

THE STRANGE MYSTERY OF THE WEEPING MADONNAS



AS SHE DID each night, Mrs. Pagona Catsounis knelt before a small shrine in her bedroom to thank God for the blessings of the day. Her husband, Panagiotis, a restaurant counterman, was not rich; their home in Island Park, N.Y., was small and crowded. But Mrs. Catsounis felt that few couples could be as happy as she and Panagiotis.

She raised her eyes to a picture of the Virgin Mary whose blessing she had asked two years before when she had been married in Greece. Then Pagona stopped her prayers. It seemed that the Madonna's eyes had opened and glanced at her. Frightened, the young woman watched moisture form in the corner of the Virgin's eye and slip down the painting.

Pagona rose slowly and backed away from the shrine. She called almost hysterically to Panagiotis in the living room. When he ran to her, he found her trembling.

"The Virgin is weeping!" she said. He followed Pagona's stare toward the icon where he saw another tear form and run down the painting.

The Catsounises' discovery, in March, was only the beginning of a strange series of events. For no sooner had the excitement and wonderment

*In two humble homes,
housewives looked up from prayers
to see tears form in the eyes
of pictures of the Blessed Virgin;
hundreds of others claim to have
seen the same phenomenon—
what is behind it?*

By GEORGE CARPOZI, JR.

over this weeping Madonna subsided than another even more tearful icon of the Virgin was reported. This was in the home of Pagona's sister, Antonia, and her husband, Peter Koulis, in Ocean-side, N. Y., four miles away.

The second surprise was presaged in a series of prophetic dreams in which Antonia says she had a vision of Christ on the Cross telling her: "You will see what happens on Holy Thursday."

The next day, driven by an "uncontrollable urge" to burn incense before her collection of 20 icons and say a prayer, Mrs. Koulis went into her daughter's room where the altar is kept. As her eyes glanced at the icon of the Virgin—a lithographic reproduction of the Holy Mother of Porta Itisia—she too saw tears!

It was 20 minutes before she could compose herself and call her husband. "A miracle!" she cried. "It's our Madonna—She is weeping like my sister's icon wept."

Then, as Mrs. Catsounis had done, Mrs. Koulis summoned their parish priest, the Rev. George Papadeas, pastor of St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church in Hempstead, N. Y.

As Father Papadeas made his way into the modest home of the Koulis, once again he felt

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What the Madonnas Mean

By ARCHBISHOP IAKOVOS

Head of the Greek Orthodox Church
in North and South America

Twice in a month's time I have been called to witness the weeping of Madonna icons.

The first time, at the Catsounises' apartment, I did not see the tearing myself. I had stopped; but the many others who had witnessed the tearing were living proof that the invisible God still speaks to the hearts of people. When, however, I visited the apartment of the Koulis and saw the tearing in the eyes of their portrait of the Virgin Mary, I was certain then that the weeping of the Madonnas was a miraculous sign—a sign signaling spiritual regeneration.

It was my duty to declare the scene hallowed ground, to read the special service called Paraklesis, and to offer thanksgiving prayers for the love She manifested and humble supplications that She continue to be our Hope, Perpetual Helper, and Protector.

I am making a special trip to Istanbul to report on the miraculous occurrences to Patriarch Athinagoras I of Constantinople, the supreme spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodox Christians. I feel a declaration by higher authority than I must be made.

I myself am not in a position to explain the deep or remote meaning of the sign. Only the Son of God knows the mind of God. I only know that both homes from which the icons came are humble shelters—places where Our Lady could, indeed, give birth to new salutary hopes for the world.

In my heart I feel we Americans have received a sign that the time has come to revitalize our faith. We are witnesses to the fact that faith alone can despise cold rationalism—we have experienced the power which is faith.

COVER:

Ozzie Sweet catches the high-flying aquabatics of Nancie Rideout, Women's World Water-Ski Champion, and Buster MacCalla, Men's Champ. Nancie's story is on p. 11.

Family Weekly

June 12, 1960

LEONARD S. DAVIDOW President and Publisher
WALTER C. DREYFUS Vice President
PATRICK E. O'ROURKE Advertising Director

Send all advertising communications to
Family Weekly, 153 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

Address all communications about editorial features to
Family Weekly, 60 E. 56th St., New York 22, N. Y.

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