

## **THE MARTYRS ARE THE PROOF OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION**

On the 23rd of April, my beloved Christians, our Church honors the memory of Saint George the Great Martyr. We will speak about him here. Before we speak about Saint George, however, we will say a few words about Easter; because the Feast of Saint George usually comes near Easter and has a relationship with the great Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord.

Easter, is the feast of feasts and celebration of celebrations. Angels and Archangels, the most holy Theotokos, and the righteous rejoice in the Resurrection of the Lord. We rejoice as well, because there came immortality from His grave, forgiveness of our sins, and triumph over sin, death, and Lucifer. As Saint John Chrysostom says so wonderfully in his Catechetical homily, which those who stay until the end of Divine Liturgy of Easter hear, "Let no one grieve at His poverty; for the universal Kingdom hath been revealed. Let no one mourn that he hath fallen again and again; for forgiveness hath risen from the grave. Let no one fear death; for the Death of our Savior hath set us free!" Which is to say: Those of you who are poor, do not be upset; Christ is rich. Those of you who are sinners, wipe away your tears; Christ forgives your sins. Those of you who fear death, have courage; Christ has defeated death.

The Resurrection, like the sun, spread joy and happiness everywhere. Even dead nature, which is resurrected in springtime rejoices and dresses in its festive clothing, and the spring flowers cry out also in their own way "Christ is risen!" God's joy! Only Satan mourns and laments, and with him all those who do not want to believe in Christ and continue to live in unbelief and corruption. Even on the day of the Resurrection they do not feel anything holy and spiritual, but live like beasts without God, without Christ, and alas only the name Christian remains on them.

The Easter of the Lord! The joy of the Christians, however, continues and near the Resurrection of Christ we celebrate the Feast of Saint George the Great Martyr. His memory is celebrated on the 23rd of April. But when the 23rd of April comes before Easter, during the time of mourning, then the feast of Saint George, it has been decided, is celebrated on the second day after Easter. And this is proof that our Church has the right to change the days of the Feasts. The foremost matter here is not so important when we celebrate, but how we celebrate. If Christians rush to dances on holy days, to drunkenness, fornication, adultery and to every filthiness and crime, going to work would be preferable. These Christians do not honor, but dishonor the saint; they cheapen the name Christian and give the unbelievers the right to criticize our faith.

Let us say, though, a few words about the Feast of Saint George now. Saint George is beloved not only in our country, but also in other Christian countries. Millions of men are called George; Kings, Princes, Generals, Scientists, rich and poor, workers, farmers have the name George and celebrate their nameday. Women too have the name Georgia. There is not a home in Greece that does not have a relative with the name of Saint George. But why is there so much honor for Saint George?

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Saint George was one of the greatest heroes of Christendom. He was born and suffered the martyr's death during the time of an awful persecution against Christians, that an evil blood thirsty emperor, Diocletian, set forth. George came from the country of Cappadocia, a district of Asia Minor which gave birth to so many saints and martyrs. His father was arrested, confessed Christ and suffered the martyr's death when George was

a little boy. George was the son of a martyr. His widowed mother, a pious woman, went to his father's grave often, and there with both of them kneeling, they prayed to God. George burned with the holy desire to follow the example of his father and become a martyr for Christ too. When he grew up, he served in the army. He was an excellent soldier, obedient, brave, fearless in battle. He loved his country, he chased after the barbarians who invaded it, burned down houses and slaughtered children and women. Saint George was the protector of the weak. Due to his bravery, he quickly climbed high and reached the top offices of the army. He became a general.

When a persecution was declared against Christians and all the officers were asked to declare that they were not Christians and that they believed in the idols, George did not hesitate at all to do that which he should. He did not deny Christ, as others did. He declared that he was a Christian and that no power in the earth would change his faith. When the Emperor heard this he was very sorry, because this most brave general was a Christian. In the beginning they tried to change his mind in a pleasant way. They promised him every honor and office. George, however, rejected all the offers and remained steadfast and unshakeable. Then his martyrdom began; a martyrdom of the worst kind. At first they threw him in a dark prison. Then they placed him on a wheel, which was a torturing instrument; with its sharp nails the wheel tore the flesh, made the blood of man run, and then the person die.

Christ however, by His grace helped the martyr and defeated the pain. Not only this, but he also performed miracles. He resurrected a dead man from the grave; he destroyed a large dragon that was eating people; he went to the temple of the idols and with his prayers brought down all of the statues and made the demons shout and say, that there is only one true God and He is the God of George. This seems unbelievable to many, but Christ declared that whoever believes in Him will perform miracles, he will step on scorpions and snakes and defeat all the power of the enemy.

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What Saint George did he did not do by his own power; he did it with the power of Christ, who defeated sin and death and rose from the dead and gives power to everyone who is faithful to defeat their enemies. Thus every saint is also proof that Christ is the true God. The life, the martyrdoms, and the miracles of the saints cannot have any other explanation than that Christ rose from the dead and lives and reigns, and that it is He Who gives His power and grace so that weak and sinful people may become heroes and martyrs. Thousands of people, who saw the martyrdom and the miracles of the saint, believed and were baptized in the name of Christ.

My Christians! It is not appropriate to simply celebrate the feast of Saint George; we must also imitate the saint in his virtues, and especially in the bravery that he showed all of his life. Did the saint kill the dragon, as it appears in his icon? We have dragons too and they are our passions and vices. Who does not have them? Onward, let us fight those internal dragons! Whoever fights and defeats his passions with the help of Christ, becomes a worthy imitator of Saint George. This Christian is proof that Christ who was resurrected lives in our time, succeeds, and triumphs. Christ is risen, my brothers and sisters! To the Crucified and Risen Christ belongs honor and glory forever.

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