

The feast of Saint Gerasimos of the Jordan



On Cheese fare Sunday, March 4/17, 2024, the commemoration of Saint Gerasimos of the Jordan was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Monastery built in his name on the West Bank of the Jordan River just before its mouth into the Dead Sea.

On this feast the Church, especially the Church of the Jerusalem, recalls that Saint Gerasimos was born in Lycia and came to the Holy Land on a pilgrimage in AD 451, initially living as a monk in an anchorites' monastery by the Dead Sea. Seduced by the Monophysites, he went astray but returned to Orthodoxy under Saint Euthymius the Great. After this, he founded on the bank of the Jordan "a marvellous Lavra" and in it a Coenobion, having as a co-practitioner Saint Kyriakos. His life was marked by many wonderful works. He slept in the Lord in 475, becoming a guide to thousands of monks and lay people in the monastic life and in life in Christ.

According to tradition, on this day, the Cheese fare Sunday, all the ancient ascetics gathered in this Monastery of "Kalamonos", which was founded by Saint Gerasimos of the Jordan, and received the blessing of each Hegoumen and a little food to strengthen them at the beginning of the Holy and Great Lent and then they departed for their ascetic cells, to return again for the feast of Palms.

At the Holy Church of the Monastery, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolas, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Nectarios of Anthedona, Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Exarch in Moscow Archimandrite Stephanos, the Exarch in Athens Archimandrite Raphael, Archimandrites, Amphiloichios, Claudius, Ieronymos and Kyriakos, other Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and the Patriarchal School students, as the service was attended by local faithful and pilgrims from Cyprus and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry” (Ps. 34,15) “The eyes of the Lord are turned favourably towards the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer”, the psalmist exclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all to this holy place in the desert of the Jordan, where the Lavra of our holy and God-bearing Father Gerasimos of Lycia is located, so that we may solemnly honour his holy commemoration.

The blessed Gerasimos became one of the great recluses of those who shone in Palestine during the 5th century. During his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he visited the great monasteries of Palestine and settled permanently in the inner desert of the Jordan, where he built a great Lavra, which became marvellous according to the testimony of Cyril of Scythopolis, who writes in the Saint’s biography: “Then he blessed Sabbas, in the thirty-fifth year of his age, having fulfilled his age... departed to the eastern desert of Saints Gerasimos the last ten days (= of that time) bright in a way (in a manner) shining and in the desert of the Jordan sowing seeds of piety”.

Indeed, the great Gerasimos shone as a luminary, i.e. he radiated the light of Christ’s love and sowed the seeds of piety, i.e. the sanctifying and saving Orthodox faith. This fact is confirmed by the spiritual relationship that Abba Gerasimos had with Euthymios the Great, whom he met in the desert of Rouva during the Great Lent. “And during the time of the holy Lent, the holy Gerasimos received Abba

Kyriakos the monk in his Lavra, in the desert of Rouva, who was quiet until the Feast of Palms on Sundays, receiving communion from the hands of the Great Euthymius. Shortly after the passage of time and the end of the Great Euthymius in Christ, Gerasimos among the saints, saw his soul led by angels and taken up to heaven. Abba Kyriakos took him up to his monastery and returned the body after burying it", Cyril of Scythopolis testifies.

Our Father Gerasimos chose the anchorite's life in the desert according to David's word: "Lo I have fled afar off and have dwelt in the wilderness" (Ps. 54,8), and that was the desert of the Jordan, where Saint John the Baptist was the first to retreat to, preaching and saying: "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3,1-2).

In the desert of Jordan, Saint Gerasimos lived in stillness, that is, he had free time, so that after quietness, food abstinence and unceasing prayer he could know God according to what is written: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46,11). Interpreting this word, Athanasios the Great says: "Unless all worldly care is cast out, one cannot know God". "This task, then, is good for the learner and beneficial, quietly encouraging the ascension (knowledge) of the teachings of salvation", Basil the Great says.

And this "taking up, of the knowledge of the teachings of salvation" is none other than the divine wisdom, which according to Solomon: "For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets, for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon 7, 26-28). To this "spotless mirror of the working of God" did our God-bearing Father Gerasimos attend to, according to the Evangelist John: "And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

The divine love towards the heavenly king Christ is the power of the divine energy that reveals itself to those who have a pure heart, the true light of eternal life, namely the Son and Word of God, Christ. The Saints of the Church are precisely distinguished in this, especially the martyrs and the secluded ascetics of the desert. "My love is crucified" (= Christ has been crucified) and there is no desire (= lust) for love in me; "living water" (John 4:10) and they say to me from within, go to the Father. I have no desire for the food of corruption or the pleasures of this life; I

want the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, and I want a drink, his blood, which is incorruptible love”, the Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer writes.

Saint Chrysostom, who lived ascetically, says: “I love all the saints, even the blessed Paul... I said this so that I could make you partakers of the potion (of love). Those who love physical love are really afraid to confess... and those who love spiritual love never stop confessing... that love is a crime, this one is a laud”.

So this, my beloved brothers, is why we honour and praise the saints, like the blessed Gerasimos who is celebrating today. It is a fact that Christians do indeed participate in divine holiness through the gift of the Holy Spirit and appear “in the holy temple” (Eph. 2:21) and “a holy nation”. “ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2,9), the supreme Apostle Paul preaches.

In other words, my beloved, we as Christians as a “chosen generation” must render to God “reason, spiritual worship to God, offering ourselves together with Christ as a “living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God” (Rom. 12,1) according to Paul. In this exact way we become conformed to the call of Christ saying: “ Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8,34). On the other hand, let us imitate our holy Father Gerasimos, by whose petitions to God and the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos we may be worthy to pass through the stage of the fast of Holy Lent in repentance, self-control, humility and patience. Along with the hymnographer let us say: “Saint Gerasimos, as thou appear before Christ with all the saints, pray to him for the peace of our troubled region and the whole world”. Amen. Many returns and blessed Lent.”

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a festal meal of the Cheese fare Sunday, hosted by the hardworking founder of the Monastery, Archimandrite Chrysostom, who decorated the Monastery and the Church with fine mosaics and built the premises, creating a pilgrimage, working and social centre, a refreshing oasis for the needy and an Old-peoples’ home for the Holy Sepulchre Fathers.

From Secretariat-General



























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