

ONE MORNING ON PATMOS

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.”

[Revelation 1:1]

Years ago, prior to completion of my studies at the seminary, I had the blessing of spending two months in the monastery of St. John the Theologian on Patmos. In Revelation 1:9, St. John writes: *“I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”* Being there because of persecution, the elderly saint received the revelation from our Lord while in the cave.

If you were to go there today, you would go past all the tourist traps, including vendors, and – half-way up the mountain – be able to enter into the Cave of the Apocalypse, where John received the revelation. As you enter that cave, you notice an Iconostasion directly ahead of you, as part of the Chapel of St. Anna; then, off to the right, is another chapel – dedicated to the Revelation. As you stand inside that cave, within the natural curvatures of the stone walls, you are enveloped by the warmth of the love of God and inspired by His grace – standing in the exact space where St. John, the beloved disciple and friend of Jesus, received God’s message.

Continuing up along the same mountain, you would reach the monastery dedicated to the Theologian. St. John’s stands majestically above the entire island and, on a clear day, from the terrace over the top floor of the guest’s room one can see twin peaks from the mountainous terrain across the way in Asia Minor. During my time there, a particularly inspiring moment occurred. One weekday morning, on the first of August, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the celebrant priest, the abbot, and all the monks left the church and went out to the exonarthex (the outer narthex) for a blessing of the waters – that is a common practice throughout the Orthodox world.

What was unique was that the abbot was holding the skull, surrounded by a simple, silver crown, of the Apostle Thomas! At the conclusion of the Agiasmos, we each approached, one by one, to venerate the holy relic of this often-noted disciple of Jesus. On that memorable summer morning, it was an interesting junction to observe: a sizeable relic of St. Thomas while visiting the monastery of St. John!

While all the other disciples fled, it was St. John alone who stayed with Jesus at the Cross. And then, after the Resurrection, hearing of the good news from all of his fellow disciples, St. Thomas doubted their testimony. On the one hand, unflagging love and faith; on the other, doubt. Yet, as St. Gregory the Great writes: *“More does the doubt of Thomas help us to believe, than the faith of the Disciples who believed. For when he, through touching, is brought to believe, our soul, putting all doubt aside, is made firm in faith.”*

As we progress through the hot and humid days of yet another summer, let us thank our Lord for all of His blessings. Let us remember Him, as we want Him to remember us – through all times. Let us seek Him at all times and at every opportunity – receiving Holy Communion on a frequent basis – through the reading of Holy Scriptures. Few might following the example of St. John – let us stay with the Lord at all times; following that of St. Thomas, let our faith overcoming the darkness of doubt.

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