

March 4

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Gerasimos of the Jordan (d. ca. 475) monk

Today the Orthodox churches commemorate Gerasimos of the Jordan, a monk of the Palestinian desert. His biography has been reconstructed on the basis of an anonymous *Life* and some anecdotes drawn from John Moschos' *Spiritual Meadow*, but much of his life remains an enigma.

Gerasimos was probably born in the province of Lycia in the late fourth century, and seems to have entered a cenobitic community in Asia Minor at a young age. After some time he travelled to Judah, attracted by the fame of the anchorites who lived in the Palestinian desert.

Before long, many disciples began to ask to stay with him. Gerasimos founded a monastery near Jericho, incorporating about seventy desert hermitages into the community. This made it possible for the youngest monks to learn purification of the heart in the fellowship of the community, while seniors could dedicate themselves to solitude in the hermitage, in search of the 'hidden person of the heart.'

Gerasimos, a man of sincere love and communion, is also associated with the famous story of a lion that was healed by the elderly monk and remained faithful to him until death. When Gerasimos died, the lion stretched out on his tomb and died there as well.

Gerasimos' *lavra* remained one of the most vibrant centers of Palestinian monasticism until the thirteenth century.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Casimir (d. 1484; Roman calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (25 amsir/yakkatit):

Archippus, Philemon and Appia (1st cent.), martyrs (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Elsa Brändström (d. 1948), witness of the faith in Finland

MARONITES:

Paul and Juliana (d. ca. 273), martyrs

Gerasimos of the Jordan, monk

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Gerasimos of the Jordan, monk