

Father John of Santa Cruz – a novel figure of Orthodox Christianity -
martyred by the Satanists in 1985. Celebrated May 19.
(taken from the Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros website)



The Holy Martyr, Father John of Santa Cruz, was born in 1937 in the Greek village of Karastamatis from the Island of Andros. At the age of 20 years he leaves for America and later started a family. He is ordained priest and for 10 years he ministers with apostolic zeal many churches in Alaska.

In 1981, father John came to the Church of Prophet Elijah in Santa Cruz, CA which he restored and renewed. Under his ministry, this church is soon to become the center of Orthodox catechesis throughout this region where many people were alienated from God and the Church.

Father John was simple in conduct, loved his parishioners and his door was always open for everyone, even at midnight if he was called. He preached with great fervor. Fr. John loved God and desired for everyone to love Him. He would go to parks and public streets to talk to young people who knew nothing about Christ or were Jews.

In his native village from the Island of Andros, a miracle occurred involving the white lilies: considered to be the flowers of the Virgin Mary. When the lilies bloom, they get uprooted and are placed in the Church before the miraculous icon of the Mother of God. Later of course, the leaves and flowers wither and fall, leaving only a dry stem. The dry stalks, however, are left like this near the icon of the Virgin and during the Dormition fast, the lilies begin to sprout and flourish thus at the feast of the Dormition, the lilies are already blossomed. This phenomena is repeated each year.

Father John, when he was growing up on the island of Andros knew about this miracle. So he went to the Monastery of St Nicholas from the island and asked Abbot Dorotheos for few dried lilies. He took few dried stalks with him to America and placed them in the church of Santa Cruz at the icon of the Blessed Virgin. The stalks have miraculously blossomed and flourished during the feast of Assumption. This miracle had strengthened the faith of many, to have more reverence to the Blessed Virgin.

Father John was a sensitive and beautiful soul. At the instruction of Elder Dorotheos, he wrote poems and religious hymns. He was deeply touched by the miracles of the Virgin and the lives of the saints.

As a small child, he loved to go to St. Nicholas monastery on the island of Andros, saint whom he loved dearly. An icon of the Virgin from this monastery began to shed blood and myrrh and Father John began to talk about the miracles of Our Lady with greater divine zeal and many people of different faiths become Orthodox.

His preaching has angered some who began to threaten him by phone and letters, to cease preaching. But Father John became even more passionate about his ministry saying: ***“As long as my eyes have tears, I will preach Christ and Orthodoxy.”***

He advised the faithful to guard themselves against the pitfalls of the Antichrist and not to take the mark. Then the telephone threats on his life become even more intense, but Father John did not worry for anything.

In the evening of May 17, 1985 he telephoned the Abbot Dorotheos and asked him about the miracles of the myrrh streaming icon of Blessed Virgin – Myrrhovitissa, because he wanted to preach a sermon on her for the following Sunday.

The next day on May 18, Father John was at home alone with her son Photius. The presbytera (his wife) and their daughter Mary were away from home. The boy went out with his friends, and Father John left to the church to finish his sermon.

The boy returned home later that evening and seeing that his father was missing anxiously went to look for him at the Church.

There, the boy was faced with a terrible sight: his father was found on the floor slaughtered and unrecognizable... he had been hit in the head with a hammer and his whole body was butchered with knives. As the police had later discovered, because father John didn't die right away, the criminals took the cross he was wearing around the neck and hanged him with its chain. The blood poured from his wounds and flooded the floor of the Holy Shrine. The Satanists used his blood to write their slogans and the mark 666 on the walls of the Church. The blessed father John suffered martyrdom in the very place where he was photographed with the cross in his hand, almost prophesizing of what would follow.

Before his martyric death, three wonderful things had happened:

1. The blossoming lilies of the Virgin had wilted at once, one week before his martyrdom and they had never blossomed since.
2. The Icon of the Blessed Virgin wept, and her traces of tears can still be seen on her image.
3. On three consecutive Sundays before his martyrdom, during the Divine Liturgy, the boy while giving him warm water (to prepare the Holy Communion) saw a strange phenomenon, his father's face was shining scattered in rays of light and darkness, but father John strictly told him not to reveal anything.



The police searched for the killers and found three people: a couple and the son of the man with another woman. They were priests and worshipers of Satan. They drank cobra venom while they were arrested and two of them died and the third: the young man lost his mind and could not testify.

Because Fr John face was disfigured, his relics could not be displayed at the funeral, his body was covered in father' usual gold-vestments and the coffin sealed.

When Abbot Dorotheos learned about the martyrdom of Father John, wrote to his presbytera asking to send his priestly vestments when they celebrated together the feast of Saint Dorotheos at the Monastery in 1981. The time passed but he received no response from father John's family. On the eve July 4, at the monastery of St. Nicholas fromAndros, a athonite vigil was celebrated in honor of St. Athanasius ofMt.Athos and many pilgrims have come fromAthens. As the vigil was about to end, the monastery bells began to beat themselves as for a solemn feast. They stopped for awhile, but the bells started ringing again so harmoniously that everyone was astonished.

Seized with fear and awe, the faithful started to pray the paracletis of St. Nicholas, waiting for a miracle to happen. That afternoon, elder Dorotheos got a call from Mary, the daughter of Father John, who had come specifically to the monastery baring the vestments of her father. She brought them into the monastery and were received with joy by all pilgrims. The bells were ringing in the monastery that morning exactly at the time when the ship entered the harbor caring the Martyr vestments.

The apparitions of blessed father John after his martyric death are many.

On the eve of the feast of St. Nicholas, in 1986, abbot Dorotheos together with several women was preparing the necessary things for the monastery patronal feast. At one point, they saw the blessed father John walking through the monastery gardens and heading towards them. They all were frightened and began to shout: **“Papa Iani!”** Then he disappeared from their sight. Immediately after this to their surprise, came the postman with a package fromSwitzerland containing a wooden carved image (icon) with Father John, from some Russian believers that honored him as saint. Father John had asked that his icon may be spread to all Christians so they may learn about his martyrdom and of missionary work.

In February 1987, the abbot Dorotheos went toSwitzerlandfor a surgery. While talking to the faithful there, about Fr. John and his martyrdom, he appeared to them, he blessed them, then he disappeared from their sight.

Before his martyrdom, when Fr John served inAndroswith the abbot Dorotheos, he donated to the monastery his epitrahillum (priest stole). Elder Dorotheos when he went toSwitzerland, took it with him a piece of the stole spreading ineffable aroma to those present.

In Orthodox America and the Russian Church Abroad, Fr. John is honored/venerated as a Saint by the faithful. A booklet with a service to the saint has been published. The events and details on Fr John' martyrdom were provided to the abbot Dorotheos, by Fr. John' daughter: Maria.

His memory is celebrated on May 19, on the eve of **the feast of the translation of Saint Nicholas holy relics**, because as a child Fr. John had great devotion to St. Nicholas.

His blessing be to all of us. Amen.

Translated from: **“The OSIOS FILOTHEOS OF PAROS, NO 17, May-August 2006, Thessaloniki”** by the blog author.

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