

SAINT AGATHON

Agathon, our holy father among the saints, is commemorated by our Church on January 8th. This righteous man who attained perfect love made the following remarkable statement: “If it were possible for me to give my body to someone with leprosy and for me to take his body, I would gladly do so; because this is perfect love.”

One of his few possessions was a small gardening tool. One day, another monk who was visiting the saint commented that the gardening tool was very nice. Subsequently, abba Agathon insisted that the visitor take it, and he did not permit him to leave until he accepted to take the small gardening tool with him.

One time, this saint went to the city to sell certain items that he had fabricated. In the city square, he saw a crippled man who was laying on the ground, and who had no one to look after him. The elder took the man to an inn and rented a room for him. He used part of the money he earned from selling his handicrafts to pay for the room, and he spent the remainder to purchase things needed for the sick man. He stayed with the destitute man for four months until he became better, and then he left for his hut with a peaceful conscience.

Another time, while on his way to the city to sell various small items, abba Agathon came across a leper who was sitting at the side of the road. The man asked him, “where are you headed?” “To the city to sell these items,” replied abba Agathon. “Do me a favor,” said the man, “lift me up and take me there.” So abba Agathon lifted him and carried him toward the city. The poor man then told him, “set me down wherever you’re going to sell your items.” Once again, abba Agathon did as he requested. In following, when abba Agathon sold his first item, the man asked him: “How much did you sell it for?” “This much,” the elder replied. “Buy me a small pie,” requested the pauper. And he bought it for him. Each time he sold something, the poor man would ask: “How much did you sell this for?” And abba Agathon would respond, “this much.” And every time the man would request, “buy me this thing,” the saint would buy it for him. Finally, after he had sold all his handicrafts and was preparing to leave, the leper asked him: “Are you leaving?” “Yes,” he replied. “Do me one more favor and take me back to the place where you found me.” And so, he lifted him up on his back and took him back to the same spot. After abba Agathon set him down and turned to leave, he heard the man saying: “Blessed art thou, O Agathon, by the Lord of the heaven and the earth.” And when the elder looked back, he saw no one. It was an angel of the Lord who had come to test him.

Through his holy prayers, may Christ our God grant us such love also. Amen.