

A TEACHER OF SPIRITUALITY

Have you ever heard the story of the man who walked along the banks of the Jordan River when a lion came along, limping, and in great pain? The man approached the animal, found a sharp splinter in the paw, extracted and nursed the limb. It is said that the lion thereafter never left the side of his benefactor.

St. Gerasimos of the Jordan is that man. He was a great ascetic of the Church, and is said to have gone through the Great Fast taking no food except the Eucharist at the Liturgy.

The saint died in the year 475. When the lion found his friend gone, he searched everywhere for him. A faithful disciple, Abbot Sabbatios, tried to comfort the beast, but it seems nothing could be done. The Abbot said, “Our old friend has gone away and left us orphans, and has migrated to the Lord: but here is food, take and eat.” The lion would have no part of it. He kept roaming the cell, roaring with his head rased.

Finally, the lion was led to the grave of Gerasimos. The abbot, standing at the tomb, said: “Behold, here is were the old man is buried.” The abbot knelt and wept at the grave of the one he loved as father. Then the lion, too, stretched himself over the grave, with his head on the sand, and moaned in sadness. There the beast stayed, refusing to be moved, until death came and released him from the bonds of the earth.

St. Gerasimos, called “the righteous,” is a great teacher of spiritual life. He is an example for all to follow in this Lenten Season.