

THE ROMAN RULER WHO WAS SAVED FROM DROWNING

—from the book *The Salvation of Sinners*—

In the regions of ancient Rome, there lived a certain ruler who presided over a large city. This man possessed excessive wealth and material goods, but his soul was impoverished and pitiful, as he wallowed in fleshly desires and carnal sins. Despite this, he had great reverence for the Mother of God, and he showed boundless sympathy for the poor, providing abundant alms to whomever sought his help.

One day, he was traveling outside of the city on horseback in the company of some other aristocrats. Prior to venturing outside of his house each morning, he maintained the virtuous custom of stopping in front of the icon of the Most Holy Theotokos and praying to her at length, reciting the Angelic Greeting and other prayers that he knew, asking Her to cover him with Her Grace, and to protect him from harm. He had done this also before setting out with his friends in this instance.

On account of his great reverence for the Most Pure Mother of the Lord, the devil despised him and for some time had sought an opportunity to kill him, if possible. Thus, when they were passing over a river, the devil entered into the noble's horse, which immediately became wild and uncontrollable. As the horse jerked its body violently, the nobleman was hurled into the river below. When his companions saw that he was drowning and was submerged in the waters, they became deeply distraught. Convinced that he had died, they bewailed the death of their friend, quickly returned to the city, and announced the incident to his relatives who were to arrange for his funeral service. However, the merciful helper and swift aid of all Christians, the advocate of sinners, rescued him from bodily and spiritual death in the following manner.

As he was falling into the river, he cried out to the Mother of God: “**Most-Holy Theotokos help me!**” And after plunging into the water, she appeared to him and pulled him out by his hair. She then carried him in an instant back to his home, and admonished him: “**Look, you are well. Sin no more, but thank God, your Benefactor, bearing fruits worthy of repentance so that you may be saved.**” When his family members saw him unexpectedly, they were shocked. He was soaking wet, in a daze, and unable to utter a word.

In the meantime, his companions returned to his home to speak with his family again. When, however, they encountered their friend (whom they thought had drowned), they stopped dead in their tracks, dumbfounded. He then recounted what had taken place in detail, prompting everyone to glorify the miracle-working Mother of God. The regional bishop, who was soon informed about this miracle, gathered all of the Orthodox Christians and conducted a joyous celebration to thank the Panagia. As for the nobleman, he no longer returned to his former sinful ways, but departed for a shrine of the Most Holy Theotokos where several monks dwelled. He became a monk himself and remained serving the chapel until his last breath with virtuous and God pleasing conduct, and, thus, became worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. May we all inherit it. Amen.