

**Greece's impressive gift to France, on the occasion of the reopening of the Notre Dame Cathedral.**



A highly symbolic image, depicting Our Virgin Mary of the bees, was offered on behalf of Greece by the President of the Republic, at the inauguration of Notre Dame Cathedral on December 7, 2024, coinciding with the opening of the Beekeeping Conference at the 15th Honey Festival.

The choice is not accidental, since on April 15, 2019, when the Notre Dame Cathedral was destroyed by fire, the 200,000 bees living on the roof of the building miraculously survived. This event was reported by world news agencies. However, miraculous events and signs of the times never happen by chance! The Virgin Mary did not protect this built temple, but she protected these blessed insects, the bees that work tirelessly for the salvation of life on the planet and people.

Hieromonk George Alevras Kavsokalyvitis, who was then Righteous of the Skete of Kavsokalyvion on Mount Athos, immediately gave orders for a faithful copy of the icon of the Virgin Mary of the Bees to be made and donated by the Greek Nation to the people of France, honoring the Virgin Mary who, with Her Grace, protected the bees.

The copy of the icon was completed 5 years later and was delivered to the Byzantine Cultural Center "Panagia Melissou" in Trikala, at the vespers of the Akathist Hymn on April 19, 2024.

Elder George states: "The bee is a unique gift of God to man, a lasting blessing that we must preserve as the apple of our eye. We must protect the bee and follow its example as a model of God's society." We must, for the glory of God and in harmony with the spirit of the Saints who used the example of the bee, present today to the whole world the excellent and ideal society of the bee for the good of humanity and the good of the whole world. "I hope that the bees will inspire us to rebuild the church of unity and love and to live again like the first Christians."

The first simple icon of the Virgin Mary of the Bees was created on the occasion of a miraculous event that had been happening for many years in the Holy Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos, in Katousi Karditsa, where the abbot of the Monastery was Fr. Georgios Alevras. The bees lived within the sanctuary of the temple.

During the Divine Mass on the feast of the Virgin Mary on September 8, they flew without being disturbed and without disturbing anyone, and the priests, along with the antidoros, also distributed a piece of honeycomb with honey as a blessing to the faithful. This event lasted for several years until 2004.

The Byzantine art icon of the Virgin Mary of the bees is a masterpiece, with deep spiritual significance. The icon, after remaining in the Catholicon of the Holy Trinity of Kavsokalyvia until November 8, 2018, was transferred on November 9 to the Byzantine Cultural Center of Panagia Melissos in Trikala, where it is kept to this day and constitutes its official icon. The two brothers created another copy of the icon, which is kept in their Monastery.