28/05/2020

HOLY MONASTERY OF THE ASCENSION – JERUSALEM



The History of our Monastery

History of the veneration of the Ascension

As we can read in the New Testament, 40 days after His Resurrection, Jesus walked with His Apostles to the top of the Mount of Olives, blessed them, and as He was blessing them, He Ascended to heaven. On the last place where He stepped, His Holy feet left two traces on the rock, by miracle. The place was well known among the early Christians in the area, and when Saint Helena came to the Holy Land, she built a large Church on the site of the Ascension in 327. Subsequently, in 614, during the Persian invasion, Saint Helena's Church on the place of the Ascension was destroyed, alongside almost all churches. Twenty two years later, in 636, before the Patriarchate had the time to rebuild the destroyed Churches, the Muslims came and appropriated the place. After a few centuries, they built a

mosque in the place of the Ascension, which was used for six centuries. Then, the Muslims stopped using the place as a mosque and opened it to pilgrims. Since then, Christians have been able to visit the real place of the Ascension undisturbed.

History of the Greek Orthodox Monastery of the Ascension

When the place of the Ascension became accessible to Christian pilgrims, the Patriarchate decided to buy a parcel of land in the area so that there could be a Church near the place of the Ascension. Indeed, in the year 1845, Patriarch Cyril bought about 12 acres, exactly across from the place of the Ascension, with the intention to build a monastery and a Church. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Patriarchate sent Archimandrite Markos to the property and he asked permission from the Turks (who, at the time, were occupying the Holy Land) to build a Church. Unfortunately, the Turks did not give him permission. They just allowed him to built a residential house. In 1987 Patriarch Diodoros sent Archimandrite Ioakim to the same place, to try once again to build a Church. When he came, he asked the Jewish municipality for a permit, but without any results. Archimandrite Ioakim then decided to start collecting money from pilgrims and began to build the Church, with the hope that the municipality will give him the permit later. Yet, the permit was never granted. Finally, Archimandrite Ioakim built a large Church and a small basement below the Church (which was intended to become a Church as well), without any permit.

In 1992, after the Church was built, the housing authorities of the municipality sent two bulldozers to demolish the Church. Mention should be made of the fact that inside the dome of the great Church, Archimandrite Ioakim had temporarily placed a round Icon of the Pantocrator. When the two bulldozers demolished the large Church above ground (an operation which took only a few hours to complete), something paradoxical happened; while the Church was being ruined, instead of being destroyed under rabble, the Icon of Christ Pantocrator was ”paradoxically” found above the ruins. After that, when one of the two bulldozers began to smash the floor of the Church, which was also the ceiling of the basement that had also been intended to be a Church, the round Icon of the Lord rolled on its own and stopped in an upright position in front of the bulldozer. At that moment exactly, the steel hammer head of the bulldozer (which had broken the stones) broke off, the demolition of the basement could no longer continue and the two bulldozers left without ever returning. Thus, the basement that was intended to be a Church was miraculously saved.

Archimandrite Ioakim complained strongly about the demolition of the big Church and from that moment on, he began using the basement – that had been saved by

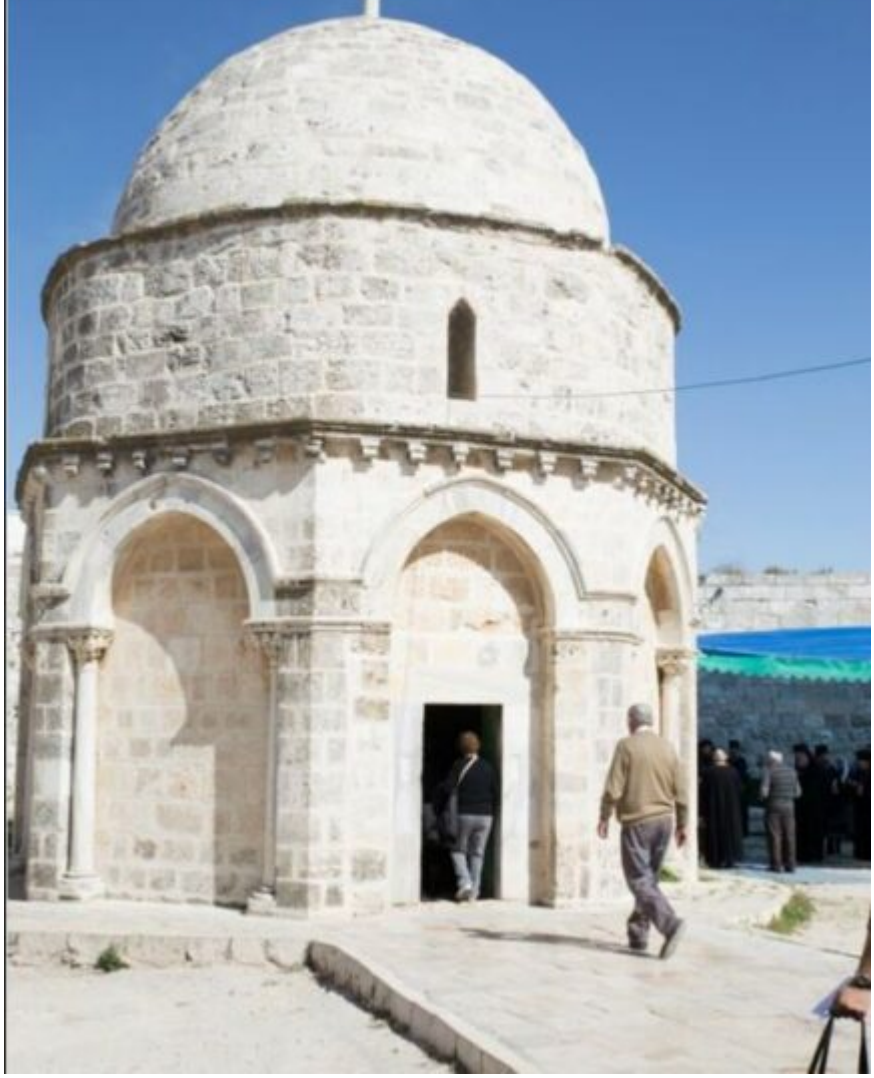
divine intervention – as a Church. Three years later, in 1995, two persons came to kill him but ended up murdering his mother Anastasia, while Archimandrite Ioakim escaped with minor injuries. In 2009, Archimandrite Ioakim passed away on the same day of the Ascension. Then, Patriarch Theophilos III sent Monk Achillios to replace him.

The contribution of Archimandrite Ioakim to the holy monastery of the Ascension

Archimandrite Ioakim is the unquestionable Founder and Creator of the Holy Monastery of the Ascension. Without his efforts, the small Church would not exist, nor would there have been the buildings that are used in the monastery (except for the house which was built by Archimandrite Markos in the beginning of the 20th century).

The duty of the current and future caretakers of the Monastery is to continue and preserve the presence of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in the area. In parallel, they ought to maintain and to improve the buildings that are in the Monastery. This

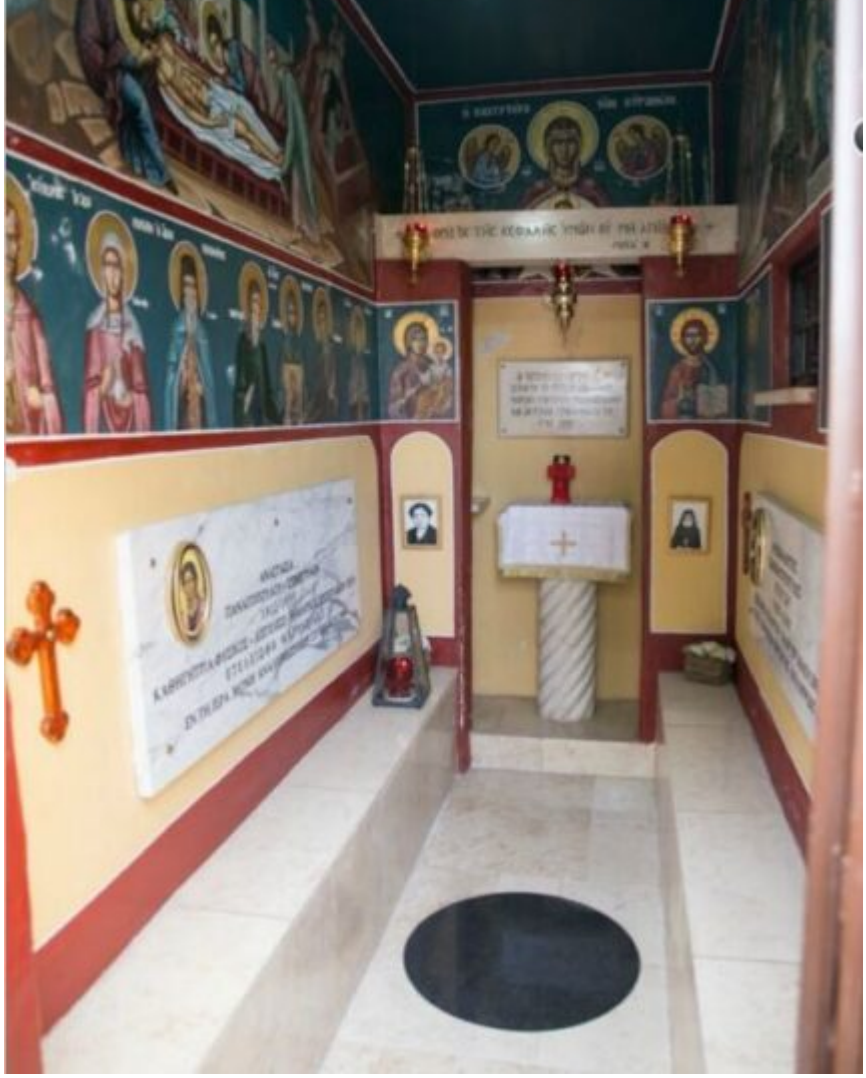




















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