17/12/2020

Agios Dionysios Church in Zakynthos

Agios Dionysios is the largest church in Zakynthos and celebrates on December 17, which is the Feast Day of Agios Dionysios, Patron Saint, and Protector of the island.

This holy and miraculous church was slowly built from 1925 and was finally completed in 1948, only a few years before the devastating earthquake of 1953. It is one of the three buildings that did not have any damage at all by the earthquake, which is considered a miracle and blessing by the locals.
Agios Dionysios was born in Zakynthos in 1547 and was the son of an aristocratic family. From a young age, he was given a Christian upbringing. He was very well educated and spoke Italian as well as Ancient Greek and Latin.

At the age of 20, after the death of both his parents, he donated his entire estate to his brother and decided to join a monastery a few miles off the coast of Zakynthos. After living there for a while he was encouraged by his fellow monks to be ordained as a priest, that of which he did and later became the Archbishop of Aegina, he spent the last years of his life at the Monastery of the Virgin Anaforitria in Zakynthos, where he passed away at the age of 75 on the 17th December, 1622.

It was there at the Monastery Anafonitria that Agios Dionysios lied for the first time, by hiding his brother's murderer and then helping him escape the island and flee to Kefalonia.

This is why Agios Dionysios is considered Saint of Forgiveness, as he forgave his brother's murderer.

The church of Agios Dionysios is very impressive with a spectacular wooden temple, marble columns, large chandeliers, icons, stained glass windows, red velvet seats, and gold plated detail, it is there where the relics of Agios Dionysios are kept here.

The church overlooks the harbour and the bell tower – that of which resembles the bell tower of San Marco Church in Venice and exceeds 40 feet is the landmark of the city.

Agios Dionysios was often visited by people who wanted to confess or ask for advice.

According to his will, he was buried in the church of Agios Georgios in Strofades, where he was ordained a priest. Three years later, when he was exhumed, his body was found intact and remains intact till today, displayed in the church of Agios Dionysios, where lots of pilgrims go every year.

There are two processions of the sacred relics of the Saint which are probably the most important events on the island. The first takes place on the 24th August which celebrates the day on which the relics were transported from the monastery in Strofades (it was there that St.Denis requested his remains to be kept after his death) and the second procession takes place on the 17th December, today on which he passed away.

Both celebrations last for three days, the first being from the 23rd of August to the 26th, and the second being from the 16th December to the 19th.

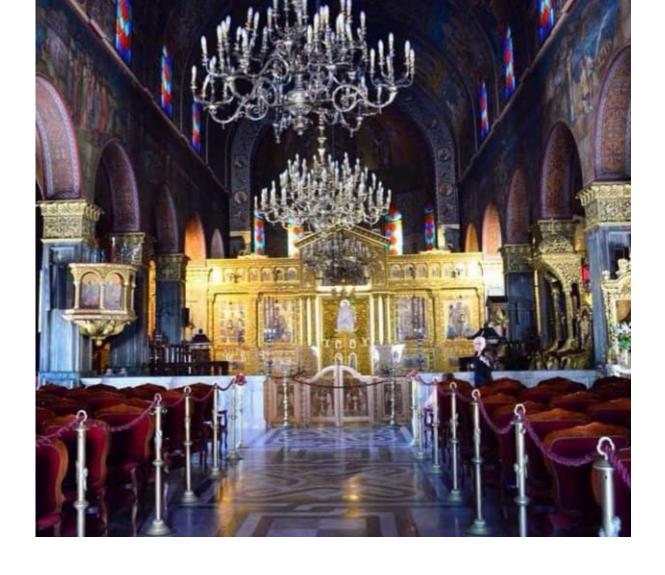Xronia Polla!