

# Iconography

Adult Spiritual Enrichment

February 28, 2021

CLASS 18

## JOSEPH (REQUEST OF) TAKING THE BODY OF CHRIST (JULY 31)

The noble Joseph, a wealthy man and member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, was secretly a follower of Christ (Matthew 27:57, John 19:38). Joseph and Nicodemus removed the body of Christ from the Cross, and placed it in Joseph's sepulcher. As a result of this he was bound by the Jews and thrown into prison. There the resurrected Lord appeared to him and convinced him of His Resurrection. The Jews later released Joseph from prison and banished him from his fatherland. He traveled throughout the world preaching the Gospel of Christ, and brought the good tidings even to England, where he reposed in the Lord.

The historical location of Arimathea is uncertain, although it has been identified with several towns. It was a town of Judea.

Matthew 27:57 – “Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.”

Mark 15:43 – “Now when evening had come because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So, when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Any Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph observed where He was laid.”

Luke 23:50-56 “Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.”

John 19:38-42 “After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So, he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So, there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.”

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Eastern Orthodox churches commemorate him on the Third Sunday of Pascha (i.e., the second Sunday after Easter, the Sunday of the Myrrbearers).



### **JESUS DESCENT FROM THE CROSS**

The Descent from the Cross (Greek: Ἀποκαθήλωσις, Apokathelosis), or Deposition of Christ, is the scene, as depicted in art, from the Gospels' accounts of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus taking Christ down from the cross after his crucifixion (John 19:38–42).

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Isaiah 53:9 “I will appoint evil men for His burial and rich men for His death, because He committed no lawlessness, nor was deceit found in His mouth.” Note: This is believed to be in reference to Joseph of Arimathea being the rich man who took Christ down from the cross, and prepared his body for the tomb.



### **ST MARINA (JULY 17)**

Marina was born in Southern Anatolia, specifically from Pisidia in Antioch, at the end of the third century during the reign of Claudius II (268-270). She was the only daughter of noble pagan parents.

When she was five years old her mother died (some sources say she died shortly after childbirth), and since her father, Aidesios, was too busy carrying out his duties as a pagan priest to care for her properly, he turned her care over to a woman who happened to be a Christian.

This nanny lived in a small town about fifteen miles from where Marina was born. Away from her father's idols and blasphemous practices her nanny taught her about the Christian Faith. As Marina increased in age, more so did she advance in knowledge, understanding, and compassion. Her faith in the Living God was so great that she desired the difficult path of Martyrdom. She told her father that she wished to become a Christian and to never marry so as to live a life of virginity. Her father despised her for her faith and disowned her as his daughter.

A new governor named Olymbrios was elected for the region and in time began a persecution against all Christians in the area. One day he caught a glimpse of the very beautiful fifteen-year-old Marina with

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her nanny. The Imperial Governor Olymbrios, seeing her great beauty, desired her for his wife. When asked her name, homeland, and faith, Marina answered: “My name is Marina; I am the offspring of Pisidia; I call upon the Name of my Lord Jesus Christ.” Upon learning that she was a Christian, Olymbrios tried to dissuade her by flatteries, and by threats of torture.

### “Nothing Will Separate Me from Christ”

Marina frankly replied to the man: “Have no vain hope for me, O governor, that I might cower before any number of torments. Nothing will separate me from Christ – neither affliction, famine, fire, sword, nor any other harsh tribulation – not even a violent and very painful death. Think not that you will entice me with honors, gold or other wealth, because all these things are perishable and temporal.

“The soul, by the grace of God, is immortal and desires eternity. For this reason, we, the Christians, wisely disdain these fleeting luxuries and enjoyments. We endure the sorrow and distress of the day that we might attain to everlasting life and eternal rest after our repose. If you think that I lie, here I am, try me, so you will know by deed the truth. Strike me, slay me, burn me, suffocate or test me with ten thousand torments. As much as you will worsen the punishment, so much more will Christ glorify me in the future life and blessedness.

“Many times in this life Christ grants us a small consolation as a pledge of that future exaltation. He draws us out of the depths of the sea, or rescues us from fire, or saves us from other torments, to your shame and condemnation. Therefore, I do not sorrow in this transient life. Readily I give my body to death, for my deathless God and Master, as the Sinless One, out of love for me, was crucified.”

This rejection infuriated the governor and he put her to harsh torture so all the beauty of her body was disfigured. Not only the public sorrowed and wept and suffered due to her troubles but even the governor himself, unable to bear the horror of these tortures, hid his face in his hands. As broken up and destroyed as her body was, more so was her soul renewed and brighter.

### “Great Is Your Faith, Marina”

Unshaken, she prayed with thanksgiving that the Lord count her worthy to be tormented for His love. As they tortured her, the Saint was looking up to heaven, and prayed: “To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O My God, I trust in you; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on you be ashamed. Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. Show me your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation. On You I wait all day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving kindnesses, for they have been from of old. For I withstand these pains because I confess Your holy name. Send Your mercy and compassion to me so my grief will become joy.”

As the Saint was chanting and praising the Lord, the soldiers were beating her so severely that her flesh was torn and her blood flew profusely. The Archangel Michael, then, appeared to her and said to her: “Great is your faith, Marina. Have more strength, for it is by your good confession that your soul will survive, and you will gain the holy baptism.”

The ruler ordered that Marina be thrown in prison. While she prayed there the Archangel Michael again came to comfort her and healed her of all her wounds. Seeing this the governor was amazed. He told her

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that he was sure then that she was a great magician. She said: "I am not a magician, but I am a worshipper of Jesus Christ. Now your defiled helpless idols have been exposed."

The ruler was enraged. He ordered to saw her flesh with iron saws, and to cut her skin with knives. When he thought that she was dead, he ordered his soldiers to put her body back in prison until she rotted. Archangel Michael appeared to her again, strengthened her, and repeated what he said to her before. He, then, Crossed her, cured her and disappeared.

### The Hammer of Saint Marina

A malicious demon, beholding that his servant, Olymbrios, could not vanquish one young woman and make her fall down before the idols of demons, became desperate and wished to test her himself. Taking on a dark and dragon-like guise, a demon appeared to Marina in the prison to frighten her. *Fearlessly Christ's athlete seized him by the hair and, finding a hammer, beat him to the ground, completely humbling him. A great light appeared and illuminated the entire prison. All of Marina's wounds were completely healed and not even a trace of scarring remained on her body.* It is for this reason that Saint Marina often holds a hammer and is sometimes depicted beating on a demon in her icons.

### Baptized in Water and in Blood

The demented governor tortured her the next day by fire and water but Marina endured it all as if not in her own body. The ruler gave his orders to tie her to a pole and burn her. They did. Then he ordered that they tie her hands and legs, and put her in boiling water. When she was in the water, St. Marina looked up to heaven and said: "O God who dwells in heaven, I ask You to untie me, and to make this water a baptism for me. Dress me with the robe of salvation through it. Take away from me the old man and put on me the new man. Make me, with this baptism, worthy to inherit the life eternal, and make my faith steadfast." *A great earthquake then shook the place, Marina's ties were loosened, and she immersed herself in the water three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. She came out of the water praising God. A voice came from heaven, and all the people who were gathered there heard it. The voice said: "You are blessed, Marina. You were baptized, and became worthy of the crown of virginity." Many of those who witnessed these events declared their faith, became Christians and were baptized. The ruler ordered all of them to be killed. They were beheaded, and gained the wreath of martyrdom. It is estimated that they numbered in the thousands.*

Seeing that he could not overcome the Saint, the wicked governor finally sentenced Marina to death by beheading. *She was beheaded at the age of fifteen in the time of Diocletian (284-305),* but is numbered with the armies of martyrs, and remains alive in soul and power in heaven and on earth.

The sufferings of the Great Martyr Marina were described by an eyewitness of the event, named Theotimos.

Up until the taking of Constantinople by Western crusaders in the year 1204, the relics of the Great Martyr Marina were in the Panteponteia Monastery. According to other sources, they were located in Antioch until the year 908 and from there transferred to Italy. Now they are in Athens, in a church dedicated to the holy Virgin Martyr. Her venerable right hand was transferred to Mount Athos, to the

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Vatopaidi monastery. However, atop Mt. Langa in Albania overlooking Lake Ochrid, there is a monastery dedicated to St. Marina with a portion of her miraculous relics. Countless miracles have occurred and still occur in this monastery, whose witnesses are not only Christians but many Muslims as well. So much did the Turks have respect for this holy place that they never dared disturb either this holy place or the property of this monastery. At one time a Turk was the guardian of the monastery.

Saint Marina is especially invoked for deliverance from demonic possession and cures innumerable diseases including cancer.

### Saint Marina as A Role Model For Young Women

What a role model for Orthodox Christian young women today! This 15 year old girl was raised a pagan, had a mother that died when she was young, her father shunned her for accepting Christ and desiring virginity, she rejected a life of marital happiness and love to live for Christ and abide in His love, she further rejected all the fame and fortune and worldly comforts associated with nobility, for her strong resolve in following Christ she was tortured brutally, she endured a demonic manifestation and temptations courageously, and finally she was tortured and martyred ruthlessly yet with a joyful heart with a desire to imitate the Saints.

*Most teenagers today would probably find the early tragedies of Marina's life demoralizing, but her love for Christ overcame all her insecurities and strengthened her against all the temptations every teenage girl faces. She could have lived any type of life she wanted, but she chose a path that brought her supreme joy that no worldly happiness could ever surpass.*

And now Saint Marina lives forever and is one of Orthodoxy's most powerful and beloved Saints. She still answers prayers, cures illnesses by the grace she received in enduring bravely for Christ, and is a notable vanquisher of demons. Saint Marina was no damsel in distress, but a true female heroine.

Before there was a Hollywood female heroine, there was Saint Marina the Vanquisher of Demons. Those are fiction, but her story is real and her miraculous icons and relics are a testimony to this besides her many visitations to the faithful. Her superpower was her faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit. There could be no better female teenage role model, as she herself imitated the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary who it is said also bore Christ at the age Saint Marina was martyred.

Maybe most young women won't have to go to such extreme tortures for their faith, but to be a faithful Christian in our society today will inevitably invite public ridicule, peer pressure, misunderstanding, unflattering stereotypes, insults and all sorts of temptations. Even in the midst of these types of "tortures", *the example of Saint Marina can be a model on how to courageously endure and be strong. Young Marina's confident faith and great love for God should serve as an inspiration to look beyond all vanity of this life and focus on that which truly matters.*

Feast Day: July 17

Apolytikion in the Plagal of the Fourth Tone

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O Glorious Marina, once betrothed to the Logos, you relinquished all worldly concerns and brilliantly gave struggle as a virginal beauty. You soundly trounced the invisible enemy who appeared to you, O Champion, and you are now the world's wellspring of healing grace.

Kontakion in the Third Tone

Adorned with the beauty of Purity, O Virgin; crowned with the stigmata of martyrdom; stained with the blood of your struggles; and brilliantly radiant with healing wonders, piously, O Marina, you received the trophy of victory for your struggles.

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## **ST NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER (DECEMBER 6)**

This glorious saint, celebrated even today throughout the entire world, was the only son of his eminent and wealthy parents, Theophanes and Nona, citizens of the city of Patara in Lycia. Since he was the only son bestowed on them by God, the parents returned the gift to God by dedicating their son to Him.

St. Nicholas learned of the spiritual life from his uncle Nicholas, Bishop of Patara, and was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of New Zion founded by his uncle. Following the death of his parents, Nicholas distributed all his inherited goods to the poor, not keeping anything for himself. As a priest in Patara, he was known for his charity, even though he carefully concealed his charitable works, fulfilling the words of the Lord: Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth (Matthew 6:3). When he gave himself over to solitude and silence, thinking to live that way until his death, a voice from on high came to him: "Nicholas, for your ascetic labor, work among the people, if thou desirest to be crowned by Me."

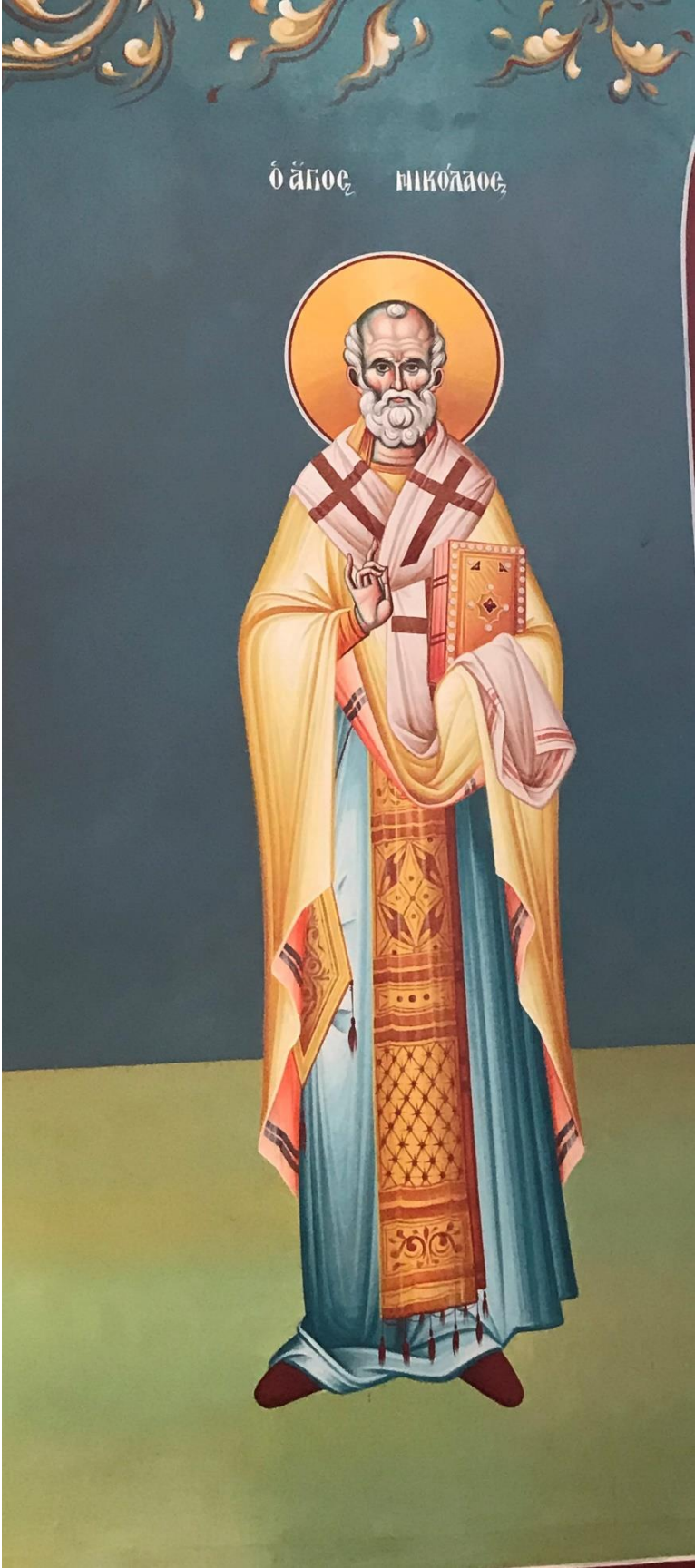
Immediately after that, by God's wondrous providence, he was chosen archbishop of the city of Myra in Lycia. Merciful, wise, and fearless, Nicholas was a true shepherd to his flock. During the persecution of Christians under Diocletian and Maximian, he was cast into prison, but even there he instructed the people in the Law of God.

He was present at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325 AD) and, out of great zeal for the truth, struck the heretic Arius with his hand. For this act he was removed from the Council and from his archiepiscopal duties, until the Lord Christ Himself and the Most-holy Theotokos appeared to several of the chief hierarchs and revealed their approval of Nicholas.

A defender of God's truth, this wonderful saint was ever bold as a defender of justice among the people. On two occasions, he saved three men from an undeserved sentence of death. Merciful, truthful, and a lover of justice, he walked among the people as an angel of God. Even during his lifetime, the people considered him a saint and invoked his aid in difficulties and in distress. He appeared both in dreams and in person to those who called upon him, and he helped them easily and speedily, whether close at hand or far away.

A light shone from his face as it did from the face of Moses, and he, by his presence alone, brought comfort, peace and good will among men. In old age he became ill for a short time and entered into the rest of the Lord, after a life full of labor and very fruitful toil, to rejoice eternally in the Kingdom of Heaven, continuing to help the faithful on earth by his miracles and to glorify his God. He entered into rest on December 6, 343 A.D.

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### **ST. DIONYSIUS OF ZAKYNTHOS (AUGUST 24 / DECEMBER 17)**

Our father among the saints Dionysius of Zakynthos was born in 1547 on the island of Zakynthos in the Ionian Sea. Before becoming a monk his name was Draganigos Sigouros. He was educated by priests and became fluent in Greek, Italian, and Latin. He excelled in theology, became a monk in 1568, received his first degree of ordination as a priest in 1570 as Daniel; he later became hieromonk of Zakynthos and Strofades. In 1577 he was raised to Archbishop of Aegina and Poros and after a year abdicated from this dignity and settled in Zakynthos as an abbot of a monastery. In December 17, 1622 he fell asleep in the Lord. He had asked to be buried in this monastery and his grave is still to be found in the chapel of St George; a dependent of the monastery.

It has been found that his body remains intact and emits a mixed fragrance of flowers and frankincense. Therefore he is venerated, and his sainthood has been proclaimed by the Patriarch of Constantinople. His feast day is celebrated on December 17, and on August 24, the Church celebrates the transfer of his holy relics.

#### "The Saint of Forgiveness":

St. Dionysius was remarkable in his forgiveness and love for his fellow man.

A man came to St. Dionysius's cell and begged the saint to hide him from his pursuers. When St. Dionysius asked him why he was being pursued, the man told him that he had killed a man. The murderer did not know that he had killed the saint's own beloved brother Constantine. St. Dionysius was very grieved but hid the man and did not surrender him to the law. Instead he instructed him and brought him to repentance. According to local tradition, the murderer later repented and became a monk himself at that same monastery.

St. Dionysius is an example to us all for his forgiveness of even the most grievous sins against us.

#### "The Wonderworker":

Dionysios grants his people many blessings; and many miracles are reported in connection with his ministry.

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For example, when the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas was destroyed on September 11, 2001, during the World Trade Center attack, only two things were recovered intact: a cross and a paper icon of Dionysios.

### *"The Walking Saint":*

Dionysius rests in the church which bears his name in Zakynthos, where opening his tomb is often found impossible. It appears as though this occurs when Dionysius is out performing miracles. Afterwards, when the tomb can be opened, seaweed is found at his feet and his slippers are found to be worn thin. In fact, his slippers need continual replacement because they receive so much wear. He is often seen alive and walking.

### *"Housing of the Relic":*

In 1717, the monks, of the monastery of Strofades, moved the Saints relic and placed it inside the metochi [1] of Kalliteros in order to protect him from various destructive invasions by pirates in the area. At a later date, a church was built in his honour in the Ammos area and shortly converted into a monastery. Later, in 1764, the church of the monastery was rebuilt and in 1854 a steeple added to the church. In 1893, all this was destroyed by a major earthquake and a temporary church constructed to house the Saint until in 1925 there took place a foundation ceremony to rebuild an earthquake-resistant church; fully completed by 1948.[2] In 1953, when the next major earthquake hit the island, the church remained untouched and was used as a refuge for the homeless. Three years later, a new monastery was built to replace the ruins and has since been called "The Holy Monastery of Strofades and Saint Dionysios".

### *"The Larnaka":*

Among the works of art inside the church of the Holy Monastery of Strofades and Saint Dionysios, stands the silver-sculptured "Larnaka" (grave) of the Saint. It was designed by a priest named Nikolaos Kantounis and depicts the dormition of Dionysios who is surrounded by many priests. It was made in 1829 by George Diamantis Bafas and is placed in a separate room to the church to the right of the Sacred Gate.

During the invasion of the pirates in 1717, both hands of the Saint were cut off by the pirates, however, due to a miracle did not manage to destroy his Holy Body. All of his relics are still kept in the larnaka.

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