

20/10/2023

Homily on Saint Gerasimos In the Evening of October 19, 2023 Kefalonia, Greece



Venerable Hierarchs,

Pious Clergy,

Ministry of Christ,

Most Reverend Nuns,

Devout Christians,

“God is wonderful in His Saints ...”, (Psalm 67, 36)

We derive great spiritual benefit, my brothers and sisters, by honoring our Saints, for they, seated by the Throne of God, intercede for us all. In addition, honoring the Saints also means imitating their lives. They were people like us; they lived in societies with challenges and problems and even faced persecution and the threat of death.

Honoring the Saints is a commandment of high religious sentiment and divine zeal, a manifestation of the desire of the faithful for the glory of God and an expression of the love of the pious for the Saints on account of their high virtues and great struggles. It is a sign of respect for their voluntary sacrifice, an expression of infinite gratitude to the athletes of Christ and fighters of the truth and a manifestation of the nature of our feelings and mindsets towards them. It is, moreover, a confession of our warm and living faith towards Christ, the Judge of struggles and Crowner, the One Who reveals and glorifies divine athletes; an indication of the divine desire flooding our hearts with the urge to imitate them and a confirmation of the divine love burning our souls to rise to the top of the spiritual pyramid. It is the moral debt to our Saints for their various benefactions to us, a debt for their intercessions to the Savior on our behalf and an obligation to them, demanded of us by God, Who glorified His Saints on earth.

Today's celebrated Saint, Saint Gerasimos Notaras, radiates the light of God. God is light; true light, real light, who illuminates "every man and all creation". This is the light of divinity the three Apostles saw on Mount Tabor. Apostle Paul, on his way to Damascus, saw this light. And all of us, in the theurgic and luminary mysteries, gain experience of this reality and thus can sing with gratitude: "We have seen the true light". Thus, Saints are the "luminous children of the Church", "bright stars of the mental firmament", "children of light". Saints are the greatest benefactors of humanity because they enlighten us with their prayers and their holy lives. Saints have as much and incomparably more value for us than the value the Sun has for creation. Saint Gerasimos, united with Christ, illuminated by the uncreated light of the "Three-Sun Divinity", experienced this Taborian light. He lived and taught for this light. This light of the Saint is our "most precious endowment". Divine Grace works with his whole being and he is completely devoted to God.

Saint Gerasimos shines as a monastic leader and miracle worker. He experienced lofty heights and possessed supernatural gifts. He received divine revelations in his heart. This enlightened Saint had received from God a special grace against demons. It was given to him because throughout his life he loved Christ so much that he ignored worldly joys, left everything to sweet Jesus and gave everything to Him. Thus, living in the knowledge of God, he emerges as a real guide of souls. He

lived a plain life but led infallibly the believers “to the true light and the life and the truth”. His speech to the people of God was not “in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in evidence of the Holy Spirit and power”; a speech born from exercise and prayer, from emptying and experience; a fruit of the Holy Spirit “springing forth” from the constant invocation of the divine name; a bright and sacramental speech. After his falling asleep, he radiates through the miraculous fountains of his holy relics. “Light” and fragrance emanate from his holy relics from the day of their recovery. Everything is bathed in light and filled with fragrance: the faces of the faithful, the Holy Monastery, the whole island and the whole world. As on the day of the Lord’s Resurrection, fragrance fills the universe, the beauty of devoutness, the fragrance of heaven fills the air, floods the senses of all those who, from that day on until today, in an uninterrupted litany, worship this hallowed place.

Saint Gerasimos shines on through the lifting of the daily cross, the duty, the responsibility, the Christian approach to temptations. He thus becomes a man of prayer, of fasting, of patience, of offering, of sacrificial love, of protection of youth. His life is a life of privations, sorrows, pains, hardships, tears and humiliations. The ecumenical honor of our Saint is due to his extreme humility and patience to the end – almost lifelong – against temptations and to his extreme love and true worship of God. Because of all these, his holy relics streamed myrrh from the first hour and remained undissolved and fragrant. Moreover, from the day of his sacrificial sleep, he was given the gift to perform a great number, and later on a greater number of wondrous miracles. The visits of our protector Saint to the sick and suffering and their strengthening and healing, to all the lengths and breadths of the earth, as far away as even to distant America, where the Grace of the Lord allowed us to serve, made him popular and famous throughout the world. The Saint loved much and was challenged and glorified much both on earth and in heaven.

In an age in which there is a lot of talk about leaders, in an age in which the leaders of worldly formations struggle and fight for the gathering of followers, Saint Gerasimos gathers every year without difficulty in his Holy Monastery, where his holy and grace-streaming relic is kept, multitudes of pilgrims, proving in this way to the unbelievers not only that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever ” (Heb. 13:8), but that “the world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. ” (John I, 2, 17.)

Hailing from the aristocratic Byzantine family of Notaras, Saint Gerasimos could have sought worldly laurels or excelled in academia, meeting the conditions, given his intelligence and the high education he acquired. If he wanted, he would also acquire ecclesiastical positions, with the brilliance of his family name. However,

Saint Gerasimos preferred the spiritual guidance of souls and was certainly not indifferent to the problems of man.

His education and theological training were able to offer him academic distinctions. But, "Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age?" (Cor. 1, 1:20), we can wonder with Apostle Paul. Everyone disappeared and the prominent contemporary leaders of Saint Gerasimos passed into oblivion. However, Saint Gerasimos lives on as an indisputable spiritual and monastic leader. He lives and will live through his work, through his inspired and enlightened writings. He lives and will live as a spiritual leader as well as a guiding monastic leader and father of monastics through his wonderful prayers, his enlightened letters to the nuns and monks of his time.

He is the spiritual father of the monastics of this Holy Monastery, which he himself founded on the beautiful island of Kefallonia. He loved God but he also loved the human soul created in the image of God and worked for it. Living with virtue and holiness in the world, Saint Gerasimos shone in the world "as a luminary" and offered the world "the reason of life".

Saint Gerasimos, a bright and enlightened star, adorns the sky of the local Church and of this blessed island; he embellishes Orthodoxy under heaven, reflecting the rays of the Holy Spirit "richly dwelling in him"; "a cleansed soul that becomes brighter than silver, receives the glory of the Holy Spirit, which then reflects back", according to Saint Chrysostom.

My brothers and sisters, for us, the life, the example of our Saint, patron and protector of this land, is the richest covenant. It is a true treasure, which we inherited in order to "utilize" it, and indeed today, in the midst of the flooding of chattering words, the power of the image, the provocation of deep and radical change and the breakdown of human relationships, the absolute dominance of life by electronics, we need this strong light that Saint Gerasimos radiates for our spiritual edification and advancement.

May the divine blessing rest until the end of time on the holy island of Kefallonia and on the pious clergy and people of the Church of Greece!

Closing my humble thoughts, I would like to especially thank your Holy Shepherd and my very beloved brother in Christ, His Eminence Metropolitan Demetrios, for his honorable invitation and the opportunity of joint prayer he gave me. I wish him many and fruitful years, with health and optimism.

May Saint Gerasimos intercede for us to the Lord for peace in the world, for our

beautiful and hospitable island, for our noble Kefallonian brothers all over the world.

Many blessed years!

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