

Icon of the Mother of God of Lydda or the Roman

Commemorated on June 26 (also on March 12)

The wonder-working Lydda Icon is mentioned in the service for the Kazan Icon (July 8 & October 22) in the third Ode of the Canon.

According to Tradition, the Apostles Peter and John were preaching in Lydda (later called Diospolis) near Jerusalem. There they built a church dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos, then went to Jerusalem and asked her to come and sanctify the church by her presence. She sent them back to Lydda saying, "Go in peace, and I shall be there with you."

Arriving at Lydda, they found an icon of the Virgin imprinted in color on the wall of the church (some sources say the image was on a pillar). The Mother of God then appeared and rejoiced at the number of people who had gathered there. She blessed the icon and gave it the power to work miracles. This icon was not made by the hand of man, but by a divine power.

In the fourth century, Julian the Apostate heard about the icon and tried to eradicate it. Masons with sharp tools chipped away at the image, but the paint and lines penetrated deeper into the stone. The icon was unable to be destroyed. As word of this miracle spread, millions of people came to venerate the icon.

In the eighth century, St. Germanus, the future Patriarch of Constantinople, passed through Lydda. He had a copy of the icon made, and sent it to Rome during the iconoclastic controversy. It was placed in the church of St Peter, and was the source of many healings. In 842, the reproduction was returned to Constantinople and was known as the Roman Icon.

The oldest sources of information for the Lydda Icon are a document attributed to St Andrew of Crete in 726, a letter written by three eastern Patriarchs to the iconoclast emperor Theophilus in 839, and a work of George the Monk in 886.

The icon still existed as late as the ninth century.

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