15/06/2022

Sister Agatha of Holy Cross Monastery Reposes in the Lord



On 4 June 2022 the Orthodox faithful of Sydney were saddened to hear that sister Agatha, of Holy Cross Monastery, Mangrove Mountain, NSW, had reposed in the Lord. Holy Cross Monastery announced, ’with much pain of heart but with hope and trust in our All-Merciful Lord, we announce that our beloved sister Agatha, after living with an illness for many years, has reposed in the Lord.’

The sad news spread quickly amongst the faithful. His Eminence Archbishop Makarios was one of the first to be informed of her sudden death.

The faithful literally flooded the church and parish of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Earlwood, on Tuesday, 7 June 2022. His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, accompanied by his five new assistant bishops, and several clergy and deacons, personally presided and officiated at the Memorial Service (Τρισάγιον), in the presence of many hundreds. The faithful had come from all over Sydney, but predominantly from Earlwood, where sister Agatha and her Abbess, Gerontissa Philothei, had attended the Church for many years.

With much emotion and attention, the faithful prayerfully participated in the service. At the end of the service His Eminence addressed the faithful with words of comfort, ‘We the Orthodox faithful, especially the Orthodox monastics, glorify the Lord not only for the joyful events in our lives but with all our being and all our heart we glorify Him for the sad events in our lives…because we believe that the best moment in our lives is God’s moment. The moment that God chose to take sister Agatha is His moment and God’s moment is above all human logic, and human interpretation.’

His Eminence went on to say that ‘sister Agatha was a very blessed person …her entire life was characterised by a desire and preparation for the eternal life.’

The words of His Eminence and the prayerfulness of the service was such that it was an experience deeply etched in the hearts of the faithful.

On Thursday 9 June 2022 the Orthros and Divine Liturgy were celebrated by several clergy at Holy Cross Monastery which was then followed by the traditional monastic funeral service. At the direction of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, the funeral service was presided over by His Grace Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia. Several clergy were present for the service: Archimandrite and Former Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery, Geronta Stephanos, who is also the spiritual father of Holy Cross Monastery, Archimandrite Ieronymos, Abbot of St George Monastery, Yellow Rock, Archimandrite Eusebios, Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery, Mangrove Mountain, Reverend Father Nicholas Stavropoulos, Reverend Priest Monk Father Nektarios of Pantanassa Monastery, Revd Father Anastasios Kalogerakis, Deacon Fr Paisios of St George Monastery, and Deacon Christos Carafotias.

The funeral service was exceptionally moving. It was held in the chapel of St Iakovos at Holy Cross Monastery, where sister Agatha had with much zeal and commitment laboured for 26 years alongside Abbess Philothei and the sisters of Holy Cross Monastery to establish the new Monastery, which has become a new spiritual centre established according to the traditional Orthodox Monastic ethos and spirituality.

Present at the funeral was also the family of sister Agatha, her devout mother Mrs Katerina Anastasiou and her two sisters Maria and Anastasia along with their families.

The service was a traditional monastic funeral service. It is likely to be the first time that this service has been prayed in Australia. The faithful, with much compunction, attention and prayerfulness participated in the three hour long funeral service.

During the service His Grace Bishop Christodoulos with much compunction addressed the faithful, ‘In this chapel today and through this funeral service we lead sister Agatha to the Kingdom of Heaven, in this service our prayers are united and go before sister Agatha’s soul towards the Kingdom of Heaven…today we farewell sister Agatha who was tonsured with the blessed and Great Angelic Schema and who gave herself to the crucified Lord but also the resurrected Lord… our sister Agatha is now rejoicing with the angels, because she was a pure soul; in her soul she burned for Jesus Christ, but above all her soul was filled with prayer and love for God. Let us therefore walk in her footsteps, to continue in prayer, because when our Lord called her to depart this life she was in prayer, that is, with her prayer rope in her hand….’

His Grace Bishop Christodoulos, all the clergy, Gerontissa Philothei with the sisters, and faithful accompanied sister Agatha to the grave site. At the end of the burial service all were called upon, according to the monastic tradition, to pray 100 times, ‘May God grant eternal rest to her soul’ and then with one heart all chanted ‘Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life!’

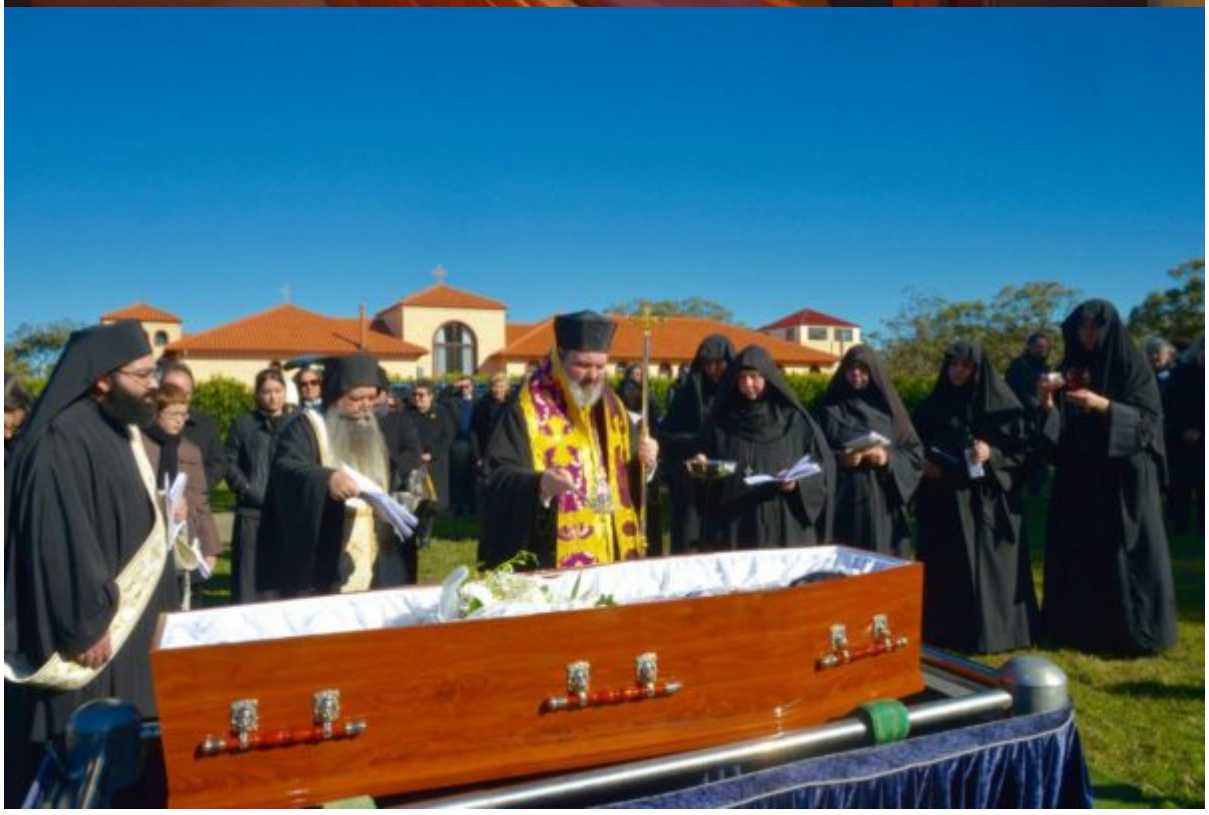
Following the service the monastery offered a lunch to all present. At the lunch the Abbess of the monastery, Gerontissa Philothei, expressed her gratitude to His Eminence for His paternal care. She also thanked His Grace Bishop Christodoulos for His presence at the funeral service, along with all the clergy. Gerontissa Philothei expressed her deep condolences, words of comfort and prayers to the family of sister Agatha, especially to her devout mother Mrs Katherine Anastasiou. Finally, Gerontissa thanked the young ladies who so beautifully chanted the service and the volunteers who worked tirelessly to prepare for the funeral service and the lunch.

Sister Agatha is now close to God from where she intercedes not only for her Abbess, Gerontissa Philothei and the sisters of Holy Cross Monastery, but for our Archbishop, the clergy, the monasteries and all the Orthodox faithful of Australia. May her memory be eternal.























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