

THE ICON “NOT MADE BY HANDS”

The legend of the Icon “NOT MADE MY HANDS” has been a part of the oral and written tradition of our Holy Church for centuries. No less of an authority than the famous church historian Eusebius relates this facinating tale.

We are tolld of King Abgar of Edessa, who suffered from the dreaded disease of leprosy. He had heard of the miraculous works of Jesus of Nazareth, but being too ill to travel, Abgar dispatched an artist named Ananias to find Christ and draw an image of Him. A man of strong faith, Abgar believed that if only he could gaze upon a LIKENESS OF Christ, he would be healed.

Ananias arrived in Jerusalem, where he found Jesus was preparing Himself and His Apostles for His ensuing arrest, trial and crucifixion. With no time to pose for a portrait, it is said that Jesus merely applied a piece of linen cloth to His face, leaving an unmistakable impression on the fabric!

With great haste, Ananias returned to King Abgar with this precious treasure. When the king saw this miraculous icon, he was healed instantly. The icon “NOT MADE BY HANDS” remained in Edessa until 951 A.D., when it was brought to Constantinople as a means of healing the ailing Emperor Romanos. This revered relic disappeared when Constantinople was plundered and looted by the Crusaders. Its whereabouts are still unknown to this day.

Today is the Sunday of the PRODIGIAL SON. As our Church continues to place the image of repentance before us, the words of the Kondakion must be on our lips as well: When I foolishly separated myself from your Father Glory, I squandered in wickedness the riches You had given me. So now I cry to You with the voice of the Prodigal Son, saying “I have sinned before You, O Merciful Father, receive me, repentant, and make me as one of Your servants.”