

## CONCERNING UNGRATEFULNESS

—from the book *The Salvation of Sinners*—

On March 5th, we commemorate Saint Mark the Ascetic. One time, a lioness had brought one of her cubs, which was blind, to Saint Mark, gesturing and imploring him to heal her cub. The Saint spit on the young lion's eyes and immediately restored its vision. The lioness, out of gratitude, subsequently brought a hide of a ram to the Saint as a form of repayment to him. Such similar events are recorded in numerous lives of the Saints.

Lest someone, however, contend that these were miraculous events that took place on account of the virtues of holy men, and not necessarily on account of the animals' sense of gratitude, listen to the following account that took place with idolaters, who were neither living during the period of Christian Grace, nor possessed holiness.

According to the practice during ancient times, criminals were punished and executed by wild beasts. Once, in Rome, a certain criminal by the name of Androdon was thrown to the lions in an amphitheater, an exceptionally large lion amongst the pack stood next to him and fended off the other lions, not allowing them to approach or harm this man. The emperor who was watching was amazed to see such a remarkable event. He ordered for the convict to be brought before him, and he proceeded to ask him about the surprising behavior of the lion. To this, the convict responded, "I recall, your Highness, that one day as I was walking through a forest during midday, I came across a cave, which I entered in order to rest. Within the cave, I encountered a lion that was limping. As soon as the beast saw me, it raised one of its front paws, which it could not step on, whimpering and motioning me to help it. I then proceeded assertively to remove a large splinter that had been embedded in its paw, I cleaned the wound and tended to it as best as I could. Thereafter, for the next four days during my stay in the cave, this lion would bring me portions of meat from the animals it hunted. I believe that this is the very same lion, which recognized me as its benefactor and out of gratefulness protected me in such an extraordinary manner today." Upon hearing these words, the emperor freed this man and also gave him the lion, which from then on would follow behind him in the streets of Rome as a tame sheep, without harming any person. Witnessing such a phenomenon, the citizens began to call the lion "Androdon's keeper" and refer to Andronon as "the lion's physician."