

The Myrrh-Streaming Icons of Hawaii

"By now all our parishioners living in Honolulu have heard about the blessing that has been bestowed on us sinners, unworthy though we may be, by the grace of the Almighty and the love and concern for us by the All Holy Theotokos. I have asked our Reader Nectarios, in whose home the two icons began streaming myrrh, to describe in his own words what has happened."

The Letter from the Reader Nectarios...

Dear beloved in Christ,

In humility and with extreme trepidation, I will attempt to relate to you what actually occurred before rumors spread, evolve, and eventually become untruths. Many have asked me to explain the events that have taken place in recent weeks regarding the two myrrh-streaming icons at the Holy Theotokos of Iveron Russian Orthodox Church in Honolulu, Hawaii. It has been hard to put into words the recent events that have taken over my life. I can't imagine how others would have reacted if they were in my shoes, God only knows. I pray God will guide me, and my family, to do and say things that are not contrary to His Will. I will attempt to tell the story of how these humble icons came into my life and how they changed it. Everything I write here is true.

The icons in question are two: 1) One is a mounted-print made, I believe, at the [Sofrino Church factory](#) near Moscow. It is an exact copy of the Montreal Myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon of the Holy Theotokos; this was the icon cared for by [Blessed Martyr Brother José Muñoz](#). It is a small icon, roughly 7 x 9 inches and approximately one inch thick. My parish priest, Fr. Anatole Lyovin, gifted it to me for my Name's Day. He said he purchased it at a church bookstore in Toronto when the parish in which he had grown up celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. The icons from Sofrino have a distinctive style with a beautiful silk-screen riza (or oklad) built into the icon. This is done so that those who cannot afford beautiful and very expensive icons can have something equally beautiful from Sofrino for less. 2) The second icon is a hand-painted icon in the shape of a Cross with the image of Our Lord's crucifixion in the traditional Byzantine style of iconography. A Greek monk from the [Holy Mountain Athos](#) painted it. It is roughly 8 x 11 inches and approximately 1 1/2 inches thick. I purchased a set of two near identical Cross icons and gave one to my father as a gift; I kept the other.

Before I relate to you the full story of the icons, let me say how it all began ...

Over three months ago, sometime around June or July of 2007, my wife and I noticed a hint of the scent of roses in the area surrounding our icon corner in our home chapel. Something made us look at our Cross icon of Christ (located behind our family reliquary), we noticed a small bead of liquid around the side wound on the image of the Christ, where the "soldier pierced His side with a lance". The liquid smelled very sweet, like myrrh. My experience with myrrh is quite limited, my only contact being a cotton

ball soaked with myrrh from the Montreal Myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon and several cotton balls of myrrh from the Myrrh-streaming St. Nicholas Icon. We told no one of this and proceeded to "keep an eye" on the icon for any new developments or any possible continuation of the "streaming". The bead of myrrh eventually dried out and we eventually forgot about it.

Now on to the most recent developments in my story ...

During the last week of September I began to notice an unbelievably strong smell of myrrh, at home, in my car, even at work. I couldn't explain it. Was it all in my head? I asked my wife and she said she didn't smell anything. I spoke with several other people who visited our home, and they too said they didn't smell anything. (One of these people was our Serbian Orthodox kuma – she, too, couldn't smell anything.) I was convinced it was all in my imagination. This was on September 27th, the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

Then in the first week of October, my wife and I were extremely ill and missed Vespers that night. We don't miss too many of the church's divine services, so we did take notice of the date, October 6th (Feast day of the Conception of St. John the Baptist). Around 10:30 p. m. that night, I was working in my office, which also doubles as our home chapel where our icon corner is located. My cat walked into the office and began to sniff around as if he smelled something. I did not smell anything. He proceeded to walk toward the area where our reliquaries are kept. I thought this was strange since he would never go near the reliquaries; amazingly something always stopped him, and he's a nosy cat. Yet this time he stood on his hind legs and sniffed around, I assume in order to figure out what the smell was. I still didn't smell anything. I proceeded to pick him up and then I noticed the scent. It was so strong, even overwhelming. Never have I smelled anything like that in my life. I couldn't explain why I hadn't smelled it before. It was like a thousand roses had fallen into the room. I crossed myself and guarded myself with the Jesus Prayer. I put the cat down and proceeded to look at the icons. I admit I was afraid to look at the icons near the reliquaries. I finally came to the icon of the Cross and noticed that the bead of myrrh by the side-wound of Christ was still dry, for a split second I regained some composure, even as the smell of roses was getting stronger. I then looked down and my hand was wet -- it was myrrh. How did it get there? The icon was dry? Or was it? I then noticed that the left knee of the image of Our Lord was forming a bead of myrrh right before my eyes. I then called out to my wife. She came running, and when I asked her if she had spilled anything on the icons, she said no. She hadn't gone near them. I showed her the icon. She was in shock. I told her the smell is too strong. Help me look at the other icons. So she did. In my office I have two bookshelves, at the top of them are icons. We have many icons, maybe too many. I stood on my toes to reach for the icons at the top of my bookshelves. My wife did the same. Finally I grabbed the icon of Iveron given to me by Fr. Anatole. It was completely wet. And then the smell got even stronger. Even my wife could smell it. For those of you who don't know my wife, her sense of smell is very limited; she is only capable of smelling citrus scents. We were afraid. We asked one another if we cleaned or anointed the icons recently, and both of us said 'no'. 'What is going on?' I asked. I put the icons back where they were; we took a few pictures with our digital camera. Then I said an Akathist to the Mother of God in honor of

her Iveron Icon and went to bed, or at least tried to.

The next day, Sunday October 7th, after much debate, we left the icons at home and went to church. After the Liturgy we spoke to our kuma, who instructed us to speak with the priest immediately. We told Fr. Anatole what had happened. He listened patiently and said, 'Bring the icons to church!' We then arranged with the priest, to bring the icons to church the next Wednesday, October 10th. Up until that Wednesday, the icons continued to stream. I collected the myrrh on cotton and before them I said prayers for my sister who was ill and for several other people. *[Fr Anatole's Note: The next day, his sister called her father to say that her doctor cannot explain it, but that her pancreas, which had completely stopped functioning had returned to its normal state and that her diabetes was under control.]*

We couldn't wait until Wednesday.

On Wednesday October 10th, we brought the icons to church and placed them on two analogia (lecterns) in the center of the church. Fr. Anatole inspected them and wiped them down with cotton and proceeded to start the service of the Akathist Hymn of the Iveron Icon. After the service, the icons were wiped down again; they had streamed a little during the service. Fr. Anatole confirmed to us that it is 'definitely streaming myrrh' and that it is 'a very pure myrrh'. The smell of roses filled the air. I asked him what we were to do? He asked us to leave the icons in church for the time being. No one knew about the icons; they were safe at church.

The next Saturday, October 13th, just happened to be "clean the church day". We were preparing our church for the upcoming feasts; our parish feast day (November 24), Christmas, the [Serbian bishop's visit](#), etc. So my wife, myself and another person were put in charge of cleaning. While we were cleaning the church we couldn't take our eyes off the two myrrh-streaming icons, which slowly streamed while we were cleaning. The smell of roses was quite pungent. The icons seemed to exude a strong smell of roses. The Icon of the Mother of God seems to smell more like 'roses' than the other icon. The Cross has a spicier smell to it. I can't explain it. While we were cleaning the church, our kumovi (Colette and her family) came to see the icons. Not many folks could wait for Vespers that evening. Colette later remarked to me that she's the 'doubting Thomas' and really couldn't believe it until she saw it for herself. Understandable. She didn't realize that the icons were actually streaming as we were cleaning. (They don't stream continuously.) She venerated the Cross and kissed the feet of Our Lord. She got a nice helping of myrrh in her mouth. Like the doubting Apostle Thomas who put his fingers in Christ's Hands and Side, she put her mouth right in the myrrh, where myrrh wasn't supposed to be! I couldn't help but laugh.

The next day, Sunday October 14th, was the Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God, and Fr. Anatole revealed the icons to the people. The icons streamed quite heavily; there was enough myrrh for everyone. They have continued streaming ever since. Many have come to see the icons, Russians, Greeks, Serbs, Roman Catholics, Protestants. All who approach the icons feel the Grace of God! There have been days when the icons

have been completely dry, while on other days they are covered in myrrh. Yet whether they stream or not, they continuously give off an extremely strong scent of roses. It is truly a great miracle! I sometimes wonder if it is a warning.

Now that I look back, it seems that 'revelation' has been the central theme of late. The icons initially revealed themselves to us on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. We revealed them to our priest on the Feast of the Conception of St. John the Baptist. He was the one man who revealed Christ to the world. Our priest revealed the myrrh-streaming icons to the church on the Feast day of the Protection of the Mother of God. These cannot be coincidences!

Our parish is dedicated to the original Myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon, an icon that had never traveled to Hawaii. Br. José wanted to come here, but never made it. I must confess to you, sometimes I feel that our fellow Orthodox brethren on the mainland have forgotten our little parish, our little community. Living out here in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, we struggle to survive as an Orthodox parish. Struggle to pay the bills, struggle to make the rent. I sometimes wonder, when will we have a church of our own? Has the Lord forgotten us? Are we to struggle forever? Have we done something wrong? Have we angered You, O Lord? Whether or not our fellow clergy, our fellow Orthodox faithful have forgotten us, one thing is clear... The Most Holy Mother of God has not forgotten us. She has not abandoned us. She will not abandon us! Through these icons, I now have hope that there IS a light at the end of the tunnel. Whether or not we are blessed to have a church of our own, it really doesn't matter; God has shown us that He has not forgotten us! And that's all that is needed. God is telling us that He is real! Dare we ignore this revelation? Dare we turn our backs on this great miracle? Dare we forget Christ? May God forgive us if we do.

In Christ's Love,

Reader. Nectarios