

THE MIRACLES OF OUR HOLY FATHER



SPIRIDON OF TREMITHUS



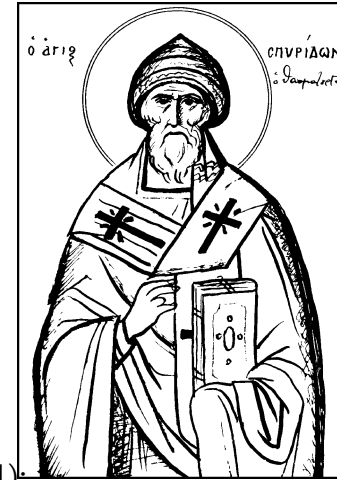
THE MIRACLES OF OUR HOLY FATHER SPIRIDON OF TREMITHUS



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Troparion (tone 1):

Thou wast shown forth as a champion of the first council * and a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Spiridon. * Wherefore, thou didst speak to one dead in the grave, * and didst change a serpent into gold. * And whilst chanting thy holy prayers, * thou didst have angels serving with thee, O most sacred one. * Glory to Him that hath given thee strength! * Glory to Him that hath crowned thee! * Glory to Him that worketh healings for all through thee!

Kontakion (tone 2):

Wounded with love for Christ, * and giving wings to thy mind through the radiance of the Spirit, * O most sacred one, * thou didst find thy work in thine active divine vision, * O thou that art pleasing to God, * being a divine oblation, *and asking divine illumination for all.

The Miracles of Our Holy Father
Spiridon of Tremithus
Whom the Church Celebrates on August 11th

Let us examine closely, O blessed Christians, Saint Spiridon's wondrous works; for they are indeed beneficial to the soul and its development, as are the accounts of the lives of all men of God. They enable us not only to avoid vice, but also to advance in virtue. It stands to reason that those who pay attention to these divine acts and supernatural feats, improve their lives, shunning their former vices in pursuit of virtue, becoming more ardent in its performance, each motivated according to his strength, striving to imitate their example. All the biographies of the saints are admirable and edifying to the soul. However, the life and miracles of Saint Spiridon are more inspiring and pleasant to the ear, stimulating both the mind and heart. This life therefore, of our great Father and his awe-inspiring miracles we shall narrate for your love, and we beg all to attend with eagerness and contrition.

In the days of old, the island of Kerkyra¹ was stricken by a severe famine and many necessities of life were lacking. On Great Saturday, Saint Spiridon appeared to the captains of certain nearby ships and informed them of the serious need, and they brought wheat to the island. Therefore, the Holy Pascha was celebrated on the previously famished island with great splendor and joy with the provisions accorded by the Saint.

At another time, a plague swept the city of Kerkyra, and everyone whether stricken or not, flocked to the shrine of Saint Spiridon for there was grave concern that the entire city would fall victim. Yet, many of the pious people were not affected in the least, and straightway, by the Saint's intercession, health and prosperity were restored to the island.

Furthermore, Saint Spiridon restored eyesight to two disabled

oarsmen of the Venetian fleet who had been discharged from the ships of Antonio Bernardo and Jerome Mauricano. Few were those who were not astonished by this miracle which the blessed one did for those pious men, who, out of religious zeal climbed to the top of the belfry at the Saint's Church to extinguish a fire that had been started by lightning. When the whole edifice was about to go up in flames, the men fell from the heights, but were not hurt as they landed safely.

Once, a certain nobleman mocked a young lad to scorn who was afflicted with an incurable illness. While the boy lay on the road during a procession, so that the relics of the Saint might pass over him, in hope of getting a cure, the nobleman also ridiculed his parents, who wept by the side of the child. Yet divine retribution intervened, smiting the foolish one. At that moment, he was struck by a pyrotechnical device which completely burnt out his right eye. Many people were witness to this incident. Thereafter, he repented in tears and stood in the Church of Saint Spiridon throughout the night, praying for forgiveness.

In the year of our Lord, 1673, a deadly blight descended and spread over fields and crops in the cities and countryside. Death seemed inescapable. Twice during that year, the wonderworking Spiridon saved the island and its inhabitants from certain ruin. On the same occasion, a merchant of the east known as Theodore, who had lost his eyesight, hastened with faith to the Saint's Church and regained his vision. Indeed, it was a great sight to behold on July 13th, the day of one of his celebrations. The miracle he did for Theodore, and those victims who were near death, now are restored to health. And the Saint worked another miracle on Palm Sunday during the annual procession, when the islanders again witnessed the unexpected termination of a plague.

Our holy father, Spiridon wrought miracles at all times. However, the most exceptional and remarkable was the one where

he preserved Kerkyra invincible in the face of the Turkish invasion of 1716. Every corner of the island hails and proclaims this special event in a resounding voice. The matter took place as follows:

War erupted between the Venetians and Ishmaelites (Turks) resulting in the capture of the Peloponnesus. The Turks considered it to their advantage to take Kerkyra too. Therefore, on June 24, 1716, a Turkish armada sailed into the city's harbor. Due to this unexpected maneuver the inhabitants were overwhelmed and surprised. A great horde of Turks landed on the beautiful island shores, their purpose being to lay waste and pillage it by land and sea.

A fierce battle ensued, but the barbarians succeeded in overpowering the Christians by fire and sword. After fifty days of violent combat, the infidels' main thrust was spear-pointed at the city of Kerkyra. Then, the beleaguered Orthodox Christians, having no other recourse, sought refuge in their holy hierarch and defender, Saint Spiridon. Day and night, they entreated him with tears and vigils, begging him to rescue them from imminent annihilation. (Verily, this occurred!)

One day, the Turkish army stormed the walls of the city (and shortly after, many of them met an evil end). They were vanquished by the intervention of the wonderworking Spiridon. The outcome of this further enraged the barbarians, so they marched on the outlying towns, committing horrid and brutal murders wherever they went. In addition to this, new raids were imminent which would decimate the natives either by an evil death or bitter enslavement.

The hapless islanders intensified their vigils and prayers to the Saint to deliver them from this peril. At the point where they anticipated defeat by the Turks, suddenly, at dawn our great Father Spiridon appeared against them, accompanied by a vast celestial host, wielding a sword of lightning in his hand and with which he angrily scattered the marauders. This awesome sight struck panic in their

ranks and they chose to flee; their eyesight having been dimmed, they were cast into confusion and fought one another. Therefore, they were routed and driven out by fear, rather than by fire, sword, or any adversary. And all this was accomplished solely by Saint Spiridon and the incorporeal hosts of heaven.

Meanwhile, the infantry and cavalrymen fled and the fleet sailed away in the face of the great power of the holy hierarch, which delivered the city of Kerkyra. However, after calm was restored (unbeknownst to the citizens), the Kerkyraeans expected further attacks, yet there was no enemy in sight, nor a sound to be heard, only absolute silence. Wherefore, puzzled by these peculiar circumstances, they left the city walls and proceeded in the direction of the enemy tents. It was then that they realized that a miracle had taken place, to their amazement, and with sheer delight they leapt for joy. For it was unprecedented for Turks to disappear and leave all their gear behind. As they fled, they admitted to everyone wherever they went that they were driven out by a venerable monk (that is, by Saint Spiridon) and a glorious celestial army which appeared in the sky, forcing them out with rampant speed.

Therefore, with extreme reverence everyone hastened to render honor and chant hymns of thanksgiving to the wonderworking hierarch. The expulsion was acknowledged by the Venetians who ruled the island at the time. They acclaimed the rescue by the Saint and the divine, heavenly host. And they honored them with a procession and hymns of praise. The memory of this miracle is celebrated on August 11 th.

The pious Christians erected a solid silver lampstand of rare workmanship, offering it to the Holy Church in gratitude for this incontestable sign and wonder. Wherefore, by the intercessions of our shepherd and patron, O God, have mercy on us!

The admiral of the Venetian fleet and governor of the island, Andrea Pizano, perceived the idea of erecting a sanctuary within the

Church of Saint Spiridon in which a Latin mass could be served daily by a Catholic priest, hoping that in this manner he might offer thanks to the Saint for the salvation of the city from the threat of the Turks. However, how could the champion of Orthodoxy ever permit such a service to be conducted in his sacred Church by a non-Orthodox priest with unleavened bread?

Therefore our Father appeared twice to the governor ordering him to abandon his scheme. But Pizano would not desist; for he listened to one of his theologians who advised him that the dream was of demonic inspiration. In addition to this, the governor threatened the priests who guarded the holy relics, because they would not agree with his novel idea. Since he would not be convinced by the vision and abandon his plan, one night the store of gun powder exploded within the old fortress and demolished all the homes within the old city, killing everyone in the vicinity including many Latins. Andrea Pizano was found with his neck wedged between two wooden posts that choked him; his misled theologian was also found dead. At that time, the two guards assigned to watch the gunpowder saw the Saint approach with a torch, which he brought without setting anything afire in the Church of the Crucifixion. At that same hour, in the city watchtower of the Venetians, they beheld three flames proceed from the Church of Saint Spiridon in the direction of the city ramparts. Instantly the gunpowder exploded. In Venice that evening a thunderbolt struck the picture of Pizano and burnt it to ashes, without damaging anything else in the house. All these strange events took place on November 12, 1718. Lo, the miracle! O supporter of the Orthodox! Who is it that after this divine judgment does not acknowledge the blasphemous innovations of the papacy before God? Yet, may God enlighten them to return to the truth from which they have strayed. This is how Saint Spiridon defended the Faith even after his repose.

How is it possible to enumerate all the miracles wrought by our patron and Father? On Palm Sunday in the year when the memorable Nicephorus Theotokes², the great teacher of the Church, taught in Kerkyra describing the many miracles of Saint Spiridon and entrusting his listeners to his protection, the following took place: Two weeks later, as he was speaking to a crowd of eyewitnesses to the Saint's miracles, the holy relics passed by in a procession. A certain possessed woman who foamed at the mouth and gnashed her teeth was brought forward. Even though she was bound hand and foot, two or three men were not able to restrain her violent behavior. Her face was disfigured and did not resemble that of a woman. Her voice was disguised and alien, for at times she snorted like an ox or barked like a dog. She even cried like a baby. Now they laid her on the ground three times so that each time the relics of the wonderworker Spiridon would pass over her (thrice to signify the Holy Trinity which the righteous one preached at the First Council)³. Straightway -0 the wonder!- the woman came to her senses, ceased wailing and spoke like a human being, no longer making unusual sounds. Wherefore they immediately untied her. She rose to her feet with tears in her eyes, and fell at the feet of the Saint, venerating and thanking the blessed one.

In the year 1769, he cured a paralyzed German soldier who had approached him with faith and fervent tears and then fell at his feet. The governor of the island, Andrea Doni, witnessed the reaction of the crowds and the bell-ringing declaring this extraordinary miracle. He summoned physicians from the city's hospitals and was apprised thereby of the soldier's condition. At once, they marched to Saint Spiridon's Church where they chanted hymns of thanksgiving to him.

Saint Spiridon was always the protector of Kerkyra, indeed a help in every circumstance. At the close of 1855, the public acclaimed his fatherly care which preserved the people from the

threat of cholera which periodically menaced Europe, decimating heavily populated areas; for medical assistance was unable to stem the catastrophic results. In October of 1855, when cholera swept Europe, the first cases suddenly appeared in the Manduke quarter. The news struck fear in the towns and rural areas as everyone became alarmed. Each family considered it wise to prepare for mourning and a mass burial. The public unanimously chose to take refuge in the Church of Saint Spiridon for vespers. They called upon him with tears and prostrations during three consecutive vesper services offered up to God and His Saint. Whereupon, by his intercessions before God, Kerkyra did not fall victim to the same calamity that had visited other cities. In them the number of fatalities exceeded the tens of thousands.

It became apparent that the Saint protected the island by the events of the first Sunday of November, when many people assembled as a procession of his relics was taking place. Then certain ones, namely physicians, feared that with the great concentration of people, the epidemic would spread rapidly. No one in the crowd however shared this fear as they set all their hopes on our Saint. Indeed, on that day, the entire populace including the outlying areas, gathered in the city. The two populations, both urban and rural, filled the square through which the holy relics were to pass. The clergy served a supplicatory canon and prayer to the wonderworking Spiridon, and with tears and prostrations they appealed to him to intercede before God. Great contrition seized the multitudes and it was an astonishing sight to observe the devotion and faith that people displayed for Saint Spiridon. Wondrous is God in His saints! From that day onward, the decline in the number of victims was noticed, and the report of deaths ceased. Divine wrath and the epidemic receded as the cholera disappeared in the face of the great intercession of the Saint. After the 11th of December, there were no more fatalities. It is impossible to describe the gratitude that the people

showed for Saint Spiridon. The Bishop at that time, Athanasius, composed a service of thanksgiving to the Lord and ordered that it be chanted in all the churches of that diocese.

Hieromonk Gregory Valmes records another miracle in a pamphlet he published in 1856. It reads as follows: "A woman by the name of Vasilo from Zagora, Epirus, the daughter of Constantine Simos and Christina Kyritse from the village of Vounou of Chemara on July 13, 1853 decided to go on a two mile hike with several other women to gather firewood. Indigenous to this area is a wood that burns easily and it is used by the Greeks of Epirus because of its high resin content. Vasilo returned on the 16th. Fatigued as she was from the trip and the heavy weight she had carried on her back she sat down to eat her supper. She perspired profusely, so she bathed her feet and hands in cold water. Yet she never finished this, when her left leg and arm stiffened, causing her serious pain. The poor woman grieved over this happenstance. Many were her attempts during the next two years to find relief and solace from this condition. All treatments failed. Driven by grief and despair, she resorted to a certain Turkish hodja⁴ for treatment. She spent a great deal of money but to no avail; for she was deceived by him, and continued in her miserable state.

While leading this type of life, she obtained a separation from her husband with his consent and that of the Church. She had become a burden on herself, relatives and friends, who by now had grown weary of taking care of a quadriplegic woman who was unable to attend to her personal needs. Thereafter, she resorted to mourning, tears and repentance. With a contrite heart, she implored the all-merciful God and His saints to forgive her sins and relieve her of this mysterious ailment. In December 1855, she envisioned a cleric in her sleep, who stepped on her withered leg saying: "Do not write to your brother in Kerkyra, as you have planned; but go in person." She was astonished by this, and out of curiosity asked: "Who

might you be?" The cleric answered: "I am the Saint whom you have implored many times." She was awakened by this vision and was startled. She related it to everyone in her house. They all agreed that she should do all those things she was ordered to in the vision.

With extreme faith, the afflicted woman decided to make the journey. Vasilo was brought to the shores of Epirus in a large basket tied to a horse. In this manner, she was taken to Kerkyra where all were shocked as they saw her hopeless and incurable condition. She was transported from the shore to the Church of Saint Spiridon in a cart. Once there, she was placed on a chair and brought before the relics of the wonder-working Spiridon. She fell with continuous tears upon the Saint, imploring him to intercede before the all-merciful God to grant her forgiveness of sins, eternal salvation for her soul, and physical health. Great is the Lord in His saints! The fervent tears of faith and the intercessions of our Saint and patron moved divine mercy. Therefore, during the second vigil that she made lying near the relics of the Saint, about midnight, she attained the health of which she longed. At that moment, Vasilo called the parish priest and proclaimed with tears of joy the miracle of Saint Spiridon. Afterwards, she confessed with true repentance and compunction. At dawn, she walked unassisted before the Royal Gates and received the immaculate mysteries. Safe and healthy, she returned to her homeland, glorifying God, acclaiming to all the great boldness the wonder-working Spiridon possessed before God.

A certain lad named John Pallios, the only son of Spiridon and Catherine Vrikos, were Orthodox Christians residing for many years in Barletta, a town in central Italy. Early in November 1861, when John was eight years of age, he was stricken by a severe case of typhoid fever which grew progressively worse over seventeen days, defying all medical treatment. On the morning of the 17th the youth lay gravely ill. He had the appearance of death all about his face. His pulse was very feeble and his extremities were motionless and cold;

his voice was weak and his respiration labored. All symptoms bespoke the prognosis of imminent death. Therefore, his mother did not cease to pray in tears to Saint Spiridon on her knees. At that ominous moment, she increased her sighs and supplications, and suddenly as if by divine inspiration, she was moved to say, "I will send a telegram to my kinsfolk in Kerkyra, that they open the reliquary of the Saint and have a paraklesis chanted for our Johnny! By the Saint's intercession God will indeed save him and restore him to me, for I have besought Him with all my heart and soul!"

The telegram was sent promptly, and behold the miracle! About noon, at the precise moment when the reliquary was opened and the paraklesis performed, the youth lay critically ill, his condition having deteriorated seriously since the morning. Then immediately, a spasm convulsed his entire body, which indicated to the physicians in charge that this was the final throws of his ailment. In reality, it was the expulsion and riddance of the deadly disease through the intercessions of the Saint. A little while later, the symptoms disappeared and signs of a welcome recovery appeared; he began to perspire normally, regained his vision and all vital signs returned to normal. All who witnessed this, including the doctors, were astounded and exclaimed, "Truly, it is a miracle! Wondrous is God in His saints!" After this, John underwent a slow recovery, for the lad remained silent. This grieved his parents. However, even this condition improved through the intercessions of Saint Spiridon. On the eve of his commemoration, December 11th, the youth regained his speech and at last, his health in general was restored, to the glory of God and His faithful servant. Thus was the righteous one's life.

We have presented the older and better known miracles of Saint Spiridon. But how is it possible, as we have said, to fathom the magnitude of his wondrous works over the past centuries and to this day? Kerkyra is a witness to the blessed one's innumerable miracles. The Orthodox peoples and even the Latins, witnessed and proclaimed

the wonder-working gifts of Saint Spiridon. Those that travel by sea or in difficulties especially take refuge in the Saint. The numerous costly offerings to be found in his Church are clear proof of his miracles. Anyone who in faith and compunction has recourse to the holy Spiridon will not fall short of his desire. Indeed, let us, both humble Orthodox Christians and much more the Kerkyraens, send up a loud cry to our beneficent God, Who in His love has been well pleased to bestow this holy treasure on the land of Greece. Wherefore let us exclaim, wondrous is God in His saints, to Whom is due glory, dominion and honor unto the ages! Amen.

Corfu, Greece

Endnotes:

1. For clarity's sake, we will take this opportunity to explain to our readers that every year in Kerkyra, there is a procession (lite) of the relics on four occasions: The first is on August 11th, in memory of the liberation of the island from the Turkish invasion in 1716. The second is on the first Sunday in November, instituted in 1673 by the Venetians, due to a plague that swept the island that year. The third, on every Great Saturday, in commemoration of the arrival of the wheat-laden vessel in days of old, when the population was saved by divine Providence from a universal famine. And the fourth procession is the most elegant and lengthy of all, as it circles the entire city once. It is conducted on Palm Sunday on the occasion of the epidemic which struck in 1630. Up until the year 1605, during processions the relics were completely uncovered, borne in the arms of a single priest. This practice, however, was considered improper. Therefore, a silver reliquary was constructed in Venice, gilded and

partially covered with crystal, at the expense of Thomas Motsanega; in this the relics were placed. The case itself was then set within a larger silver reliquary. During the processions which are conducted with great splendor, the reliquary is borne about by the priest. In Venetian times, they were attended by all the civil authorities, often with the Latin bishop carrying candles. In days of old, two of the priests who carried the reliquary belonged to the Bulgaris family (who built the church), and two were members of the monastic order of Saint Basil (for he supposedly belonged to it). The magnificent order of the processions lasted into the period of the French and the English rule and until Kerkyra was united with Greece.

At this point, we wish to add that according to Andrew Marmoras (History of Corfu, pg. 262), the priest, George Kalocheretes took the relics of Saint Spiridon and Theodora, enclosing them in two sacks filled with straw and traveled through Greece on a donkey without incident, convincing all those who questioned him that he simply was transporting fodder for livestock.

2. Nicephorus Theotokes was a theological scholar of the 18th century. He was acclaimed for the sermons he wrote on the Gospels and the Epistles of Saint Paul. He was a respected cleric of that period and was rewarded with a bishop's staff. Like his contemporary, Eugenius Bulgaris, he also traveled extensively to the Balkan countries and Russia.

3. At the First Council (325 A.D.), in a discourse with one of the philosophers, St Spiridon attempted to demonstrate that the Holy Trinity consists of three persons, just as a file is made of three components; fire, water and clay, yet is of one essence and nature (for the human mind cannot comprehend the Infinite Nature of God, just as the infinite ocean cannot fit into a small vessel). After the saint uttered these words, he made the sign of the Cross with his right hand. In his left hand he held the tile and said, "In the

name of the Father," and immediately - lo thy wonders, O Christ our King! - the fire which had baked the tile flared upward. Then he said, "And of the Son," and at once, the water wherewith it had been mixed ran down. And immediately following, he said, "And of the Holy Spirit," and he opened his hand in which only the clay from which it was made remained. This miracle was witnessed with astonishment by all, especially the philosopher, who was awestruck to the depths of his soul and fell silent. After a considerable length of time, he replied, "These things which thou hast said, O holy man, I accept and embrace!" The Saint then said to him, "Because thou admittest by word, come, and show me by act that thou really knowest who God is, the Creator of all things. Let us enter the church, that thou mayest receive the seal of the Orthodox faith." Then the philosopher straightway converted to true piety.

4. In the Moslem faith, at various times of the day, a hodja will call and lead the people in prayer from a minaret.

Translated by Leo Papadopoulos and G. Lizardos from The Great Synaxaristes. Matthew Lagges, publisher. Athens, 1974, Vol. 12, pp. 338-369 and 1977, Vol. 8, pp. 205-07. Edited by Isaac Lambertsen. Rewritten by L. Papadopoulos, 2004. Judy Graves, typist. All rights reserved.

