

## **THE MOTHER OF GOD CONSOLES SAINT JOSEPH THE HESYCHAST**

During one particular point in his life, Elder Joseph the Hesychast (†1959) was in deep sorrow and great pain on account of sustained injustice from his neighboring monastics. In this heartbroken state, he entered his small chapel one day, and fell before the icon of the Mother of God. As he was praying, his soul suddenly was filled with consolation and light, his heart became inundated with the love of God, and he saw a vision, which he describes as follows:

I found myself in a vast plain similar to an ocean with no sign of a horizon anywhere, and the ground was as white as snow. It seemed as though I was walking toward the east, but I was not touching the ground nor did I feel any weight or restriction. I was wearing my usual ragged clothing. I was amazed at how quickly I was walking without any effort...Then I started to wonder how I would get back since I knew nothing of how I had gotten there nor where I was.

Quite a distance ahead, I heard people speaking. I headed in that direction to find the people who were talking and ask them what everything here is. "How did I get to such a beautiful landscape?" I asked myself in astonishment. I was looking for a way out, lest someone come and scolds me because I had entered without permission. And as I was looking curiously right and left to find an exit, I saw a basement door and entered there. It was a temple of our Most Holy Theotokos. Some beautiful youths were sitting there dressed with splendid garments and had a red cross on their chests and on their foreheads. One of them, who wore a brighter garment and looked like a general, arose from his throne and spoke to me very warmly as if he knew me well: "Come. We are waiting for you." Then he urged me to sit down. "Forgive me," I said, "I am unworthy to sit there, but it is enough for me to stand here at your feet."

I was reserved and felt embarrassed because I was wearing my old, ripped, and unwashed clothes. He, nevertheless, smiled, took me by the hand, and led me down an exquisite staircase. When we got to the bottom, I was before a very large entrance, which was filled with beautiful seats occupied by radiant youths who were similar in age and appearance, and who were chanting the hymn I had heard earlier...My guide left me at that point and proceeded into

the main part of the chapel, from where chanting could be heard that was being directed to our Lady the Theotokos. I wanted to sit somewhere on the floor in order to marvel and enjoy at all that grandeur; however, the door opened and the general who had led me there appeared and called me happily, "Come Fr. Joseph; come inside! Let's go in so you can venerate."

As I remained motionless, he took me by the hand; we walked past the luminous youths and arrived at the door. When the door opened and he led me in...I did not know if this was a temple, or if it was heaven and the throne of God...Then I noticed the magnificent iconostasis...and two large icons to the right and the left of the Royal Doors: one of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the other of His Immaculate Mother seated on a throne and holding the Divine Child on her lap...Then my guide motioned me to approach in order to venerate, and he directed me toward our Lady the Theotokos, who is the consolation of all Christians. I don't remember exactly if I had started to move toward her...but my guide, who seemed to be very familiar and have great boldness before our Lady, said to her with a warm and caring voice (which I remember until today), "Lady of all, Queen of the angles, Immaculate Virgin Theotokos! Show thy grace to this thy servant who suffers so much for thy love, so that he be not engulfed by sorrow." And suddenly, so much brilliance came out from her divine icon and the Panagia looked so beautiful, in full length, that from the extreme beauty—a million times brighter than the sun—I fell down at her feet unable to gaze at her and cried out in tears,

"Forgive me, my dear Mother, because out of ignorance I sadden you! My Lady, do not abandon me!" Then I heard Her blessed voice, which was sweeter than honey and stronger than any known consolation asking me, "Why do you despair? Have your hope in me." Then she turned and said to my guide, "Take him back to his home so he can continue struggling." Simultaneously, I felt someone nudging my shoulder, and as I attempted to get up, I found myself in the original spot where I had began to pray, and crying thus in reality, I came to myself soaked in tears and full of joy. Ever since, I feel such love and respect for our Lady the Theotokos, that her name alone fills me with spiritual joy. "Have your hope in me." These words became my steady and permanent source of consolation henceforth.