



**Our Righteous Father Gerasimus of the Jordan  
Whom the Holy Church Celebrates on March 4**

This Saint, who was from Lycia in Asia Minor, lived there for many years as a hermit, and then went to Palestine. There he built the great Lavra by the Jordan River, where a lion served him with great obedience and devotion. One day the lion came looking for Gerasimus that he might feed him, but his disciples took the lion to the place where they had buried the Saint shortly before. The Lion fell at the Saint's grave and, roaring with grief, died at that very place. St. Gerasimus reposed in 475.

*If Alleluia is not said:  
Dismissal Hymn. First Tone*

**T**HOU didst prove to be a citizen of the desert, an angel in the flesh, and a wonderworker, O Gerasimus, our God-bearing Father. By fasting, vigil, and prayer thou didst obtain heavenly gifts, and thou healest the sick and the souls of them that have recourse to thee to thee with faith. Glory to Him that hath given thee strength. Glory to Him that hath crowned thee. Glory to Him that worketh healings for all through thee.

*Kontakion. Fourth Tone*  
*On this day Thou hast appeared*

**A**S a star resplendent with \* the light of many virtues, \* thou didst make the wilderness \* of Jordan radiantly shine \* with beams of sacred celestial light,  
\* O righteous Father, God-bearing Gerasimus.

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Brief *Life of St. Gerasimus* courtesy *Orthodox America*

**VESPERS**

*For* Lord, I have cried, *we chant the following Stichera:*

*Plagal of Fourth tone. O strange wonder*

**O** GODLY Father Gerasimus, \* since thou hadst given thy mind to soar up to God by faith, \* thou didst hate the turbulence \* and impermanence of the world. \* For thou didst take up thy cross with ardent zeal \* to follow after Him that beholdeth all; and thou didst subjugate \* the reluctant body to the sovereign mind \* by ascetic labours through the Holy Spirit's might.

**O** RIGHTEOUS Father Gerasimus, \* ever abiding by faith in the mountains and caves of earth \* and the desert wilderness, \* thou didst find Him as thou didst long to do, \* for thou wast strengthened in thine unwav'ring soul \* with good ascents on high \* all thy days; and thou didst offer unto Christ \* multitudes of godly monks who had been saved through thee.

**P**ASSING all thy life in quietude, \* with much compunction and tears \* and deep stillness, O blest of God, \* through thy faith thou didst become \* a wise trainer of proven monks. \* Thou wast appareled with non-possessiveness \* and wast made fair with unceasing abstinence; \* thou wast shown to be a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth. \* Wherefore, thou hast found enjoyment of good things on high.

**SESSIONAL HYMN**

*First Tone. While Gabriel was saying*

**T**HE ladder of divine virtue, thou didst scale with ardour, \* and thou didst attain to the height of divine noetic vision, receiving reflections pure and clear \* revealing the divine myst'ries of Christ. \* Hence we honour thee with

piety, as we cry, \* Gerasimus, thou God-bearer: \* Glory to Christ, Who hath given thee strength. \* Glory to Him Who hath crowned thee. Glory to Him Who worketh healings for all through thee.

#### ODE FOUR

##### *Troparia*

**H**AVING gone up the whole ladder of the virtues, O wise Gerasimus, thou wast deemed worthy of mystical visions, and didst receive the grace to see things to come before their time.

#### SYNAXARION

✠ On the fourth of this month we commemorate our righteous Father Gerasimus of the Jordan.

##### *Verses*

Since while yet living he slew the beasts of the passions,  
Gerasimus' reward is a beast for his servant.

✠ On this day we commemorate our righteous Father Gerasimus of Vologda.

By their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy on us. Amen.

### A brief Life of Saint Gerasimus of the Jordan

Saint Gerasimus was born in the province of Lycia in the southern part of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). His parents were wealthy, prosperous people. From a very early age St. Gerasimus developed a great love of God and, as he grew older, he found he had little in common with other young people of his own age, who were only interested in having fun. He realized that the world and any attachment to it only brought needless cares and sufferings, so he yearned to serve God and to be pleasing to Him.

Thus it was that St. Gerasimus became a monk and departed for the desert of Egypt, to the region known as the Thebaid. He spent some time there, growing in Spiritual strength and wisdom, and then he again returned to his native province of Lycia. Later, towards the end of the reign of the holy Emperor Theodosius the Younger (who ruled from 408-450), he went to Palestine, where he settled in the wilderness near the Jordan River. There he built a monastery and became renowned for the virtue of his life.

The monastery of St. Gerasimus was built approximately 25 miles from Jerusalem and about 100 yards from the Jordan River. At that time there were more than 70 desert dwellers there and St. Gerasimus established the following rule for these strugglers. Five days a week each monk was to keep silent in a solitary cell, doing simple handiwork such as weaving mats or baskets out of palm leaves. During these five days no cooked food was eaten; the only food was a small amount of dried bread, roots and water brought from the monastery. On Saturdays and Sundays

all the monks went to the monastery to attend the Divine Liturgy and receive Holy Communion. Afterwards they were served cooked food and a little wine at the refectory. The work that had been completed during the week was given to the abbot. On Sunday, afternoon each monk departed once again for his solitary cell in the wilderness, taking only a little bread, roots, a vessel of water and palm branches to weave baskets. Each monk had only a single old robe, a mat on which to sleep and a small vessel for water. Whenever the monks left their cells, the doors were left open so that anyone could enter and take whatever he wished of the monks' few possessions. In this way they prevented any attachment to material possessions. During Great Lent St. Gerasimus ate nothing at all until the radiant Feast of Pascha. His bodily and spiritual strength were sustained solely by receiving the Holy Mysteries.

#### A Visit from Saint Theodosius the Cenobiarch

Saint Gerasimus was mighty in prayer and in the monastic discipline. He had, sad to say, fallen prey to the heresy of Monophysitism. This heresy teaches that Christ has but one nature, that is, the divine nature.

The 630 holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 teach that Christ has both the divine nature and the human nature which are united; the uncreated divine nature is united with the created human nature, without mingling, and without mixture between the two natures, in the *hypostasis*, or Person, of the Son of God.

After consulting all the writings of the holy Scriptures and the holy Fathers, the Council agreed to draw up two documents. One was written by those who favored the teaching of an Abbot named Eutyches that there is but one nature, and that a divine nature, in Christ. The other document was written by those who followed the Tome of Pope Saint Leo which teaches that there are two natures, the divine and the human, in the one Christ.

All the fathers agreed on the following procedure: they would open the incorrupt reliquary of St. Euphemia and place their two documents inside it. An Imperial guard would stand watch over the Saint's reliquary so that the Fathers could earnestly fast and pray for three days of night-long supplications. Then the reliquary would be opened and the Saint's decision, so the Fathers had agreed beforehand, would be final and they would all follow it.

On the third day St. Euphemia's reliquary was opened. The Monophysitic document was under her feet, and she held the Tome of Pope Saint Leo in her hand (Celebrated July 11). Today's Orthodox Christians follow St. Euphemia's decision and the teaching of the Fourth Ecumenical Council. There are two natures in the one Christ.<sup>1</sup> If Christ is not God, we are not saved, for only God can conquer the power of death. If Christ is not man, bearing our human nature which He

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<sup>1</sup> Christ's Icon is an icon neither of the divine nature, which can neither be seen nor described, nor of the human nature, but of the incarnate *hypostasis*, or Person, of God the Word. We truly see God Incarnate in His holy Icon. Our souls are elevated by the very sight of Him; our eyes are healed as we gaze upon His all-powerful countenance. We see Him as man; He heals us as God.

received from His Virgin Mother, we cannot be saved. As the hymn says, “He died our death that we might live His life.”

When Saint Theodosius met with Saint Gerasimus they spoke with each other. Saint Theodosius went over all that the Fathers at Chalcedon had done and said. He spoke of St. Euphemia’s miracle, and of its saving significance: only God can save us from death, and His human nature, united with ours in holy Baptism and His Body and Blood, the Body and Blood which He took from His Virgin Mother, does savingly blend with our human nature. Yes, we are saved by the Virgin’s blood.

Who knows what words passed between Saints Theodosius and Gerasimus during the course of that visit. But the holy Fathers do tell us that Saint Gerasimus was saved by his humility. On that day by the Jordan he brought himself around to the simplicity of the Gospel as taught by Saint Theodosius.

#### Saint Gerasimus and Jordan the lion.

The monks of his monastery were fond of recalling how a lion came to greatly love the saint and served him obediently and with great humility. One day, as St. Gerasimus was walking through the Jordan desert, he met a lion. The lion stretched out his paw and St. Gerasimus saw that it was infected and very swollen. The lion gazed pleadingly and meekly at the elder who sat down immediately to inspect the paw. He discovered that a thorn had lodged in the lion's paw and this was the cause of his suffering. The saint carefully removed the thorn, cleansed the wound of all the pus and then wrapped it with his handkerchief. From then on the lion faithfully followed the saint like a disciple. St. Gerasimus marveled at the lion's intelligence, meekness and willingness to eat bread and whatever else could be found for him. The lion was given an obedience in the monastery. The monks had a donkey which carried water from the Jordan River for the brethren. The lion was entrusted with the task of accompanying the donkey to the river and guarding it while it grazed on the riverbank.

One day the lion fell asleep in the sun, leaving the donkey to graze peacefully. Just then an Arabian merchant happened to pass by with his caravan of camels and saw the donkey. Thinking the animal was a stray, he tied it to his line of camels and took it with him. The lion awoke and began to search for the donkey, but it was nowhere to be found. The beast returned to the monastery and went immediately to St. Gerasimus who, seeing his dejected expression, thought he had eaten the donkey and asked, "Where is the donkey?" The lion stood in silence, hanging his head in shame. The elder praised the lion for not running away after his evil deed and instructed him to do the work of the donkey from then on. The monks loaded a large barrel on the lion's back, as they had done before with the donkey, and sent him to the river to fetch water. One day a soldier came to the monastery to pray, and, seeing the lion carrying the water, took pity on him and gave the monks three gold pieces to buy another donkey. The lion once again resumed his former obedience of guarding the monastery’s donkey.

Some time later, the same Arabian merchant once again passed by the Jordan on his way to sell wheat in Jerusalem. The donkey was still with him. That day the lion happened to be near the river and as the caravan approached he recognized the donkey. Roaring loudly, he rushed towards him, frightening the merchant and his companions who fled in great terror. The lion

grasped the donkey's reins in his teeth, as he had done previously, and led it together with the string of camels to the saint. When he saw the Saint he roared joyously at having found the lost donkey. St. Gerasimus smiled gently and told his monks that the lion had been blamed most unfairly. The lion was given the name 'Jordan' and he continued to be a most faithful 'disciple'. He was never absent from the monastery for more than five days at a time.

St. Gerasimus departed to the Lord in the year 475 and was buried by his sorrowing brethren there in his monastery. The lion was not in the monastery at that time. When later he arrived, he began to search for the saint. ... Father Sabbatius tried to explain why it was that the elder could not be found. "Jordan, our elder has left us orphans; he has departed to the Lord." The lion was not to be comforted; he refused the food that was offered and continued searching for his St. Gerasimus, roaring in great confusion. Fr. Sabbatius and the other monks stroked Jordan gently on the back and pleaded, "The elder has gone to the Lord; he has left us!" No words or explanations could stop the sorrowful roaring of the lion. He kept searching, now in great distress. Finally Fr. Sabbatius said, "If you do not believe us, then come with us: we will show you the place where the elder rests." Jordan was led to the tomb near the church where St. Gerasimus was buried. Fr. Sabbatius explained to the lion, "We have buried our elder here." Fr. Sabbatius then fell to his knees and with a heavy heart began to weep. The Lion now realized what had happened. He gave one last mighty roar, struck his head on the ground and died on the elder's grave.

The lion's love and devotion for St. Gerasimus is an example of the love and obedience the animals had for Adam before his fall into sin and his expulsion from Paradise. From this account we also learn how St. Gerasimus pleased the Lord, from his youth unto old age, until he was granted to be numbered among the saints with whom he now glorifies the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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(Translated and condensed by Vera Pronenko from the *Russian Lives of the Saints* based on the Menologion of St. Dimitry of Rostov.) Edited for the Virtual Parish.

