



The Life of St. Demetrios the Myrrh-flowing

"THE FEAST DAY of Aghios Demetrios is a great feast for all of Orthodoxy, but especially Thessalonica, which is his birthplace. His church is a building dating from the ancient Christian era, built one hundred years after his holy martyrdom which was in 296 A.D. But after 300 years it burned, and was rebuilt in the days of Leo the Wise."

"St. Demetrios along with St. George are the two brave lads of Christianity. These two are below on earth, and the two Archangels Michael and Gabriel are above in heaven."

"In ancient times there were painted without armor, but in later years they were depicted armored with swords and spears and dressed in metal breastplates. On one shoulder they have their helmet hanging, and on the other their shield. At the waist they are girded with the straps which hold the sheath of the sword and the quiver which has in the arrows and the bow. In recent years, after the conquest of Constantinople, these two saints, and many times other soldier saints also, are painted as riding horses, St. George on a white horse, St. Demetrios on a red one."



Portable Mosaic of St. Demetrios from the Monastery of Xenophontos on Mount Athos (12th Century) (icon from http://www.eikastikon.gr/afieromata/agios_dimitrios_3.html)

"This armor which these Saints wear, depicts spiritual weapons, like those of which the holy Apostle Paul speaks saying, "Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high. Therefore take up the armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of justice and having your feet shod with the readiness of the Gospel of peace, in all things taking up the shield of faith, with which you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, that is, the word of God" (Eph.6:11-17). This heroic and persevering character, which the warriors have who were martyred for Christ like harmless and innocent sheep, has reference to spiritual things."

"AGHIOS DEMETRIOS, the Great Martyr and Myrovletes (myrrh-emitting), was born in Thessalonica in 260 A.D. His parents were illustrious people and along with the transitory glory which Demetrios had from his family, he was adorned with imperishable virtues, with prudence, with sweetness, with humility, with justice, and with every noble comeliness of the soul. All these were like precious stones which shone on the crown which he wore, and this crown was the faith in Christ."

"In those days, there reigned in Rome Diocletian, and he had appointed as caesar in the parts of Macedonia and the East a hard-hearted and bloodthirsty general who was called Maximian, a beast in human form as were all those military rulers (polemarchs) who then ruled the world with the sword: Diocletian, Maxentius, Maximian, Galerius, Licinius -- hard headed, fierce-faced, strong-jawed, grim-mouthed, with short thick necks like barrels, ruthless, and terrifying. He in turn appointed Demetrios ruler of Thessalonica and all Thessalia. When Maximian returned from a certain war, he gathered the officers of Thessalonica in order to offer sacrifice to the idols. Then Demetrios revealed that he was a Christian, and did not accept hewn stones as gods.



Fresco from the Patriarchate of Pec depicting St. Demetrios before Maximian (taken from: http://www.srpskoblago.org/Archives/Pec/exhibits/StDemetriosChurch/Nave/UndertheDome/NorthWall/282N1801_L.html)

Maximian went into a rage and ordered that he be tried and imprisoned in a bath. And all the while he was imprisoned, the populace ran with mourning to hear Demetrios teach the people of Christ. A young lad, Nestor, also went every day and heard his teaching."

"During those days, many brave men fought in the stadium and Maximian rejoiced at these spectacles. He even had a great honor a certain henchman Lyaeus, a beastly man, brass-knuckled, an idolator and blasphemer, brought from some barbarous nation. Nestor, seeing that this Lyaeus had defeated all the boasted that he had the strength of Ares, the pagan god of war, and that no native dared wrestle with him, went to the prison and besought St. Demetrios to bless him to defeat and put to shame Lyaeus and Maximian and their religion."



Fresco from the Patriarchate of Pec depicting St. Demetrios blessing St. Nestor (taken from: http://www.srpskoblago.org/Archives/Pec/exhibits/StDemetriosChurch/Nave/UndertheDome/NorthWall/282N1802_L.html)

"Aghios Demetrios prayed and made the sign of the Cross over him, and immediately Nestor ran to the stadium and wrestled with that fierce giant, and he threw him down, and slew him. Then Maximian became beside himself with rage and learning that Nestor was a Christian and that St. Demetrios had blessed him, he ordered the soldiers to have them put to death."



Icon of St. Nestor defeating Lyaeus, and St. Demetrios praying for him in the background (Icon

courtesy of www.eikonografos.com used with permission)

"And they going to the bath lanced St. Demetrios (note holy icon above top of the page) with their spears, and thus he received the eternal crown on the 26th of October, 296 A.D., at the age of thirty-six. It is written that when he saw the soldiers thrusting their spears at him, he raised high his arm and they lanced him in the side, so that he might be deemed worthy to receive the lancing which Christ received in His side, and there ran blood and water from the wound. Nestor was beheaded the next day (holy Martyr Nestor of Thessalonica is commemorated in the holy Orthodox Church on the 27th of October) outside the wall at the place of the Golden Gate with his own sword."



Icon of the Martyrdom of St. Demetrios from the Monastery of Megisti Lavra on Mount Athos

(icon from http://www.eikastikon.gr/afieromata/agios_dimitrios_2.html)



Another icon depicting the Martyrdom of St. Demetrios (http://194.177.217.107/gr/showpic.asp?picpath=13_8bit_PE-IC8-DS2-Q2&curtable=icons&currrecord=13&vorder=1&vmode=first)

"The holy Christians took the holy remains and buried them side by side, and from the grave of St. Demetrios there came forth holy myrrh which cured many diseases. For this reason he is called Myrovletes. Over his holy grave and the place of his holy martyrdom there was built a church in the form of a basilica which stands to this day. In 1143 the Emperor Manuel Comnenos sent from Constantinople and brought the holy icon of the Saint which was at his tomb and put in the Monastery of Pantocrator, whose church was build by the Comneni and is called today Zeirek."



Icon of the Dormition of St. Demetrios from the Patriarchate of Pek Kosovo (icon from http://www.eikastikon.gr/afieromata/agios_dimitrios_3.html)

"This then is the holy martyrdom of Aghios Demetrios the Great Martyr and Myrrh-bearer, who loved our Savior above all things of this life - - pleasures, wealth, honors - - and longed to be dissolved that he might be found with Him in the celestial Kingdom, through whose prayers may we also be deemed worthy of like fate. Amen.

Source: *The Orthodox Word, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California*"; Compiled by Fr. Demetrios Serfes (<http://fr-d-serfes.org/lives/stdemetrios.htm>)



Another icon of the Dormition of St. Demetrios the Great Martyr (http://194.177.217.107/gr/showpic.asp?picpath=12_8bit_PE-IC8-DS2-Q3&curtable=icons&currrecord=12&vorder=1&vmode=first)

For another account of the **life of St. Demetrios**, see: <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=103059>.

For a previous post on the **Veneration of St. Demetrios and Thessaloniki**, see: <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2008/10/veneration-of-st-demetrios.html>.

For a post with **numerous miracles of St. Demetrios**, see: <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2009/10/miracles-of-st-demetrios-myrrh-streamer.html>.



7th Century mosaic depicting St. Demetrios protecting children, from the Church of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki (taken from: http://www.eikastikon.gr/afteromata/agios_dimitrios.html)

Glory. Of the Saint. Tone 8. By Anatolios.

Your most godlike and blameless soul, revered Demetrios, has her dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem, whose walls have been adorned by the hands of the invisible God. While on earth this famous temple holds your all-honoured and most valiant body, an inviolate store house of treasures, a remedy for diseases; to it we have recourse and draw healings. Guard the city which magnifies you, All-praised, from assaults of foes, for you have boldness towards Christ who glorified you.

Apolytikion. Tone 3. Your confession.

The whole world has found you as a mighty champion in dangers, O victor, who rout the nations. Therefore as you destroyed the pride of Lyaïos in the stadium by giving Nestor courage, holy great Martyr Demetrios, implore Christ God to grant us his great mercy.

(Text from Fr. Ephraim Lash: <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/26oct.htm>)

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our

God, have mercy on us and save us! Amen!