

St. Trinity

Tuesday, 30 January 2007

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Not far from the Blagoveshchensk cloister there is one more Russian cell belonging to the monastery of Hilandar- a cell of the Sacred Trinity. It has been revived by the celibate monk Nifont (Krasnov).

It is believed that the cell has been founded in XII century by the Abbot Savva though there is no written evidence of the history of the cell. At that time two merchant brothers have arrived to the monastery abandoning their wealth and honour for the sake of their souls. Having lived some years in monastery they realized that dwelling in the monastery filled with monks was a burden. Then the Abbot Savva had blessed them on a hermetical life, and they have lodged in the deserts, on a half-hour distance from monastery. Here they have spent many years of the ascetic life until they died. The katholikon named after the Saint Trinity was also constructed on the blessing of the Abbot Savva.

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Then this cell even became a skete but in the course of time it had come to full desolation. There were three temples within the cell, 1st - the Sacred Trinity, 2nd - Birth of the Virgin and 3rd - St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki. Near the skete between two fragments of a huge stone was a cave where the great Serbian Abbot liked to retire for a prayer.

The skete had been ruined several times by pirate raids and by 1850 it was destroyed and deserted. The pirates have left the blasphemous traces on walls of temples of the skete, pierced the eyes of the Saints depicted on the frescoes. After the devastation the skete has turned into a shelter for shepherds.

After Russian-Turkish war of 1877 Russian archimandrite Melhisedek tried to revive the skete but failed. It managed to clear a cell of the traces of the sheep stay and to consecrate the main temple. He moved to Hilandar after some years spent in the skete.

Then the Russian ascetic monk Nifont came to the skete.

The celibate priest Nifont (Krasnov Pavel Vasilevich) - the native of

area of the Army Don became a novice in one of the Russian monasteries when he turned 10. After 6 years of a monastic life the future Athos monk became ill and had spent two years in beds and was to die. But he had sworn to visit Jerusalem to pray at a coffin of Jesus and then to go to the Mount Athos. The miracle also has come true - the young man had recovered and in 5 months due to his prior death the road to the Mount Athos was opened for him.

The young enoch had arrived in the Ilinsky skete on October, 30th, 1872. But it was hard to Russian novice to get on in a skete filled with Ukranian Cossacks. Nifont who already had some spiritual experience begged for help where it was searched by almost all Russian monks at that time. He went to Panteleimonas monastery to the Abbot Ieronim who blesses him to go to Karulja where monastic life is really hard, to one Russian elder. Monks live practically within the walls of the cell as every step out demands huge efforts. Nifont selects himself the strict elder with the secret thought to remain with him up to his death.

Nifont had needlework

- manufacturing of cypress crosses hence there was a necessity of frequent visiting of Pantelejmonas monastery where at that times it was possible to receive poor meal. To get to the Russian monastery, it was necessary to pass almost half of the Athos peninsula treacherous roads by feet. The delivery of provisions from Panteleimonas was tremendously difficult especially in the summer time as he had to carry on his back the bags of millet and crackers. Besides these difficulties the elder blamed Nifont for bringing the provision that cost 2 roubles at the same time wasting the shoes that cost 3 roubles. Eventually Nifont got accustomed to walking bare feet both in summer heat and in cold winter. All these facts affected the celibate priest Nifont. But conscience torments that the vow of visiting Jerusalem is not fulfilled was the hardest burden for him. The confessor Ieronim having listened to Nikofont's doubts blessed him to keep the vow. The young man was employed as a penman; he worked three months day and night and had earned 800 piastres (64 roubles).

Nifont had visited

the Sacred Town, bypassed all local monasteries, bowed to all relics and came back to Athos. By that time the elder he lived with died. On blessing of the confessor he arrived in a cell of St. Nikolay in the monastery of Iveron. The elder Nikolay who saw the big talents of the young celibate priest blessed him to go to the Russian monastery. And as the true novice Nifont went to carry out his new duties. He recollected that saw the destroyed cell near the Serbian monastery.

On July, 30th,

1883 he moves in a cell of the Sacred Trinity where monastic life was also hard. The main difficulty was a lack of water; it was possible to take it only from the source originating below the cell. Besides, the soil round a monastery was stony and rough. But God does not leave a worker without His help and very fast the brotherhood started to gather. To revive a monastery the Russian monk Gennady arrived alongside with Athanasius, who served as the priest for 43 years in Russia. Nifont saw the skilled confessor in the old priest and he was not mistaken. This 83 year old served a divine

liturgy daily during the 8-year-old on the Holy Mountain. Athos celibate priest Agafangel has offered 2 thousand roubles and within eight years the monastery had been put in order.

Today in the cell of the Trinity only the building of a two-storied temple remained. The place amazes with the silence and privacy though is not far from a highway connecting the Serbian monastery with landing stage on the western part of peninsula called Jovannitsa. Only giants the cypresses protecting a monastery remember its former greatness. Along a footpath there is the ancient waterpipe supplying the Serbian monastery by water.

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