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The Feast Day of the Ascension of Our Lord and the Malliari custom in Nichorion on the Bosphorus



On Thursday, 29 May, on the feast day of the Ascension of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in Nichorion on the Bosphorus, the Divine Liturgy took place and was presided over by Father Konstantinos Bartholomeou, Proistamenos of the Nichorion Community.

At the same time, as every year, the custom of Malliari was revived. Parishioners meet early in the morning and go to the Bosphorus. Participants must be silent from the moment they wake up, and must not have eaten or drunk anything. Once they reach the sea, they light the candles they have from the Feast of the Resurrection, catch 40 waves with which they wash their faces, and finally catch the Malliari, that is, a stone covered in seaweed and moss, which they take home and keep until the next year.

This version, of course, is from the Community of Panagia Koumariotissa. In the Community of Agios Nikolaos Neochorion, the corresponding custom, which they called “the silent water”, was done in the same way, but they did not include the Malliari.



The Feast Day of the Ascension is also called “the day of the sea.” In Ayvalik, women and men would go down to the sea, wade in up to their knees, and take forty waves of water into a bottle, and bidding farewell and sending Christ to the heavens, saying, “Αντε, Χριστέλλη μου, στο καλό!!” Then they would make the sign of the cross, count 40 waves with their fists (the number of days since Easter), look for the Malliari stone (a stone covered with moss), and say the following: “Christ has been taken up, I am also being taken up, dive into the sea.”

This stone, with its taking root and flowering in the sea, symbolises all the power and essence of the sea which, according to Euripides, “always washes away the evils of men.” In other words, the sea is cleansing and renewing, especially on the day of the Ascension, when with the presence of Christ in the ethers, heaven and sea have been sanctified.









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