-cda3-43ce-a2d0-1db0b95d3faf>)

### ***The Monastery of St. Paul***

"The Holy Monastery of Aghiou Pavlou is in the western part of Athos and is dedicated to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Its founder was St Paul of Xeropotamou (<http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2009/07/st-paul-righteous-of-xeropotamou.html>), founder also of the latter monastery, who, towards the end of his life, withdrew to an ascetic's dwelling, on the site of which the Monastery stands today. In the 10th and 11th centuries we encounter two monasteries on Athos with the name of Xeropotamou. What is today St Paul's (Aghiou Pavlou) finally took the name from 1108 onwards.

In the 14th century the Monastery was deserted, but by the efforts of the Serbian nobles, now monks, Gerasimus Radonia and Antonios Pegases, it was promoted from a kelli to a monastery. In the next century Aghiou Pavlou received support from John V and John VII Palaeologus, the Serbian Prince Giour, and his brother Lazarus. Many other Danubian princes, both Romanian and Greek, were the Monastery's benefactors. A time when the Monastery flourished during the 17th century was followed by its decline in the 18th, caused by a shortage of funds, in its turn caused by the savage taxation of the Turkish authorities and the usury of the Jews. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with the help of the sacristan Grigorios and Archimandrite Anthimos Komninos, the Monastery recovered and was able to pay off its debts.

The last catastrophes experienced by Aghiou Pavlou were a fire in 1902 and a flood in 1911. Its northern part was built in the 15th century, while its defensive tower dates from the 16th. In the 19th century its katholikon was constructed, though into the present century many repairs and additions have been made. The Monastery has 12 chapels, of which that of St George is the Monastery's oldest building, adorned with important wall-paintings belonging to the Cretan School. Subject to Aghiou Pavlou are the picturesque Nea Skete and the Romanian Skete of St Demetrius. Today it holds thirteenth place among the monasteries of Mount Athos.

Among the Monastery's treasures are the gifts of the Three Wise Men, the foot of St Gregory the Theologian, a piece of the True Cross, sacred vessels, and vestments. The library contains 494 manuscripts and more than 12,000 printed books. The community today consists of some 30 hard-working monks."

(taken from: <http://mountathos.gr/active.aspx?mode=enf1f47a326-e443-4719-8746-cfce887cc15f>)



*Icon of the Holy Nativity of Christ* (taken from: <http://www.rel.gr/photo/displayimage.php?album=33&pos=99>)

### **Apolytikion in the Fourth Tone**

*Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; for thereby they that worshipped the stars were instructed by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee.*

(taken from: [http://goarch.org/chapel/saints\\_view?contentid=352](http://goarch.org/chapel/saints_view?contentid=352))

**Τῶν Τιμίων Δώρων. Δόξα. Ἦχος δ αὐτός. Ταχὺ προκατάλαβε.**  
*Τρισόκλεον Δῶρον σοι, Μάγοι Περσῶν βασιλεῖς, χρυσὸν σμύρναν  
λίβανον, οἷα νηπίῳ Χριστέ, πιστῶς προσεκόμισαν ἅπερ  
ἁγιασθέντα, ἐπαφαῖς σου ἁγίας, ἅπαντες προσκυνοῦμεν,  
κομιζόμενοι χάριν, καὶ αἶνον τῇ σῇ Γεννήσει, προσάγομεν Κύριε.*  
(taken from the full service in Greek to Christ's Nativity and the Precious Gifts of the Magi at St.

Paul's, celebrated on December 26th: [http://voutsinasilias.blogspot.com/2009/12/26\\_24.html](http://voutsinasilias.blogspot.com/2009/12/26_24.html))

**Apolytikion of the Precious Gifts in Fourth Tone (amateur translation of the above Greek)**

*Three boasted Gifts the Magi, rulers from Persia, gave to You, gold, frankincense, and myrrh,  
seeing You as a babe O Christ, and faithfully worshipped You and were sanctified, venerating Your  
holy treasures, we all receive grace, and offer a hymn to Your Nativity, O Lord.*

***Idiomelon from the Litiya of Christmas. Glory. Tone 5. By Monk John.***

*Magi, Persian Kings, having clearly learnt that the heavenly King  
had been born on earth, drawn by a bright star arrived in  
Bethlehem, bringing chosen gifts, gold and incense and myrrh.  
And falling down they worshipped, for they saw lying in the Cave  
the Timeless as a babe.*

(taken from: <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/liti.htm>)

**Christ is born! Glorify Him!**

<http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2009/12/precious-gifts-of-magi-and-monastery-of.html>