

Saint Nectarios the Wonderworker

Saint Nectarios was born in Silyvria, Greece, on October 1, 1846, and was named Anastasios. His parents were poor, but they gave him a rich Christian upbringing. When he was seven years old, he bought paper and sewed the sheets together, stating that he would write the words of GOD in his "book." At the age of fourteen, he went to Constantinople in order to work in a tobacco shop. He spent his spare time reading religious books. He would copy and memorize passages that he liked on bags of tobacco which customers took home with them. When he was twenty years old, he went to the island of Chios where he served as teacher in Lithi for seven years. He spent much time in study, prayer and fasting, eating only once a day. He fulfilled a great desire and became a monk on Chios taking the name of Lazaros, and the fulfillment of another great desire to study the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church.

After three years he was ordained a Deacon with the name Nectarios. Because of his great piety and thirst for knowledge in Theology, a rich man named John Horemis sponsored him and sent him to Athens to finish high school. After he received his diploma, he was sent to Patriarch Sofronios of Alexandria who took a great liking to him and who sent him back to Athens to become a Theologian at Athens University. After his graduation, he returned to Alexandria where he was then ordained a Priest in 1886. Three years later he was ordained Bishop of Pentapolis. He served the Church with great devotion and enthusiasm and although loved by the majority, his piety stirred up envy unfortunately among a few Clergymen who slandered his reputation unjustly to the Patriarch who believed these false accusations and sent Nectarios to mainland Greece. The accusations however followed him and he was not appointed to any position. Saint Nectarios, of course, readily forgave all who had harmed him. Finally, after 1 year of suffering and near starvation, he was appointed as a simple Preacher in Halkida of Euvoia, a position he held for about two years. He was then transferred to another area, again to serve as a Preacher.

In 1894 he was offered a position as Dean of the Rizarios School where young men are trained for the Priesthood. He worked hard for 14 years, and placed the School on a spiritual plane that it had never enjoyed before or since. His great love for monastic life finally made him decide to establish a monastery for women in 1904 on the island of Aegina. He spent the remainder of his life helping to build the monastery with his own hands, and tending its gardens, cleaning the buildings, repairing the shoes of the nuns, and in general showing all signs of great humility and love to his Lord and to his fellow man. He was known for his ability to perform miracles by the Grace of GOD and to foresee future events. He spent many nights and other spare hours in writing. All the money from his publications he would give away to those in need.

The last years of his life he suffered from prostate. The nuns finally, against his will, took him to Athens to the Aretaieon Hospital. The attendant who admitted him could not believe that he was a Bishop. Saint Nectarios appeared to be only a simple monk. Because he was poor, they put him

in a large ward, where he gave up his soul after 2 months of sheer agony, at about midnight, on November 8, 1920.

After changing his clothes, they casually threw his sweater upon the closest bed. The man in the bed, who was hopelessly paralyzed, got up and danced; he was completely and instantaneously cured. The body of Saint Nectarios exuded a sweet-smelling ointment that soaked his hair and beard. He was then taken to Piraeus and then on to Aegina by boat where hundreds of people thronged in great mourning and carried him for burial to the Monastery.

He was exhumed five months later. The body was not only intact, but it continued to emit the beautiful fragrance. In 1932, he was examined by a doctor who could not believe the perfect condition in which the body with all its flesh and hair existed. Years later, by the Lord's will, the body disintegrated naturally, so that his relics could be distributed in time to all parts of the world.

Source: St. Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church, Palatine, Illinois

Apolytikion in the First Tone

The offspring of Selyvria and the guardian of Aegina, the true friend of virtue who didst appear in the last years, O Nectarius, we faithful honour thee as a godly servant of Christ, for thou pourest forth healings of every kind for those who piously cry out: Glory to Christ Who hath glorified thee. Glory to Him Who hath made thee wondrous. Glory to Him Who worketh healings for all through thee.

Kontakion in the Plagal of the Fourth Tone

In joy, let our hearts praise the latest shining star of the Orthodox, the newly erected rampart of the Church. For, glorified by the work of the Spirit, he abundantly pours forth the grace of healing to those who cry out, "Hail, Father Nektarios".

St. Gerasimos of Cephalonia

St Gerasimos the New Ascetic of Cephalonia was born in the village of Trikkala in the Peloponessos. As a young adult, he became a monk on the island of Zakynthos. On the Holy Mountain he became a schemamonk and studied with the ascetics of Mt Athos. Receiving a blessing from the Elders, the monk went to Jerusalem to worship at the Life-bearing Tomb of the Saviour. After visiting many holy places in Jerusalem, Mount Sinai, Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria and Egypt, he returned to Jerusalem where he became a lamp-lighter at the Sepulchre of the Lord. The monk was ordained a Deacon and then a Priest by the Patriarch Germanos (1534-1579 AD) of Jerusalem.

St Gerasimos maintained the discipline of an ascetic. For solitude, he withdrew to the Jordan, where he spent forty days without respite. Having received the Patriarch's blessing for a life of silence, St Gerasimos withdrew to Zakynthos in solitude, eating only vegetation. After five years he was inspired to go the island of Cephalonia, where he lived in a cave. He restored a church at Omala, and he founded a women's monastery where he lived in constant toil and vigil for thirty years. He prayed on bent knees stretched out on the ground. For his exalted life, he was granted the miraculous gift of being able to heal the sick and cast out unclean spirits.

At 71 years of age, St Gerasimos knew that he would soon die. He gave his blessing to the nuns and peacefully fell asleep in the Lord on August 15, 1579 AD. When his grave was opened two years later his holy relics were found fragrant and incorrupt with a healing power.

St. Gerasimos is celebrated on August 16th (as the Koimisis Tis Theotokou falls on August 15th, the celebration of his memory was moved to the next day) and October 20th when we commemorate the Restitution of St. Gerasimos' Sacred Relic.

Source: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

Apolytikion / Dismissal Hymn (First Tone)

O believers, let us praise the protector of Orthodoxy, the God-bearing miracle-worker lately appearing to us, the incarnate angel, divine Gerasimos. For he has rightly received from God the ever-flowing grace of performing healing. He strengthens those with diseases and he heals those with demons. Therefore he pours out healings to those who honour him.

Kontakion (Third Tone)

Now Cephalonia, with sacred songs of thanksgiving, calls upon the multitudes of all the Orthodox Christians to extol the boast and glory of Orthodoxy, the divine and great Gerasimos, who is truly her deliverer and champion, who doth preserve her from all the harm of her foes.