



Monastery of Kykkos

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
DEPUTY MINISTRY OF TOURISM

The monastery of the Virgin of Kykkos is located at an altitude of approximately 1,200 meters, about one kilometer from mountain Kykkos, a 1,318 m high peak in the western part of the Troodos range. That peak is also known by the name Throni or Throni of Panagia. The monastery is the most famous and rich among the active Cypriot monasteries of our time. It is also one of the most important in terms of history as well as national and social work.

The Holy Monastery of Panagia of Kykkos was founded around the end of the 11th century by Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, and since then has housed the icon of the Virgin reputedly painted by Apostle Luke.

According to the tradition concerning the establishment of the Monastery, a virtuous hermit called Esaias used to live in a cave on the mountain of Kykkos. One day, Manuel Boutomites, the Byzantine governor of the island, who was spending his summer holidays at a village in the Marathasa valley went hunting and was lost in the forest. He came upon the hermit and asked him how he could go back. Esaias wished to avoid all things of this world and so did not reply. His attitude angered Boutomites, who resorted to verbal and even physical abuse.

Shortly afterwards, Boutomites was taken ill with an incurable disease. This led him to recall his inhuman behaviour towards Esaias and asked God to make him well so that he could go to the hermit and ask him for his forgiveness. God answered Boutomites's prayers, but He also appeared to the hermit and revealed that everything had been the result of His will. God advised Esaias to ask Boutomites to bring to Cyprus the icon of the Virgin painted by Apostle Luke, which was kept in the imperial palace in Constantinople.

When Boutomites heard the hermit's wish, he considered it impossible. But Esaias explained it was God's will and so they agreed to travel together to Constantinople. Indeed they did, but time went by and Boutomites could not find the right opportunity to seek the Emperor's audience in order to request the icon. So he gave Esaias other icons and sent him back to Cyprus. Suddenly, the Emperor's daughter was taken ill with

the same disease as had Boutomites. The governor then went before Emperor Alexios, recounted to him his personal experience with the monk and assured him that his daughter would be cured if the icon of the Virgin was sent to Cyprus. Unable to find an alternative, the Emperor agreed. His daughter recovered instantly. Not wishing to part with the icon, however, the Emperor ordered a painter to make a copy of the icon, with the intention of sending that one to Cyprus. That night, however, the Virgin appeared to Alexios in his sleep and announced that it was her will that the icon be sent to Cyprus and that he keep the copy.

On the following day, the royal boat sailed for Cyprus, where the hermit took delivery of the icon. Tradition has it that during the procession towards the Troodos Mountains, even the trees bent their branches in piety. A church and a monastery were erected with funds dispatched by Emperor Alexios in order to house the icon of the Virgin.

The monastery is widely known by the short name Kykkos, or as the Virgin of Kykkos. The origin of the name, which seems to date from the Byzantine era, is not known. One view is that it derives from the Kermes oak tree (*Quercus coccifera*), also called *kokkos*. Efraim the Athenian, Patriarch of Jerusalem, seems to adopt this interpretation. In his work entitled “Description of the Venerable and Royal Monastery of Kykkos 1751”, he makes reference to mount Kokkos, subsequently renamed to Kykkos. On the other hand, tradition associated the name Kykkos with the call of a bird. According to that tradition, a bird with human voice flew around in the area presaging the establishment of the Monastery of the Virgin with these verses:

*“Kykkou, Kykkou, kykkos’ hill
A monastery the site shall fill
A golden girl shall enter in
And never shall come out again”.*

The full name of the monastery is “The Holy, Royal and Stavropegic Monastery of the Virgin of Kykkos”. Royal since it was founded and funded by order of the Byzantine Emperor Alexios Komnenos. Stavropegic since a cross had been placed at its

foundations. A monastery is considered stavropegic or patriarchal when it comes directly under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch and is thus not under the administrative supervision of the local metropolitan or bishop. In accordance with the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church, when a monastery is founded within the Patriarch's jurisdiction he has the right to send a cross, which is placed at the foundations of the monastery, thus denoting that the monastery is directly under his authority.

As far as the buildings within the monastic complex are concerned, they date back to various periods. The church is at the centre of the monastery. Around it are built the various sections such as the priory, the *synodikon* (= the official reception area), the monks' cells, the library, the museum, the reception rooms, the office of the administrative committee, etc. In the middle of the complex there is a flagstone paved courtyard with a well. Originally, the church and most of the other monastery buildings were constructed of wood, which abounded in the surrounding area, since the Kykkos mountain top is close to the Paphos forest. After the fire that broke out in 1365, the monastery was rebuilt, using wood and stone, and when it was destroyed again in 1541, it was rebuilt wholly of stone. The church was made single aisled, but it was enlarged in 1745 and two more aisles were added. The middle aisle was dedicated to the Virgin hence the monastery celebrates on 8 September (Nativity) and 15 August (Dormition), when religious fetes are organized. The right aisle is dedicated to All Saints and the left one to Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The outer buttresses and the high walls render the monastery an imposing castle-like character.

Most of the outer walls and open-air corridors of the monastery have now undergone renovation and been decorated with various religious murals. Those murals are mostly mosaics (with enamel and glass frit tesserae with golden leaf) and adorn the entrance and the walls of the interior court and corridors in such a way as to bind harmoniously with the distinctive architecture of the complex. The mosaics and frescoes are the work of the Kepola brothers, Cypriot icon painters, and of others from Greece and Romania.

These are some of the most characteristic scenes on the ground floor:

- To the left of the main entrance: mosaic depicting Apostle Luke painting the icon of the Virgin.
- Walking towards the corridor to the right and then turning slightly to the left, we see frescoes depicting:
 - to the right: monk Esaias in the mountains and governor Boutomites striking him with a stick; Boutomites on his sick bed;
 - to the left: miracles worked by the Icon of the Virgin – Porfyrios, who fell off his horse and was helped by the Virgin; the Virgin helping sailors.
- To the north we see: scenes with miracles worked by the Virgin; Panagia Eleousa (the Virgin of the Kykkos); Turks looting the monastery after hanging Abbot Joseph in 1821.
- Entrance to the chapel of Ephrem the Syrian: on the first floor we have frescoes and mosaics depicting angels and scenes from the lives of Jesus and the Virgin.

The steps lead us down to the lower level of the monastery, where there is an open courtyard with a large well at its centre and a shop selling the products of the monastery. Across the shop there is a huge mosaic with the Dormition of the Virgin. If we look towards the southwest, we see the belfry.

The belfry was built much later than the church, in 1882, since during the Ottoman occupation Christians were not allowed to ring their bells. There are six bells, of which the biggest is Russian made and weighs 1,280 kg.

To the north we see the monastery church, where the miraculous icon of *Panagia Kykkotissa* (the Holy Virgin of Kykkos) is kept. The icon is associated with the founding of the monastery and constitutes one of the most significant aspects of its presence. It is also known as *Panagia Eleousa*, the source of mercy. The Virgin is depicted holding Jesus in her right arm. According to tradition, *Panagia Kykkotissa* is one of the three icons of the Virgin painted by Apostle Luke, by divine order, seven years after the

Resurrection of Christ. In 1756 the icon was covered in silver-gilt (a “shirt” in ecclesiastical terminology), whereas the cover was renewed in 1795. The Virgin’s face is veiled and is never revealed, either because such was the wish of Emperor Alexios, or in order to inspire greater respect. It is said that in 1669, Gerasimos, the Patriarch of Alexandria, dared raise the cover in order to see the Virgin’s face, but he was castigated for his sacrilegious act and was obliged to ask for God’s forgiveness in tears.

Russian monk Basil Barsky, who visited the Monastery in 1735, wrote that the monks revealed the Icon only in periods of drought. They first carried it to the nearby mountain top known as “Throni”, and then they sang a *paraklesis*, a supplication. They avoided altogether looking at the Virgin’s face, which was turned towards the sky. The people of Cyprus greatly loved the Holy Icon, which is renowned across the Orthodox world. Several icons in many countries, such as Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, Egypt and Ethiopia, are dedicated to the Virgin of Kykkos, indicating the great respect it enjoys among the Orthodox peoples. People from various parts of the world come to the Monastery seeking the help of the miracle-working Mother of God, asking Her either to cure them of some illness or to grant them the strength they need to cope with life’s tribulations.

This is why, as we shall soon see, the church is filled with votive offerings attesting to the Virgin’s miracles. For instance, a part of a swordfish saw was offered to commemorate how some sailors were saved from certain drowning when a huge swordfish punctured the sides of the ship in 1718. A Turk behaved irreverently towards the Holy Icon and his arm was paralyzed. A bronze arm serves as a reminder of that incident. In general, all votive offerings tell stories of miracles worked by the Virgin, many of which have been sung by verse writers.

Let us talk of a miracle associated with an infidel Arab. One day the Arab shot an arrow and struck the Virgin’s knee on her icon. Blood started flowing instantly from the dry wood, shaming iconoclasts who refused to worship the holy icons! The Arab was scared witless and ran towards his house, but he was struck dead before making it there.

No written record of that miracle survives in Cyprus, but we do find such a record in Russia. An old Russian text describing the Icon of Panagia Kykkotissa says, inter alia: "The Virgin (of Kykkos) sits on the throne holding Christ and is flanked by two angels; an Arab shot his arrow to the Virgin's knee and drew blood". In addition to written testimonies, a unique depiction of the miracle has been preserved to date on an old Russian-style icon housed in the Yaroslav museum of Fine Arts.

We now enter the church, a domed basilica. The iconostasis belongs to the 18th century. The valuable heirlooms kept in the church include crosses, portable icons, a wooden antimimension, encolpia, gospels ornamented with precious stones, silver ciboria, silver and gold ecclesiastical utensils (disks, chalices, etc), episcopal mitres, belts and vestments, silver tabernacles, oil-lamps, and chandeliers, holy relics and other objects. The interior of the church is taken up by the admirable frescoes made in 1975-1984 by the Cypriot icon painter Christos Georgiou, inspired by the pictorial cycles on the Life of Christ and on the Life of the Virgin. The frescoes in the Holy Bema (the Sanctuary), which are just as admirable, date from the late 18th or early 19th century. Hanging from the central aisle roof are the two Russian chandeliers brought by Abbot Kleopas in 1913. The miraculous icon of Panagia Eleousa is on the iconostasis, among the other icons. It is the one painted by Apostle Luke according to tradition and is now covered with a silver-gilt "shirt", encrusted with precious and semi-precious gems, under a hand-embroidered cloth with a delicate tissue. To the right of the icon we see the replica of an arm, reminiscent of the miracle with the Arab.

A large silver cross weighing 8.5 kg is a very recent addition (October 2011) to the iconostasis.

A further change was made this year to the interior of the church. The large hall adjacent to the north aisle which was in the past used for baptisms has been converted to a Vestry that is open to the public. It houses a remarkable collection of silver and gilt reliquaries holding the relics of many saints.

The monastery inspires awe and admiration, thanks not only to its wealth and prestige, but also thanks to its work through the ages. In the past, especially during the Ottoman occupation, it had developed diverse national activities. Archbishops and other important clerics emerged from its ranks. The monastery operated a school and contributed to the great cause of enlightenment through financing book publications, inter alia.

Unlike most other monasteries, the Kykkos monastery is not cenobitic. Its monks are salaried and can have private property, which however comes to the monastery after their passing. Today the fraternity numbers nearly thirty monks. The Most Reverend Bishop of Kykkos and Tylliria Nikephoros is the Abbot of the monastery, which is also the See of the Kykkos Bishopric.

The monastery continues to play an active role, supporting people in need not only in Cyprus, but also abroad. A sound example over recent years is the monastery's contribution in the form of medicines to the "Doctors of the World", thus assisting with their efforts to soothe the suffering of victims of wars or natural disasters. The monastery's activities and contributions have grown by leaps and bounds, as evidenced by the number of metochia (dependencies) and other centres under its jurisdiction. Here is an indicative list:

- **Metochia (Dependencies) abroad**

There are dependencies in Constantinople, Smyrna, Prousa, Caucasus, Georgia, Tripolis, Syria, Beyrouth, Antalya, Andrianoupolis, Kos, Serres, and Philippoupolis.

- **Metochia (Dependencies) in Cyprus**

1. Agios Prokopios, in Nicosia.
2. Archangel, in Lakatamia, where there is a monastic fraternity with three individuals.
3. Holy Monastery of St. Eftychios and St. Nicholas, in Paphos, with one monk.

4. Panagia tou Sinti, in the village of Pentalia, in the Paphos district. That monastery is an ancient monument restored and awarded the Europa Nostra award.
5. Xiropotamos, monastery of the Saints Sergios and Vackhos in Pentayia, Morfou. Under Turkish occupation since 1974.

- **Central Office of the Kykkos Monastery in Nicosia / Kykkos Monastery Nursery**

Near the Metochi of Agios Prokopios, there is a Nursery producing and selling fruit bearing and ornamental plants. It is an impressive “Garden” covering a large area and adorned with busts of the monastery’s abbots, various flowers, bushes, trees, artificial ponds and spaces for birds and animals.

- **School of Byzantine Music**

In the Metochi of Agios Prokopios, in Nicosia, there is a School of Byzantine Music which offers free tuition.

- **Centre of Social and Spiritual Support**

The Centre of Social and Spiritual Support is located in the Metochi of Agios Prokopios, near the Seminary. The Centre’s mission is to offer help, support, love and care to human beings in order to soothe their pain away. The centre coordinates with similar institutions in Cyprus and abroad.

- **The “Eleousa tou Kykkou” Foundation**

The Foundation operates a facility near the Anthoupolis intersection offering daily care and lodging to persons with mental disabilities.

- **Museum of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos**

The museum was created and operates along the applicable international museology standards. It houses collections of Byzantine icons, vestments,

manuscripts, ecclesiastical utensils, and early-Christian artifacts. We will have the opportunity to visit the museum and admire the heirlooms.

- **Library of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos**

The Monastery Library contains seventeen thousand volumes, of which two thousand are incunabula. It also includes approximately 150 manuscripts, an Archive of Greek Manuscripts and an Archive of Ottoman Manuscripts. The Library is open to students and researchers.

- **World Forum for Religions and Cultures**

The World Forum for Religions and Cultures is a charitable, not-for-profit, non-governmental institution established by the Holy Monastery of Kykkos in order to contribute to the peaceful coexistence of populations and to promote mutual understanding among religions and cultures.

The Institution comprises the following departments:

- Department of Studies and Research: this department conducts studies and research within the framework of European and national programmes aiming to improve the religious and cultural understanding among Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and other groups as well. Further, the department aims to facilitate the social integration of non-Greek Orthodox immigrants, non-Orthodox Christians, non-Christians, etc.
- Department of Communications and Events: this department organizes conferences, symposia and lectures and promotes the experiential familiarity with Orthodoxy. The department also organizes cultural presentations (religious, archaeological and folkloric) and cultivates international collaboration with similar institutions.
- Department of Educational Affairs: this department sets up seminars, lectures and educational programmes.

➤ Department of Publications and the World Wide Web: this department employs Internet communications to promote the above subject matters, to publish conference proceedings, studies and researches relevant to the Forum's objectives, and to further the interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

- **Archangel Cultural Foundation of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos**

The "Cultural Foundation" was established in 1986 and is housed at the renovated Metochi of the "Archangelos" Monastery, in Nicosia.

The Foundation encompasses the following activities:

- Research Centre of the Kykkos Monastery. The Centre aims to promote writing, publishing, organizing symposia and seminars, and research primarily into Monasteriology and the History of the Church of Cyprus.
- Library of the Research Centre of the Kykkos Monastery. The Centre's Library houses forty thousand volumes.
- The Centre of Treasure of Cypriot Greek – Historical Lexicon of the Greek Language in Cyprus. The "Archangelos" Metochi houses the Centre of Treasure of the Cypriot Greek Language which has created a database of the Greek Language of Cyprus since antiquity, along the standards of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.
- Laboratory for the Restoration of Manuscripts and Kykkos Monastery Museum Offices. These are laboratories where restoration is undertaken of books, manuscripts, heirlooms, paintings and textiles.
- Monastery of Kykkos Events Hall. This is a hall with a 500-persons capacity. It serves as a venue for speeches, lectures, conferences and other cultural events. It boasts a simultaneous translation system.

Let us now talk about a much-revered personality which is inseparably associated with the Holy Monastery of Kykkos. The first president of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop

Makarios III, served as a novice in this monastery. In accordance with his wish, he was entombed at the Throni top, three kilometers to the west of the monastery.

Archbishop Makarios was born Michail Christodoulou Mouskos in the village of Panagia of the Paphos district on 13 August 1913. In 1926, at the age of thirteen, he was admitted to Kykkos Monastery as a novice. He also completed his secondary education in Nicosia. In 1942 he graduated from the Athens University with a degree in Theology and was then appointed priest in the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, without giving up his interest in theology. In 1948, he was offered a World Council of Churches scholarship and thus began his studies at the Boston University in Massachusetts.

In the course of his studies, in 1948, he was elected Bishop of Kition and returned to Cyprus, where two years later he was elected Archbishop of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Cyprus.

He immediately displayed his charismatic leadership traits as head of the Church. However, his relations with the UK authorities governing Cyprus were not at all smooth. Like many other leading Greek Cypriot figures of the late 1940s and early 1950s, he was a fervent supporter of the Union with Greece. On 9 March 1956, the colonial administration deported Makarios to Seychelles, together with Kyprianos, the Metropolitan of Kyrenia, Papa-Stavros Papagathangelou and Polykarpos Ioannides. They remained there until 17 April 1957, when they returned to Athens. As from July 1957, Makarios started making public statements departing from the struggle for the Union and advocating independence. Cyprus was eventually declared an independent state on 16 August 1960, after the Zurich-London Agreement. Makarios took on the office of the president having won the 13 December 1959 elections with 66.29% of the votes.

In February 1968, Makarios was re-elected President of the Republic of Cyprus.

From the moment he took on the presidency, he enjoyed wide acceptance among the people (both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) thanks to his personality, his past record and his role in the Cypriot cause. His prestige and moral stature had won him

international acclaim even in the non-Christian Arab world. His participation in the Non-Aligned Movement secured him international recognition, whereas the reverence due his clerical status was never questioned. Nevertheless, Makarios had often incurred the displeasure of Greek governments, especially from 1953 onwards.

On 8 March 1970 there was an assassination attempt against Makarios, who was riding a helicopter to the Machairas Monastery to attend the memorial service for the EOKA Deputy Leader Grigoris Afxentiou. Makarios did not sustain any injuries, and the pilot though wounded managed to land the helicopter in a plot near the Archbishopric.

Makarios never underestimated the importance of his duties as primate of the Church of Cyprus. Thus, in March 1971 he travelled to Kenya, where he set the foundation stone of the Seminary which was completed in 1974 and funded by the Archdiocese. During that visit, he baptized approximately five thousand natives.

In February 1973, Makarios was elected President of the Republic for the third time. On 7 March of that year, the three Bishops of Cyprus decided that "Archbishop Makarios III should be removed from his episcopal throne and be defrocked" because he did not heed their demand that he resign the Presidency.

The action of the three Bishops was condemned by the people and was not recognized by the Heads of the Orthodox Churches.

A Major Synod convened in July 5 and 6 and again on July 14, 1973. After declaring the three Bishops' decision unconstitutional and, therefore, null and void, the Synod called the three Bishops to revert to the previous relation vis-à-vis the Archbishop. When they refused to obey, they were defrocked.

On 15 July 1974, the Athens military junta sponsored a coup to oust Makarios. The Archbishop fled to the Monastery of Kykkos in time to save his life and in the afternoon of that same day he went to Paphos, where he addressed the people. His message said: "Greek Cypriot People! You hear a well-known voice. You know who is speaking to you. I am Makarios, I am alive. I am the one you elected as your leader. I am not dead, as the Athens junta and its representatives here would like me to be. I am alive.

And I stand by your side, fellow soldier and flag bearer in our common cause". Thus the Archbishop quite categorically refuted the announcement of his death by the state radio station of Cyprus.

Then, via the British military base and Malta, he travelled to London where he had a secret meeting with Bülent Ecevit on the following day and afterwards flew to the USA to go to the UN Headquarters and present a report on the situation in his country.

On 20 July of the same year, using the coup as a pretext Turkey invaded Cyprus and captured 36% of the lands of the Republic, ousting 28% of the Greek Cypriots from their fatherland, killing non-combatants and causing great destruction.

Makarios died on 3 August 1977, in Nicosia, of a myocardial infarction, at the age of 63.

Makarios was proclaimed an Honorary Professor of the Faculty of Theology at the Universities of Boston and Athens, of the Law Schools of the Universities of Kerala in India, Thessaloniki, Bogota in Colombia, and Malta, and of the Panteon School of Political Sciences. He was also bestowed the supreme decorations of most Churches and States and the gold medals of Greek and foreign Municipalities.

Let us now continue our trip and visit his tomb. Exiting the main gate of the Kykkos Monastery, we turn right and walk up towards the top of the mountain. Coming to the first bend, we see on our left the monastery's winery. A further 200 meters bring us to a stone structure on our right, supporting five church bells. They too belong to the monastery. Continuing our walk, we reach the end of the way, a large square where visitors can park their cars and pay a visit to the pavilion, a very recent addition.

Our gaze is immediately drawn to the imposing bronze statue of Archbishop Makarios III. It is 10 meters high and weighs 13 tons. It is the work of Nikos Kotziamanis, a Cypriot artist from Morfou, who lives permanently in London. For 21 years the statue adorned the court of the capital's Archbishopric and was carried here in 2011, despite the reactions of certain citizens. Archbishop Crystostomos II stated he had taken that decision because the statue *better blended in the environment* and because he wished due reverence be paid to the first President of the Republic of Cyprus. It should be

noted that Makarios himself had wanted to be buried high up in the mountain, “so as to allow his gaze to rest upon his children”, as he used to say.

Continuing uphill, we follow the wide path flanked by high walls of volcanic stone adorned with mosaics depicting saints, just like in the monastery. The mosaics are the works of two icon painters, a Cypriot and a Greek. After 250 meters, we enter the narrow climbing passage on our left which, 100 meters further up, terminates at the tomb. The Archbishop was laid horizontally with his head towards the West and his face turned towards the East. A marble inscribed stone covers the grave. The inscription is an excerpt from a speech he had delivered to the Cypriot people. Young Cypriot soldiers stand guard at the tomb every day. The tomb resembles a chapel. It was the Archbishop’s choice, as he had seen a similar grave abroad. Two flags, of Greece and Cyprus, are flown at all times.

Starting on the trip back, within 50 meters we find a vantage point which allows us to see the Paphos forest to the southwest, the occupied bay of Morfou to the northwest, and Olympus, the highest Troodos peak, slightly to the northeast.

From that vantage point, if we climb 100 meters we reach the peak of Throni, which also offers a spectacular view. The Kykkos Monastery recently constructed here a small, open chapel in the shape of a rotunda.

As you wander through the monastery grounds, you may come upon the most elderly monk, father Evgenios, or the monastery priest, father Charalambos. The priest lives at the guesthouse, 150 meters outside the monastery. Going back by car you pass by the guesthouse. Visitors can stay there, subject to advance booking with the monastery.

Another 150 meters beyond the guesthouse, we reach a large square with parking facilities and a café/restaurant for those who wish to rest while enjoying their coffee or meal and looking out to the sea. There are also shops selling traditional products and foods, as well as products of the monastery. Most popular among those are the wines, other traditional spirits such as zivania and commandaria, but also mountain herbal teas.

At a distance of approximately 10 kilometers from the monastery there is a Holy Water spring. On the way from the monastery to Pedoulas village, 8 kilometers to the right, you come to the Xystarouda picnic area. If you take the exit to the left and follow the dirt path which hugs the slope of the mountain, you will end up at the "Pyrgi" locality. The Holy Water spring is there, to your right, on the mountain side a little above the river. The water flows from an opening under a huge rock. According to tradition, a monk was walking in the area, tending to monastery business. It was harvest season, the weather was scorching hot, and the monk was tired and thirsty. He fell unconscious at that spot. When he regained his senses, he prayed and asked the Virgin to save him. He heard a voice telling him to strike the rock with his hand. He did so and sweet water started flowing out immediately.

Museum of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos

The Museum was established at the initiative of the Abbot and the fathers of the Holy, Royal and Stavropegic Monastery of Kykkos as an exhibition area and as a scientific vehicle. Its design followed closely upon the Abbot's concept of a space which would reflect the majesty and magnificence of the Byzantine Empire. The exhibition halls of the Museum lie to the northwest of the old Monastery complex and are accessible through the entrance at the north side of the interior Monastery courtyard.

The floors of the Museum are decorated with multicoloured marble and granite inlays, whereas the roofs are covered with carved and gilded walnut panels. The Museum collection includes unique artifacts, most of which are of gold, silver, enamel, ivory, silk, pearls and precious stones. The bee inlaid in the floor of the reception hall constitutes the emblem of the Abbot of the Monastery and symbolizes industriousness and orderliness. Bees pick up as much pollen as they need; so do people pick whatever they need to become better human beings.

Copies of exhibits, books and other objects can be purchased at the Museum store.

Room 1

The entrance through the south wall leads to Room 1, which contains pre-Christian antiquities from the wider Greek area. The basic collection consists of Cypriot ceramics spanning the period from the Copper Age (2500 BC) through the Roman era (4th century AD). It includes pottery of various types and uses, such as a complex ritual red-varnished vessel of the early Copper Age bearing on top a plank-shaped human figurine between two *kyathoi* (small dippers). A bowl with four birds in full relief around the rim, and a goat-shaped *rhyton* belong to the same period. A krater and a cup from the Cypro-Achaic period stand out with their rosettes, lotus flowers and full-relief bull heads. A group of red- and black-figure vases from Attica and Graecia Magna rounds off the exhibition. A black-figure amphora merits special mention: it dates from ca 520 BC and is attributed to the Antimenes Painter. On the obverse side, Theseus is depicted killing the Minotaur flanked by two female figures, Ariadne and goddess Athena, who are awaiting the outcome of the fight with restrained expressions. On the reverse side there is a four-horse chariot driven by a charioteer.

Room 2

This room houses various Byzantine and post-Byzantine exhibits, covering the period from the early Christian era (4th century AD) to the middle of the 20th century. The early Christian collection includes mainly bronze items, such as oil lamps, crosses of various types, censers, chandeliers, and candelabra. The section with silver-gilt objects is especially rich in content. There is a variety of ecclesiastical ritual utensils such as chalices, tabernacles patens, lamps, incense burners, chismals, reliquaries, brooches, crosiers, ciboria, candle holders, holy water basins, censers and gospel covers not only from Cyprus, but also from areas in Asia Minor (Smyrna, Cappadocia, and Constantinople) and from distant Russia.

The rich collection of silver-gilt covers of printed gospels with the pronounced baroque style includes signed works by Cypriot goldsmiths John and George of 1813, as well as by Hatzioannis from the village of Odou (1864).

Russian gospels are of a different texture and decoration. They bear multi-coloured enamel stetharia, whereas the decoration is complemented with precious and semi-precious stones.

The monastery boasts a sizable collection of lamps. Of particular interest is a 19th century lamp, richly and elaborately decorated with gilding, multicoloured glass frit, corals, cast heraldic lilies, double-headed eagles, and crescents, whereas the suspension chains consist of whole angels, anthemia and cherubim. This is an especially ornate object, typical of the fusion of elements from diverse art movements during the post-Byzantine period (Orthodox Christianity, West-European baroque and Islam).

The Monastery of Kykkos is also renowned for its collection of holy relics kept in reliquaries made mostly of wood or silver. An object of particular note in the collection of church silver is the large silver cross of the 18th century.

An *artophorion* is a “box of the Holy Communion”, a container where dry Eucharist is kept to be given to dying persons. Among the artophoria in the museum’s collection, a church-shaped silver-gilt one is worthy of particular mention. It is an 1807 item with strong baroque and neoclassical features, enriched with corals and pearls. On its panels are depicted the Virgin of Kykkos, Christ at the Last Supper and the Apostles walking towards Him in pairs.

One of the most intriguing artifacts of this category is a part of the silver-gilt cover of the Monastery’s palladium, i.e. of the holy icon of the Virgin of Kykkos. It was made by the 16th century goldsmith Grigorios Toumazos in Nicosia. Affixed at the bottom, there is a silver-gilt frieze, probably older, with busts of apostles and saints.

Of special interest among the works of micro-sculpture is a 1545 wooden cross with base, decorated with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, some of which are carved in full relief. This cross is one of the most significant existing works of its kind and is attributed to the well-known micro-sculptor George Laskaris.

The Monastery's wooden antimension of 1653, votive offering of Archbishop Nikephoros (1641–1674), is a rare sample of its kind. In addition to the carved symbols of the Holy Passion and to the relics affixed to it, it also bears an important 6th century ivory plaque with a representation of St. Peter, as well as a round cameo with St. Demetrios.

More impressive in terms of size and decoration is a 1710 cross for the consecration of the waters on Epiphany. It is known as the "Cross of the Mavri" (i.e. cross of the black woman) and it has a carved wood core with scenes from the life of Jesus.

Despite the destruction it suffered on four occasions due to fire, the Monastery of Kykkos still preserves numerous post-Byzantine fabrics in its vestries. One of the most beautiful items is a gold-embroidered *epitaphios* (a cloth icon depicting the preparation of Christ for burial), made in 1703 by the renowned embroideress Despoineta of Constantinople. The Lamentation is embroidered on red silk with golden and silver threads while the naked parts of the figures are rendered with wheat-coloured threads. A votive inscription runs the length of the bottom of the composition.

Ritual vestments of the various ranks of the Orthodox clergy (deacon, priest, bishop) are exhibited in two large showcases near the end of Room 2.

A separate showcase contains coins of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, as well as Byzantine and post-Byzantine jewellery.

The particular connection of the Virgin of Kykkos with the sea and the protection which she offered to seafarers are the subjects of a specially designed showcase.

A 6th century Holy Table (altar) stands out at the one end of the room. It probably comes from an early-Christian basilica. A 13th century processional icon of *Panagia Odigitria* (the Guiding Mother of God) stands on a wood leg, flanked by icons of the apostles, part of the Great Prayer, by the 17th century icon painter Pavlos Ierographos (Paul the Hierograph).

Octagonal Room

The exhibition of icons continues in the next room, an octagonal hall with a dome bearing an image of Christ Pantokrator surrounded by angels. The dome is the work of Sozos Giannoudis. A multi-coloured marble inlay, by George Gracier, adorns the granite floor. It depicts a peacock, symbol of the Heavenly Paradise. Wood carvings and ecclesiastical furniture are also exhibited in that hall.

The oldest icons date back to the 13th century: *Panagia Vrefokratousa* (the Virgin and Child), St. John the Baptist with the donor John Moutoullas in the lower right-hand corner, and St. Basil.

The icons of Christ's Ultimate Humility, with elements of Western influence, and of Panagia Kykkotissa date from late 16th, early 17th centuries.

The period of the Ottoman occupation (1571–1878) is represented with more works, mainly signed ones. Christ Enthroned, the Theotokos (Mother of God), and Archangel Michael are some of Paul the Hierograph's icons. Equally impressive is the icon of Archangel Michael with the donor, Abbot Meletios of Kykkos, by the Cypriot icon painter Michail.

The Calling of Apostles Andrew and Peter is a representative work by John Kornaros, the Cretan icon painter who stayed at the Kykkos Monastery for a considerable length of time towards the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, leaving behind an extensive collection of works.

The frescoes adorning the two sides of the octagonal hall date from the 12th and 13th centuries and come from the church of St. Anthony in the Kellia community. St. Demetrios, of the 13th century, depicted on a blue background stands out in full combat outfit.

Next to the frescoes is the impressive bone-encrusted old stand of the Holy Icon of the Virgin of Kykkos.

Room 4

The last room of the Museum, a small domed octagonal hall with built-in showcases towards the end of the eastern wall of Room 2, houses objects made of parchment and paper, manuscripts, with and without miniature illustrations, books published by the Monastery, paper icons, and seals. The collection includes a copy of an official 1760 patriarchal document of the Ecumenical Patriarch Serapheim (1757–1761) signed by the Synod of the Ecumenical See and by the Archbishop of Cyprus Paisios.

The Monastery's Library boasts a rich collection of manuscripts, rare publications and thousands of volumes. A significant number of Greek and Ottoman documents are kept in its Archive. The Museum houses a collection of rare treasures and a large number of highly valuable icons, gold embroideries, copper engravings, silver-gilt artifacts, etc.

The Museum continues to be enriched with ecclesiastical heirlooms, manuscripts, engravings, old maps and ancient objects which thousands of visitors will have the opportunity to admire. The Bishop of Kykkos and Tylliria has been the heart and soul of the monastery over the last decades, assisted by dedicated fathers and able scientists manning the museum and the research centres. The Holy Monastery of Kykkos, a safe haven for the faithful, has rightfully been established as Cyprus's most glorious monastery

Two other men's monasteries in Cyprus, both royal and stavropegic, merit a special mention: the Holy Monastery of Panagia of Machairas and the Holy Monastery of St. Neophytos (a local saint) in Paphos.

The Holy, Royal and Stavropegic Monastery of Panagia tou Machaira

It is located at the eastern extremity of the Troodos range, at an altitude of 870 meters, close to the Kionia peak (1,423 meters). It is built on a beautiful slope full of pines that rolls down to Pedieos River. It is a royal monastery because its construction was financially assisted by the emperor, and stavropegic because it is autocephalous, as indicated by the cross placed at its foundations. It is dedicated to the Virgin and celebrates on *Eisodia*, the Entrance of the Virgin to the Temple, on 21 November.

The Holy, Royal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. Neophytos the Enkleistos

It is also known as the Monastery of the Holy Enkleistra (= hermitage), and it was founded by monk Neophytos, with royal financial assistance. The Enkleistra and monastery of St. Neophytos are close to the village of Tala, approximately 10 kilometers to the north of Paphos. The monastery celebrates on 28 September and on 24 January.