

06/05/2025

## Holy Diocese of Perth: Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers



On Sunday the 4th of May 2025, the Third Sunday of Pascha and the Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers, with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, His Grace Bishop Elpidios of Perth Presided over the Matins and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Church of Sts Constantine and Helene in Perth WA.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, His Grace lead a procession around the church of the icon of Archangel Michael of Mantamados, as is the ecclesiastical tradition on the island of Lesbos every year on the Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers.

The Church was filled with hundreds of worshipers, especially many of the Greek-Australian diaspora hailing from the island of Lesvos, in order to honour the miraculous icon of the Archangel Michael of Mantamados. There are two accounts surrounding the date of this icon, one having to do with the Ottoman Turkish occupation and destruction of 1462, and the other with Saracen pirates during the 9th and 10th centuries during which the entire island was invaded.

In either case, the story of the creation of the icon shares the theme that the target of the raids was the monastery of the Taxiarchis. The pirates threatened the monks with death if they would not reveal the whereabouts of the hidden villagers. The monks refused and the invaders slaughtered all of the monks except for one novice-monk.



As the pirates were leaving, the novice climbed to the roof of the monastery to be sure that the pirates had left. However, the pirates noticed him from afar and returned to kill him as well. It is at this point in the story that the Archangel Michael makes his appearance in front of the Saracens with his own sword drawn forcing them to retreat in terror. Thanks to this miracle from the Archangel the monk survived and descending to the courtyard buried the bodies of his fellow brotherhood.

The monk still in deep respect and reverence for having witnessed the Archangel Michael in all his fury, gathered up the earth that was red by the blood of the



martyred monks and shaped it into the icon-sculpture of the Archangel as it is today; while it was still vivid in his memory. According to legend, the monk did not have enough of this dirt-blood mix and so the head of the Archangel has turned out disproportionately larger to the rest of his body.

This icon is now kept within the interior of the church on the island of Lesbos. Many islanders claim to have had personal experiences of miracles being granted for them by the Archangel Michael. This is evident by the numerous cabinets full of tagmata (gifts) to the Archangel. To this day, pilgrims to this church have mixed emotions regarding this icon. At times, the expression on the icon can appear severe, sad, or happy, according to the message that the Archangel wants to convey to that pilgrim or the faithful. This is the tradition of the much-celebrated icon of Mantamados.



We are truly blessed to have a replica of the original icon housed at the Church of Sts Constantine and Helen in Northbridge.

His Grace Bishop Elpidios of Perth conveyed to all the Paschal and Paternal blessings of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia. Following the conclusion of the service, a celebratory morning tea was hosted in the hall next door to the Church.

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