



Saint Kosmas the Aitolian

Saint Kosmas the Aitolian, or Patrokosmas, as he is called, is a figure in both church and national history who in the 18th century cast his light upon the path which the Greeks would follow a little before the outbreak of the Struggle for Liberation. He was the son of devout parents who brought him up accordingly, and he came from the village of Mega Dendron in Aitolia.

His aptitude for learning took him to the school run by the Vatopedi Monastery on the Holy Mountain, where he studied under teachers famed for their learning. When the Athonite Academy fell into decay, the young Kostas (his name in the world) went to the Philotheou Monastery. There he was tonsured a monk and given the name of Kosmas and zealously engaged in many ascetic practices. At the request of the fathers of the Monastery, he was ordained a priest.



St. Kosmas had a burning desire to be of service to his brothers in Christ who were suffering so many hardships. The enslavement of many years with the subsequent degradation of life, ignorance, and the decline into barbarity in behaviour were the scourges of the mass of Christians. The reflections of St. Kosmas on this situation led him to go out to the people and begin a series of preaching tours. As his thoughts matured, with the permission of the fathers of the Monastery, around 1760 he left for Constantinople, where he received the blessing of the Patriarch Seraphim II.

The martyrdom of St. Kosmas.

St. Kosmas began his preaching from the enslaved Capital itself. He then went to Nafpaktos, Mesolonghi, and other areas, returning to Constantinople in 1774. With the permission of the new Patriarch Sophronius II, the Saint resumed his apostolic task. He returned for a little while to Athos, but his love for the Church's flock led his steps to Thessaloniki, Veria, and other parts of Macedonia. From there, he moved on to Acarnania and Aitolia, as far as Arta and Preveza.

Because of the large crowds which followed him, the Saint used to preach on open plains, always with the permission of the local bishop and aga (local Turkish official). His words were simple, but filled with the Holy Spirit. It was his custom wherever he was going to preach to tell the people to construct a wooden cross. He would then place a stool which he carried with him against the cross and preach standing upon it. The cross would remain as a reminder of his preaching. The Saint urged the Christians to build schools so that their children could learn about the Faith and be well-grounded in Christian piety. He would speak to them about the services of the Church, explain to them the value of repentance and confession, warning them against sin and urging them to lead lives of goodness.

As with the Apostles, St. Kosmas' preaching was often confirmed by miraculous signs. The Saint was admired and even feared by many Turks, and hated by many Jews. They spread unfounded accusations against him and slandered him to Kurt Pasha, to whom they offered money if he would put St. Kosmas to death. Kurt Pasha conspired with the hodja of the village of Kolikontasi in Albania that a trap would be set for St. Kosmas. On the pretext that the Pasha wished to see him, they took the Saint to a remote spot and hung him on August 24th, 1779. His murderers stripped the sanctified body of the Saint, tied a stone to it, and threw it into the river. The local Christians looked for his corpse, but could not find it. In a miraculous manner it rose to the surface and was pulled out by Papa Markos, the priest of the All-Holy Theotokos of the Presentation Monastery, which is near Kolikontasi, and buried it at the back of the sanctuary. Many other miracles followed the martyr's death of the Saint, and he was quickly established in the mind of the people not only as a martyr but as a true apostle.

TEACHINGS OF ST. KOSMAS

The Omnipresence of God

There is no place from where God is absent. We pious Christians should consider that God is in our hearts when we wish to commit some sin, that He is present everywhere, and that He sees us. We should be ashamed before the angels, the saints,

and especially before the angel who guards our soul and observes us. We are embarrassed before a young child when we commit a sin, so how can we not be embarrassed before so many saints and angels?

Love Your Neighbour

IT IS NATURAL FOR US TO LOVE our brethren because we are of one nature, we have one baptism, one faith, we receive the same Holy Sacraments, and we hope to enjoy paradise. He who has been found worthy and has received these two loves in his heart, love of God and love for his brethren, is fortunate indeed. Because whoever has God in his heart possesses all that is good and can't bear to commit sin. And whoever doesn't have God in his heart has the devil and always commits evil and every kind of sin. Even if we perform thousands upon thousands of good works, my brethren: fasts, prayers, almsgiving; even if we shed our blood for our Christ and we don't have these two loves, but on the contrary have hatred and malice toward our brethren, all the good we have done is of the devil and we go to hell. But, you say, we go to hell despite all the good we do because of that little hatred? Yes, my brethren, because that hatred is the devil's poison, and just as when we put a little yeast in a hundred pounds of flour it has such power that it causes all the dough to rise, so it is with hatred. It transforms all the good we have done into the devil's poison.

The Jesus Prayer and the Sign of the Cross

NOW I TELL YOU TO do this. - Let all of you take a prayer rope. Let it have thirty knots, and pray. Say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Logos of the living God, through the intercessions of the Theotokos and of all your saints, have mercy upon me, a sinner and an unworthy servant." What does one see in the "Lord Jesus Christ," my brethren? The Holy Trinity, our God, the incarnate dispensation of our Christ and all of the saints. With the Cross and the "Lord Jesus Christ" they went to paradise. And whoever says this prayer and makes the sign of the Cross, whether man or woman, he blesses the sky, the earth, and the sea. With the sign of the Cross and with the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ" all illnesses are cured. With the Cross and the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ" the Apostles raised the dead and cured every illness. With the Cross and the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ" a person is blessed and goes to paradise to rejoice and be glad as angels.

So you see, my brethren, how much the honorable and holy Cross helps a person. Whoever makes the sign of the Cross never suffers a loss but is protected from every kind of poisonous thing and from every demonic temptation. And a person has the Cross marked on him. Let him unite the three fingers of his right hand and place them first on his forehead, then on his navel, then on his right breast, then on the left breast, and bow low and then rise.

The Meaning of the Cross

LEARN, MY BRETHREN WHAT is the meaning of the sign of the Cross. When we put our hand on [our] head, it reveals God who is in the sky. When we put it over [our] navel, it reveals that he descended to earth and became incarnate. When we put [our] hand on the right breast, it reveals that he is just and eternal and that he will place the just on his right hand. And when we put it on [our] left side, it reveals that he will judge all the nations and they will stand on his left side and he will put them into hell.

The holy Cross, my brethren, is the wellspring of the whole earth. The holy Cross blesses the entire world, all that is divine and holy in the churches. The Cross blesses the Divine Liturgy and every service. The Cross blesses the saints. The Cross blesses and strengthens baptism. The Cross blesses couples. The Cross chases away demons who flee like lightning. The Cross is a bright weapon, and whoever makes the sign of the Cross is illuminated and is blessed. It is like a double-edged sword to which the demons don't draw near to urge people to commit sin.

Wherever a person sets out to travel, he should first make the sign of the Cross and say the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ." Whether you go to the fair or to the field, or to the vineyard, or when you eat bread or fruit, or drink wine or water, when you go to sleep, worship God. Make the sign of the Cross over your body and then lie down to sleep. You will then sleep and will rise in the morning strong and happy. So, my brethren, you have understood and now know.

Source: <http://www.saintkosmasaitolosgomonastery.org/index.html>

Prophecies of St. Kosmas:

http://www.saintkosmasaitolosgomonastery.org/st_kosmas.html