

Venerable Nicetas the Confessor the Abbot of Medikion



Saint Nicetas the Confessor was born in Bithynian Caesarea (northwest Asia Minor) of a pious family. His mother died eight days after his birth, and his father Philaretos became a monk. The child remained in the care of his grandmother, who raised him in a true Christian spirit. From his youth St Nicetas attended church and was a disciple of the hermit Stephanos. With his blessing, St Nicetas set off to the Mydicia monastery, where St Nicephorus (March 13) was the igumen.

After seven years of virtuous life at the monastery, famed for its strict monastic rule, St Nicetas was ordained presbyter. St Nicephorus, knowing the holy life of the young monk, entrusted to him the guidance of the monastery when he himself became ill.

Not wanting power, St Nicetas devoted himself to the enlightenment and welfare of the monastery. He guided the brethren by his own example. Soon the fame of the lofty life of its inhabitants of the monastery attracted many seeking salvation. After several years, the number of monks had increased to one hundred.

When St Nicephorus departed to the Lord in his old age, the brethren unanimously chose St Nicetas as igumen.

The Lord granted St Nicetas the gift of wonderworking. Through his prayer a deaf-mute child received the gift of speech; two demon-possessed women were healed; he restored reason to one who had lost his mind, and many of the sick were healed of their infirmities.

During these years under the emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820), the Iconoclast heresy resurfaced and oppression increased. Orthodox bishops were deposed and banished. At Constantinople a council of heretics was convened in 815, at which they deposed the holy Patriarch Nicephorus (806-815), and in his place they chose the heretical layman Theodotus. They also installed heretics in place of exiled and imprisoned Orthodox bishops.

The emperor summoned all the heads of the monasteries and tried to bring them over to the Iconoclast heresy. Among those summoned was St Nicetas, who stood firmly for the Orthodox confession. Following his example, all the igumens remained faithful to the veneration of holy icons. Therefore, they threw him into prison. St Nicetas bravely underwent all the tribulations and encouraged firmness of spirit in the other prisoners.

Then the emperor and the false patriarch Theodotus attempted to trick those who remained faithful to Orthodox teaching. They promised that the emperor would give them their freedom and permit the veneration of the icons on one condition: that they take Communion from the pseudo-patriarch Theodotus.

For a long time the saint had doubts about entering into communion with a heretic, but other prisoners begged him to go along with them. Acceding to their entreaties, St Nicetas went into the church, where icons were put out to deceive the confessors, and he accepted Communion.

But when he returned to his monastery and saw that the persecution against icons was continuing, he then repented of his deed, returned to Constantinople and fearlessly denounced the Iconoclast heresy. He ignored all the emperor's threats.

St Nicetas was again locked up in prison for six years until the death of the emperor Leo the Armenian. Enduring hunger and travail, St Nicetas worked miracles by the power of his prayers: through his prayer the Phrygian ruler released two captives without ransom; three shipwrecked men for whom St Nicetas prayed, were thrown up on shore by the waves.

St Nicetas reposed in the Lord in 824. The saint's body was buried at the monastery with reverence. Later, his relics became a source of healing for those coming to venerate the holy confessor.

Troparion - Tone 4

You were a firm pillar and an undaunted guardian of sacred tradition, O Nicetas; you were adorned with holy dispassion and became an illustrious confessor of the Faith.

Accept the prayers of those who cry to you,
interceding for them with Christ our God.

Kontakion - Tone 2

You acquired a heavenly mind and life,
shining as brightly as the sun in the splendor of your deeds!
Father Nicetas, you enlighten those in the darkness of life guiding them all to God.
Pray without ceasing for us all!