08/10/2021

ICONS STOLEN FROM GREEK MONASTERY FINALLY RETURNED AFTER 14 YEARS



18th-century Christ the Pantocrator and Panaghia Portaitissa (Iveron) icons were delivered to the Greek Consul General in Düsseldorf on Tuesday.

The icons are among nearly 40 that were stolen from Holy Dormition Monastery in Makrion, Zagori, Greece, in 2007. Last year, the icons were discovered in the catalogue of a private art gallery in Europe, set to be auctioned.

Having gathered the necessary information, the Department of Documentation and Protection of Cultural Property of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Greece, with the assistance of law enforcement units, the Prosecutor's Office of Ioannina, Greece, and Interpol, took the necessary steps to return the holy icons.

Having studied the documentation on the theft of the icons, the German auction house handed them over to the Greek Consul General in Düsseldorf, in the presence of the head of the University of Antiquities in Ioannina. They will soon be sent to Greece and returned to the monastery.

The Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports has been working for many years to identify and return cultural and religious valuables that have been illegally

exported from Greece.

Hundreds of precious icons were stolen from churches and monasteries in the northern Epirus region of Greece between 2000 and 2010, most of them ending up abroad and being sold. The creation of an electronic database of stolen art, including 150 icons, helped significantly reduce the number of thefts.

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