

Panagia Tsambika in Rhodes (8 September)



Centuries ago the icon of Panagia Tsambika was located at the Holy Monastery Panagia Kykkos in Cyprus. In a miraculous manner, the icon would leave Cyprus and go to the mountain Zambiki of the Archangel in Rhodes. This would upset the monks of Kykkos and they went to all lengths within their power to confine the icon.

On Mount Zambiki the icon hid in a cypress tree. In the opposite region near the spring of Aimahiou a humble shepherd lived and he saw a strange light coming from Zambiki. At first he ignored it, but after three days of seeing the light he decided to climb the mountain to see what it was. Afraid that it might be thieves, he first notified the men of the village who grabbed their guns and went with him.

When they reached the top of the mountain they saw to their amazement that the light came from the icon of the Virgin Mary on the cypress tree, and it lit the icon like a vigil light. It was from this that the icon received its name, as the word tsamba in the local dialect of Rhodes means “spark” or “small fire”; the word has Turkish origins. The villagers brought the icon to the village, but the icon would leave and go to the spot it was found. After three repeated attempts it was figured that it was the will of the Panagia to have a church built on that spot.

This cypress tree is still there and can be viewed by the faithful. On its root there is a hole which sometimes releases warm or cold air, depending on the weather.



It should be underlined that the miraculous icon of Panagia Tsambika came from Cyprus three times. The monks of Kykkou Monastery located the icon in Rhodes and they took it back to Cyprus, but the icon returned to the same spot in Rhodes. In order to verify that the icon really left Cyprus the monks burned the back of the icon. This burned part can be seen very clearly till today.

From that time the icon has never left Rhodes. There were attempts to bring it to other parts of Greece for it to be venerated by the faithful, but each time in a miraculous manner the icon would return back to Rhodes. However in 2002 a chapel was built in honor of Panagia Tsambikas in Pera Horio of Cyprus, and the faithful asked for the consecration to take place in July 24th. The icon of Panagia Tsambikas was brought from Rhodes by Metropolitan Kyrillos of Rhodes with three priests. For three days the icon remained in Cyprus and was returned back to Rhodes by the Metropolitan.

The Holy Monastery of Panagia Tsambikas celebrates its feast day on September 8th to honor the Nativity of the Theotokos, and on the Third Sunday of the Great Fast when we also commemorate the Holy Cross.

One of the oldest miracles associated with Panagia Tsambika is tied around the buildings which surround the Monastery. These buildings belonged to a Turkish Pasha whose wife was unable to bear children. Learning of Panagia Tsambika, the

wife of the Pasha prayed to her and ate the wick which burned the fire of the vigil lamp before the holy icon. Soon thereafter she found out she was pregnant, though the Pasha did not believe it and even believed the child was from another man. When the child was born, however, it held within its hand the wick the mother had eaten. As a thank offering, the Pasha gave all his property surrounding the Monastery to the Monastery.



Lower Panagia Tsambika

Panagia Tsambika is unique but she is honored and venerated in two places. The one monastery is high on the Sacred Hill, where the Higher Panagia, or the Lady (Kyra) is venerated. The other monastery, which is also a center of religious joy and consolation for the believers, is by the highway and it is called Panagia of Lower Tsambika.

In the region that the well-known and old Panagia Tsambika monastery lies today, there was a temple of the goddess Artemis in the classical period, as it is stated in an Epigram, that is a Sacred Law, where sacrifices and oblations to the goddess Artemis, the patron of hunting, are mentioned. An ancient necropolis has been located, with tombs dating from the Mycenaean and the Hellenistic periods. An ancient inscription was also found, which describes the offering of sacrifices by a woman to the goddess Artemis.

On the 8th of September every year thousands of believers come from all over the

island to honor Virgin Mary. The church itself is of the Dodecanese type and it is covered externally with concave tiles. The floor of the church is covered with pebbles, as it was common in older times to cover the yards and the floors of houses and churches with black and white sea pebbles in various religious patterns. This fine church has an excellent wooden icon screen. The icons date from the 19th century, while the icon screen is older.

Higher Panagia Tsambika

Whilst sunning yourself on a sunbed at Tsambika you may notice a tiny white building atop the hill on the left hand side of the bay (as you face the sea). This is Panagia Tsambika Monastery, sometimes also known as Kyra (Our Lady). To visit it and admire the tremendous views there from the top, then you have to navigate a concrete road that twists and turns steeply up from the main road. The rest of the journey has to be made on foot – 307 stony stairs. The Monastery itself is tiny but has a reputation for helping women conceive – on its feast day barren women climb on their knees or barefoot up here to pray for children and when the happy event occurs the child is often called Tsambiko (boy) or Tsambika (girl). This name is unique on Rhodes. If you doubt this habit, just call this name out on a busy street in Rhodes, and you will see how successful the Monastery is. For a contemporary and detailed account of this miracle, read [here](#).

Apolytikion

The island of Rhodes, has your icon, as a fountain of your gifts, and praises you as the Theotokos Tsambika, boasting of your divinely-inspired wonders, singing to you the greeting of the Angel, crying out: Rejoice Virgin graced by God, the salvation of the Christian people.

Ἀπολυτίκιον (Σύνθεση του Μητροπολίτου Ρόδου κ.κ. Κυρίλλου)

Κρήνην ἔχουσα των δωρεών σου την εἰκόνα σου, ἡ νήσος Ρόδος, Θεοτόκε Τσαμπίκα γεραίρει σε, καὶ καυχωμένη ενθέως σοις θαύμασι, τον ασπασμόν του Ἀγγέλου προσάδοι σοι, Χαίρε κράζουσα, Παρθένε θεοχαρίτῳτε, λαοῦ του χριστωνύμου το διάσωμα.

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