



■ **The Panagia comes to the aid of all those who invoke her with faith**

The Miraculous Deliverance of an Army Sergeant From a Helicopter Crash

Thanksgiving Liturgy at the Convent of the Panagia Akroteriane, Serifos, Greece

On **Thursday**, June 30 / July 13, 2017, the Feast of the Twelve Holy Apostles, and also the local Feast of the *Panagia Metalleioruchitissa* (“Protector of Miners”)—a Feast celebrated with special devotion on Serifos, an island with many iron mines—a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in thanksgiving for the miraculous survival of Greek Army Sergeant Vasiliki Plexida from the helicopter crash that took place on 6/19 April, 2017, in Sarantaporo, Greece, which killed the four other officers onboard.



His Eminence, Metropolitan Photios of Demetrias, in his capacity as *Local Tenens* of the Cyclades and Dodecanese for the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, presided at the Festal Vespers on Wednesday, assisted by Hieromonk Father Athanasios.

The following day, His Eminence, together with the aforementioned Hieromonk, celebrated the Festal Divine Liturgy in the convent’s main Church. In attendance were the survivor with friends and relatives, as well as other pious worshippers, all of



whom had miracles of the Panagia to recount.

During Orthros, the Minister of National Defense Panagiotis Kammenos and Chief of Army Staff Alkiviades Stefanos arrived by helicopter to honor the convent and to express their own gratitude to the Theotokos,

who yet again demonstrated her living presence and her salvific assistance to all those who invoke her with faith. They offered symbolic gifts to the convent and asked the Abbess and the clergy for their prayers on behalf of the Greek army and of our homeland [of Greece] in general.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the devout Vasiliki Plexida, standing in the middle of the Church, related the details of her miraculous survival. She offered to the convent the military uniform she was wearing at the time of the crash, both as a testimony to the miracle and as a blessed object, since the Theotokos touched it when she saved her from certain death.

The astonishing miracle, as Vasiliki herself described it, took place, in brief, as follows: When the helicopter first hit the ground, she made the sign of the Cross and called out to the Mother of God for help. She then saw the Theotokos as she is depicted on the Icon at the Convent of the Panagia Akroteriane (where Vasiliki is a frequent visitor and in regular contact with its Abbess), who descended from the heavens, grasped her firmly as she sat strapped in her seat, and, having detached the seat, removed Vasiliki from the helicopter and placed her in a shrub with her back to the wreckage, so that she would not be distressed by the sight of the collision.

The Theotokos remained at her side, holding her hand, until a technician from the Public Power Corporation ar-



rived, who had been sent to repair the power outage caused by the fall of the helicopter. The technician saw the wreckage and, in a shrub twenty meters away, a person strapped to her seat, with her helmet and mobile phone at her side. At that moment, the phone began to ring. The technician answered the call, which was from the helicopter base, and he gave the location of the crash.

A rescue helicopter with paramedics was immediately dispatched, which brought Vasiliki to the hospital. Her injuries (abrasions and fractures) were insignificant considering the magnitude of the accident. The doctors told her she would have to remain several months in the hospital. The Theotokos then appeared again to Vasiliki and reassured her that she would soon be discharged from the hospital. She also told her to disseminate the miracle, so as to strengthen the faith of the people and enable them to endure the hardships to come.

The miracle was widely reported, and at the same our Synod's humble and poor little Convent of the Panagia of Akroteriane in Serifo, and the simple Gerontissa Anthodoche, who lives the solitary life there, became known. In this way, the Theotokos teaches us that God takes pleasure where Orthodoxy goes hand in hand with humility and simplicity.

It is comforting that, during the difficult times through which our homeland [of Greece] is passing, at least the Army Command invokes the aid of the Champion Leader and the prayers of the monastics and clergy of our Church.



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