

St. Joseph of Arimathea (with Orthodox hymn to the saint from St. Anthony's Orthodox Monastery in Arizona) - July 31

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A contemporary Orthodox icon depicting saints Eudokimos and Joseph of Arimathea (July 31).

All that is known for certain concerning him is derived from the canonical Gospels. He was born at Arimathea — hence his surname — “a city of Judea” (Luke 23:51), which is very likely identical with Ramatha, the birthplace of the Prophet Samuel,

although several scholars prefer to identify it with the town of Ramleh. He was a wealthy Israelite (Matthew 27:57), “a good and a just man” (Luke 23:50), “who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43). He is also called by St. Mark and by St. Luke a bouleutes, literally, “a senator”, whereby is meant a member of the Sanhedrin or supreme council of the Jews. He was a disciple of Jesus, probably ever since Christ’s first preaching in Judea (John 2:23), but he did not declare himself as such “for fear of the Jews” (John 19:38). On account of this

consent to His condemnation by the
completely absent from the meeting which



The Crucifixion of the Master

quickened Joseph’s faith and love, and suggested to him that he should provide for Christ’s burial before the Sabbath began. Unmindful therefore of all personal danger, a danger which was indeed considerable under the circumstances, he boldly requested from Pilate the Body of Jesus, and was successful in his request (Mark 15:43-45). Once in possession of this sacred treasure, he — together with Nicodemus, whom his courage had likewise emboldened, and who brought abundant spices — wrapped up Christ’s Body in fine linen and grave bands, laid it in his own tomb, new and yet unused, and hewn out of a rock in a neighbouring garden, and withdrew after rolling a great stone to the opening of the sepulchre

(Matthew 27:59, 60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:38-42). Thus was fulfilled Isaiah's prediction that the grave of the Messiah would be with a rich man (Isaiah 53:9). **The Greek Church celebrates the feast of Joseph of Arimathea on 31 July**, and the Roman Church on 17 March. The additional details which are found concerning him in the apocryphal "Acta Pilati", are unworthy of credence. Likewise fabulous is the legend which tells of his coming to Gaul A.D. 63, and thence to Great Britain, where he is supposed to have founded the earliest Christian oratory at Glastonbury. Finally, the story of the translation of the body of Joseph of Arimathea from Jerusalem to Moyenmonstre (Diocese of Toul) originated late and is unreliable.

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