

THE FEAST OF ABBA GERASIMOS OF THE JORDAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, March 4/17, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our holy Father Gerasimos of the Jordan in his holy Monastery, located on the West Bank of the Jordan River in front of its mouth at the Dead Sea.

About Abba Gerasimos, the Church has handed down to us that he came from Lycia in Asia Minor and from childhood dedicated himself to God and the monastic life.

He came to the Holy Land for pilgrimage in the year 451, the year of the Fourth Ecumenical Council.

He wandered in the Monasteries of the Jordan Valley and was initially involved in the circles of the Monophysites, who were shaking the Church throughout the 5th century, but he abandoned them with the help of Saint Euthymios the Great.

Since then, he became a canon and a model for the monks and founded a Holy Monastery, Lavra and in it a Koinobion, called the Monastery of Kalamos, and later it was given his name.

In this, he accepted and guided thousands of monks to the Orthodox life in Christ.

In his honour, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the helper of the Hegoumen of the Monastery, Hieromonk Kyriakos, to whom His Beatitude gave the officio of the Archimandrite, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and other Hierodeacons. The Service was attended by a large congregation of pilgrims

from various countries and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, after the joyous reception by the boy Scouts.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Ps. 97:11-12), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The Holy Memory of our Holy Father Gerasimos, who practised in this sanctified place in the desert of Jordan, rose up today as a heavenly star, where his Monastery lies, and where the grace of the Holy Spirit gathered us all, to glorify in Eucharist the One Who glorified His righteous man.

“ Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart”, exclaims the psalmist. And we ask ourselves, who is this light and who are the righteous? The light, my beloved, is the light of Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, and the righteous are the upright, that is, the pure in heart. The light of Christ dawned on them, as the Father of the Church Saint Cyril of Alexandria also interprets, saying: “ To everyone who is good and righteous, in his mind and heart the noetic and divine light dawns.”

Our holy Father Gerasimos proved himself to be good and righteous, as his biographer Saint Cyril of Scythopolis says: “At that time there was somebody, a great anchorite, who came from Lycia, named Gerasimos, who had achieved the monastic life in his own hometown and strove multiple strives against the evil spirits, and has recently come to the desert of the Jordan to join the anchorite life”.

Our Father Gerasimos chose the Holy Land of Palestine as a place of stricter ascetic life, because both the Judean desert and the Jordan desert had turned into a real state of hermit monks. Among them, the great figures of monasticism stood out: Saint Theoktistos, Theodosios the Cenobiarch, Savvas the sanctified, Kyriakos the anchorite and Euthymios the Great, whose "sparkling grace" led the holy Gerasimos to a very beneficial meeting when they met.

Moreover, our father Gerasimos chose this desert of the Jordan, because Saint John the Forerunner lived in it and preached the baptism of repentance, who became the model for imitation of all hermit monks: " Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11), says the Lord.

It is noteworthy that the desire of Saint Gerasimos is not limited only to his dwelling in this holy place, but to his co-dwelling in the heavens after God, as the psalmist says: "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence", (Ps. 140,14).

In other words, the righteous, that is, those who love God "with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind" (Cf. Matt. 22:37), will come to " the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven", as the Lord Paul preaches, (Hebrews 12,23). Our holy Father Gerasimos always and unceasingly had this Church in mind, that is, the assembly of the saints in heaven. "Whose mind is always toward God, and the desire for God has increased love," says Saint Maximus the confessor.

This exalted divine love of Saint Gerasimos is expressed clearly by his hymnographer saying: "Thou didst pass an immaterial life and conversation in a material body, O righteous Father, glorifying the Lord who strengthened thee" (Minaion, Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3).

The imperishables of which the God-bearer Gerasimos conquered, is none other than the kingdom of heaven, the heavenly gate, which he sought after zeal and patience, listening to the wise Paul saying: " For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come", (Heb. 13,14).

Beloved brothers in Christ, passing through the path of the God-given and blessed fasting, in contrition, we magnified in this eucharistic and solemn assembly the Holy man of God, today's celebrated Gerasimos the God-bearer, who is "present before Christ", and we beseech him, to entreat the Son of God and the Son of the Most Blessed Theotokos Mary for all those who keep his holy commemoration.

And this, is because the world is going through a great crisis. Who is this great crisis? It is the fact that " that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19), Saint John the Evangelist says.

The cause of the crisis, or rather the criticism of people, according to Saint Chrysostom, is due to the fact that people did not want to leave the darkness and come to the light of Christ.

Our God-fearing Father Gerasimos, who has had the light of Christ in his heart since infancy, that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit, calls us all, so that by the supplications of the Most Holy Theotokos, we may leave the darkness, that is, the works of impiety and wickedness of this world and let us run to the light of piety, "putting on the armour of God", (Eph. 6,11) and taking up the weapons of fasting and abstinence, and through every prayer and supplication let us merit the flashes in our hearts of the divine and unwaning light of the glorious Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. Many happy returns and blessed the remaining stage of the holy Lent".

The Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation were offered a fasting meal by the hardworking rector and Hegoumen, Archimandrite Chrysostomos.

From Secretariat-General