



# THE HOLY ICON OF THE PANAGIA "THE SEAFARING"

Commemorated on 6 December





## HISTORY OF THE HOLY ICON OF OUR LADY THE THEOTOKOS AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY, KNOWN AS "THE SEAFARING"

**I**n the summer of the year of salvation 2003, our monastery acquired one more priceless spiritual treasure: the Holy Icon of the Panagia "the Seafaring."

The Misaelides brothers Evangelos and Alexandros, with the consent of their elder brother, Christos—a veteran member of the lay community attached to the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, who could not be present owing to ill health—, brought the Icon of the *Panagia* and bestowed it on our spiritual Father and Abbot, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.

This Icon was a family heirloom, venerated for nearly two centuries by the members of the Misaelides family.

Evangelos, now reposed, related the history of the Holy Icon, having been urged to do so by our Most Reverend Father.



*"Our great-grandfather, the shipowner Georgios Vasileiades (or "Captain Katifes," as he was known to all, on account of the flower that he used to pin to his lapel) from Kasos, was accomplishing one of his customary trading voyages from Constantinople to the Dodecanese, some time between 1790 and 1810 .*

*Suddenly, north of Mytilene, his ship sailed through assorted floating objects. Were they the result of a shipwreck or a jettison? The sailors then caught sight of an Icon!*

*At the Captain's command, they reverently took it up and gave it to him.*

*Painted on the Holy Icon (27.5 x 40 in.), which was executed in the "popular" style of the time, were the following seven holy Persons, in two rows.*

*Upper row: our Lord Jesus Christ in the arms of His Most Holy Mother; our Panagia, holding our Lord as a child, and indicating him in the well-known manner of the "Directress"; the Archangel Michael at her right, standing in piety; and to her right, in a similar posture, the Venerable Forerunner.*

*Bottom row: in the center, St. Nicholas as a Bishop, blessing and holding the Gospel, between the two well-known soldierly Saints on horseback, St. George (right) and St. Demetrios (left).*

*When the Captain took up the Holy Icon and was embracing it with uncovered head and great piety, a sailer wished him:*

*"May our Panagia be your aid, Captain, and may she protect you and your family...."*

*They continued their voyage with success. On Captain Kاتفes' return home, he brought the Icon with all honor and reverence and gave it to our great-grandmother, telling her:*

*"Guard it as the apple of your eye. Revere and honor it greatly, and light an ever-burning vigil lamp before it. It will be the guardian and protector of our family. Before you die, pass it on to our eldest daughter, and then she to hers...."*



***Thus,** passed on from mother to daughter, the Icon reached our own mother, the ever-memorable Marika Misaelides of the Vasileiades family, who did not, however, give birth to any daughters, but only to three sons.*

*Our late mother kept the Icon near her for seventy-five years—always with the same care and reverence and the ever-burning vigil lamp—wherever she went during the many times that it was necessary for her to move.*

*She gave no instructions as to who should take over the heirloom after her repose, but left that to the discretion of her sons, whom she had brought up under the Icon's protection and in whom she had instilled great reverence for it.*

*And so it is that, by the common consent of all three brothers, the Icon is handed over to Your Eminence and your monastery, with the assurance that this is the best place for it to be preserved and honored.*



***We must** add the following truly wondrous event to the historical account of the Icon.*

*On the cursed day of 25 August 1866, the “great slaughter” of Greeks by Turks took place in Iraklion, Crete.*

*Our terror-struck great-grandmother was holding the Icon in her arms and was beseeching the Panagia with tears for the salvation of her family and for all of her compatriots at that frightful hour.*

*Suddenly, they heard violent pounding on the door, which gave way, and two agitated and bloodthirsty Turks charged in.*

*They immediately took hold of our great-grandmother, who continued praying, and threw the Icon to the ground! One of the two then brought our great-grandmother to her knees and put her head on the Icon, cursing and threatening her that he would kill her if she did not call out: “Great is Allah!”*

*At precisely that moment, the Panagia worked a miracle!*

*A Cretan-Turkish officer, who was a compatriot and childhood friend of my great-grandfather, unexpectedly appeared.*

*He straightaway intervened in an authoritative manner and did not allow the bloodthirsty barbarian to slaughter the defenseless woman. The other two Turks then let out all of their rabid rage on the holy heirloom. They began furiously hitting it with their yataghans [Turkish sword]!*

*Our Panagia—O, the wonder!—intervened a second time.*

*Despite all of the gashes the Icon received, it was not shattered, though its wood is delicate and is not secured with braces.*

*The marks left by the sword strokes are still clearly discernible today, as a reminder of the incident and of the Panagia's miracle."*



**F**ollowing the account of the Icon's history, our Most Reverend Father warmly thanked the two brothers, Evangelos and Alexandros Misaelides, assuring them of the correctness of their decision.

He then charged the brothers who work in our monastery's Icon Studio with the cleaning and repair of the holy heirloom.

He likewise gave instructions as to its arrangement and placement among the monastery's heirlooms, and also as to its photographing and the composition of a special pamphlet recounting its history, in order that it become well known among the faithful and its Grace be invoked.

Finally, our Most Reverend Father ordered that the Icon be honored on 6 December, the Feast Day of St. Nicholas, the Patron Saint of sailors, who is pictured on the holy heirloom, and that the following Apolytikion be chanted, the work of our brotherhood:

***Apolytikion***  
***of the Holy Icon of the Panagia "the Seafaring"***  
*in the Fourth Tone*

**T**he assembly of the four servants of Christ encircles thee, O All-Pure one, in thine Icon, together with the Archangel. Thou hast appeared as a gift and a calm haven for those submerged in the dangers of life; and now do thou deliver from afflictions those who honor thee.

*17-18 June 2005 (Old Style)*  
*+ The Holy Martyrs Isauros and Leontios*