

SAINT KONON

—Commemorated February 19th—

Saint Konon was from Kilikia. From a very young age, he became a monk at a monastery located near the Jordan River, named *Penthoukla*. Later he became a priest and lived with extreme asceticism. When the Archbishop of Jerusalem Peter (524-552 A.D.) learned of this saint's extraordinary ascetic way of life, he appointed him to baptize pilgrims who would go to the Jordan River for this purpose. The saint would first anoint the catechumens with the holy oil and, in following, baptize them. Nonetheless, as a human being, he had difficulty anointing certain ladies, and, fearing this temptation, he repeatedly contemplated to abandon the monastery. However, every time he thought of leaving, St. John the Forerunner would appear to him and assure him, "Be patient, Elder, and I will lighten the warfare you are experiencing."

One day, a certain young lady from Persia came to be baptized. This lady was so beautiful that the Saint was unable to anoint her unclothed, and consequently she remained in that desolate region, patiently waiting to be anointed and baptized. When word of this reached the Archbishop, he was astounded to hear how the elder had dealt with this difficulty, and he decided to send a pious lady who would henceforth help the saint with the anointing and baptism of women. However, due to various circumstances, including the harsh climatic conditions of the desert, it was not possible for the appointed helper to reach the monastery.

Meanwhile, the elder took his cape and departed with the resolution, "I will no longer remain in this area." As he did so, the venerable Forerunner appeared to him outside the monastery and spoke to him in a gentle tone: "Return to your monastery, and I will lighten the warfare you are experiencing." But Elder Konon responded angrily, "Believe me, I will not go back again, because you have repeatedly promised to lighten my burden, but you have done nothing." Then, the divine Forerunner took hold of the Elder, he lifted up his garment, and made the sign of the Venerable Cross over the area below his belly saying: "Believe me, Father Konon. I wanted you to continue acquiring rewards on account of this warfare. But now, return to your monastery and have no more doubts concerning this issue." Hence, the elder returned to his monastery.

On the following day, when Saint Konon proceeded to anoint and baptize the Persian lady, the fact that she was a woman did not even cross his mind. Thereafter, he attained such a degree of dispassion, that he was viewed by many as a super-natural man. Having lived another twenty years in an angelic manner, he finally fell asleep in the Lord peacefully.

Through his holy prayers, and the intercessions of the venerable Forerunner, may Christ our God deliver us from the evil passions. Amen.