

SAINT GELASIOS

—Commemorated December 31st—

Saint Gelasios was the Abbot of a Monastery in the Holy Land. He possessed a leather-bound Bible that contained the entire text of the Old and New Testament, which was worth eighteen coins. The Saint had placed this book in the Monastery chapel, so that it could be accessible to any of the monks who wanted to read from it. One time, a visiting monk from another monastery had gone to speak to Saint Gelasios. While in the church, he noticed this Bible and had a strong desire to acquire it. Having succumb to this evil impulse, he took hold of it and quietly departed from the monastery, believing that no one had noticed. Saint Gelasios, however, realized that this monk had stolen the book. Despite this, he did not chase after him to stop him, but let him go.

This monk proceeded to the neighboring city, with the intention of selling the book. He found someone who was interested in purchasing this Bible, and asked for sixteen coins. But the buyer replied, “Let me hold on to it, so I can take a look through it first, before I pay you.” The monk agreed and left it with him. This person then took the Bible and went to Saint Gelasios. He showed it to him and asked if the owner was asking for fair price. Saint Gelasios advised him as follows: “Buy it, because it is exceptional and well worth the price.” However, when the person returned to the city and met up with the monk again, he didn’t say exactly what the Elder had advised him. He said, “Look, I showed this bible to Elder Gelasios, and he told me that the price is too high, and it’s not worth that much.” When the monk heard this, he asked, “He didn’t say anything else to you?” “No,” replied the man. Then the monk said, “I don’t want to sell this anymore.”

Full of remorse, the monk returned to Saint Gelasios, he prostrated himself before the Elder and asked him to take the book back. The Saint, however, did not want to take it. Then the monk said, “If you do not take it, I will not be at peace.” And Saint Gelasios replied, “If you will not be at peace, then I will take it.” Thereafter, this monk remained at Saint Gelasios’ monastery until the end of his earthly life, edified by the conduct of the holy Elder.

Once, some visitors had brought a fish to the Saint. After the monastery cook prepared it, he brought it to the Saint’s cell attendant. At that moment,

however, the cell attendant needed to leave immediately to take care of an unexpected matter, and so he instructed a young novice who happened to be there to keep the fish until Saint Gelasios would return. The young boy, however, unable to control himself started to eat the fish. Sometime later when the cell attendant returned and saw the boy sitting on the ground eating the fish, he became furious, and without thinking, impulsively gave him a strong kick. Unfortunately, this was a fatal blow! The boy became unconscious and ended up dying right then and there. The cell attendant, overcome by fear, lifted the boy in his arms, placed him on his cot, and covered him with a blanket. Then he ran to find Saint Gelasios. Falling before him he related to him everything that had occurred.

When Saint Gelasios heard what had happened, he told him not to mention anything to anyone about this event, and instructed him to take the deceased boy into the church's altar that evening, after everyone had retired to their rooms, to lay him in front of the altar table and then leave. Subsequently, the Saint went to the altar and stood in prayer. When the time came for the monks to gather in church for the midnight service, the Saint came out of the altar with the boy following behind him without anyone realizing what had happened. Only Saint Gelasios and his cell attendant were aware, and it was kept a secret up until the Saint passed away.

Initially, Saint Gelasios lived in the desert as a hermit, free of all possessions and worldly cares. In those days there were many other hermits dwelling in the same region, all living a life of solitude and prayer. Amongst them was one very simple elder who was a friend of Saint Gelasios. Later in life, when God willed for Saint Gelasios to establish a cenobitic monastery, several people offered land and fields to his monastery; consequently, it became necessary for St. Gelasios to also acquire livestock and oxen to farm the fields. When the aforementioned elder learned that Saint Gelasios had become involved with all these things and had taken on so many responsibilities, he became genuinely concerned for him. When he visited the saint he told him: I am afraid, Father Gelasios, lest your mind becomes engrossed in earthly matters and preoccupied with the monastery's possessions." To this Saint Gelasios replied, "Your mind is preoccupied with the needle you use to weave your handicraft more than Gelasios' mind is with the monastery's fields and assets."

Through his holy prayers, may Christ our God have mercy on us. Amen.