

## Икона Божией Матери "Живоносный Источник" The Feast of the Life Giving Spring

The Feast of the Life Giving Spring is celebrated Bright Friday. This icon may be seen on-line at ( <http://days.pravoslavie.ru/Images/im557.htm> ).. Here is an excellent explanation of this feast, from the EXCELLENT St. John the Baptist Web Page ( <http://www.stjohndc.org/icons/i9604.htm> ).

This icon has a wonderful and comforting appearance. Depicted is an enormous stone chalice, standing in a wide reservoir, filled with water.



Above the chalice, holding in Her arms the Preeternal Infant and wearing a crown, hovers the Most Holy Virgin.

To the reservoir filled with life-giving water have streamed those who thirst. The unfortunate and life-weary drink of the water and become strong and invigorated. What a wonderful sign ...

It was the 5th century. At that time, in Constantinople, near the so-called "Golden Gates," there was a grove filled with cypress and plane trees, long since dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos. Within the grove there was a spring, likewise long renowned as a source of miracles. Gradually, the site became overgrown with shrubbery, and the water receded into the mud. Only from the dampness of the earth could one deduce the existence of the spring.

Once upon a time, the warrior Leo Marcellus passed the site, where he met a helpless traveler, a blind man who had lost his way and could not find his way out. Leo helped him get out onto the path, and led the man, weakened by exhaustion, into the shade to rest, while he himself went off in search of water to refresh the blind one. Then he suddenly heard a voice say: "Leo, do not search far off for water. It is close by." Leo, amazed by the mysterious voice, began to look around, but could find no water. As he stood, sad and pensive, the same voice again addressed him: "King Leo! Go into the shade of the grove, draw of the water which you will find there, and give it to the one who thirsts. Place the mud which you find in the spring upon his eyes. Then you will learn who I am, who it is that for so long has blessed this site.

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Soon I will help you to erect here a church bearing My name, and all who come here and with faith call upon My name will have their prayers answered, and will be completely healed of their sicknesses.

As soon as Leo, hurriedly reaching the appointed place, had taken mud from the spring and placed it on the eyes of the blind man and had given him some of the water to drink, the blind man immediately regained his sight. Without a guide, he went into Constantinople, glorifying the grace of the Theotokos.

This occurred during the reign of Emperor Marcian (391-457).

Emperor Marcian was succeeded by Leo Marceilus (457-473). He remembered the appearance of the Theotokos, and ordered that the spring be cleaned of the ooze; earthworks were built to isolate the stream of that spring from other nearby springs, and the water was confined in a large circular stone pool, above which was built a church dedicated to the Theotokos.

Emperor Leo called this spring the "Life-giving Spring", for there was revealed the miraculous grace of the Theotokos.

One hundred years after Marcian, reigned the emperor Justinian the Great (527-565), a man greatly devoted to the Orthodox faith. For a long time he suffered from edema, finding no help from doctors, and already considering himself condemned to death. One midnight he heard a voice saying: "You, O king, cannot return to health unless you drink from My spring." The king did not know of which spring the voice spoke, and he fell into despair. Then, during the day, the Theotokos appeared to him, and said: "Arise, O king, go to My spring, and drink of it, and you will be healthy, as you were before." The sick man acted according to the Lady's will. He found the spring, drank of its water, and soon regained his health. Near the church built by Leo, the grateful emperor erected a new magnificent church, where later was founded a populous monastery.

In the 15th Century, the Imperial City fell into the hands of the Muslims. The famous Church of the Life-giving Spring was destroyed, and its building materials were used to construct the mosque of Sultan Bayazet. The church site was covered with earth and crushed stone, so that the very foundations of the church disappeared from sight. The beautiful surrounding areas were turned into a Muslim cemetery. A Turkish sentinel,

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placed at the ruins of the church, forbade Christians not only to gather at the site, but even to approach there.

Little by little, the strictness of this ban eased, and Christians were permitted to build a small church there. However, in 1821, it was destroyed as well, and the spring itself was filled in. Once again Christians cleaned up the ruins, reopened the spring, and once again drew water from it. Even upon these shards of the former magnificent holy structure, the Theotokos, as before, granted hearings through Her grace. Later, among the broken pieces in one of the windows was found, already half-rotted away through time and dampness, a panel on which were recorded 10 miracles which occurred at the Life-giving Spring during the period 1824-1829.

During the reign of Sultan Mahmoud, the Orthodox received a measure of freedom to conduct religious services. They used it to erect, for the third time, a church above the Life-giving Spring. In 1835, with great pomp, the Ecumenical Patriarch Constantine, celebrating with 20 bishops and an enormous flood of the faithful, consecrated the church which stands to this day. Nearby was built a hospital and alms-house. Even the Muslims spoke with great respect of the Life-giving Spring, and of the Theotokos, Who through it pours out Her grace-filled power. "Great among women Holy Mary" is how they refer to the Most Holy Virgin. The water from the Life-giving Spring they call the "water of Holy Mary."

It is impossible to recount all of the miracles flowing from the Life-giving Spring and bringing grace to kings, to patriarchs, to noted as well as ordinary people. The power of grace acts to this day through the water of the spring. That power is personally experienced not only by Orthodox, but by Catholics, Armenians, and even by the Turks.

Sources:

**St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney (Dallas area) Texas**

***Orthodox Christian Theology: Questions & Answers***

[http://www.orthodox.net/questions/bright\\_week\\_1.html](http://www.orthodox.net/questions/bright_week_1.html)

**Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Washington DC**

<http://www.stjohndc.org/icons/i9604.htm>

www.travelingtreby.org