

St. George

About 15 years ago an icon of St. George in the Holy Land began streaming myrrh in the town next to his traditional burial site of Lydda. It attracted thousands of Orthodox Christians and even Muslims to come and see the great miracle that was occurring. It was a sign of peace and unity in a land that has seen almost continual warfare and bloodshed.

To this very day, Orthodox Christians from around the globe when they go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land stop to visit the grave of St. George and receive blessed oil that has been placed on his grave. This oil is used for anointing Orthodox Christians along with prayers asking for St. George's intercession.

St. George is venerated in the Orthodox Church as the one who slayed the dragon, not only the dragon that was terrorizing the villagers in Cappadocia or Libya, depending on which story you read, but also, more importantly, the one whom the dragon represents, Satan. St. George, despite being put on a torture wheel with sharp spikes and being thrown into a lime pit, never renounced his faith, but remained faithful to Christ to the end. He defeated Satan, by keeping his faith, even amid great trial and tribulation. And so in iconography, he is portrayed as slaying the dragon with a spear. This would give rise to many medieval legends about the knight in shining armor slaying the dragon and rescuing the trapped princess.

In one of his many trials, St. George, when blasphemed by one of the emperor's advisors to raise someone from the dead, prayed to God for a long time and rolled a stone away from the tomb of a man who had been dead for many years. When the man came out of the tomb, the emperor asked him who he was and when he had lived. The man said that he had lived from the time before Christ and he had been an idolator and had burned in the fires of Hell because of his idolatry. His words caused many idolators in the city to convert. So St. George converted many idolators to Christ, not only by his own life, but also by his raising of an idolator from the dead.

St. George teaches us the value of fighting, fighting the spiritual fight, not giving in to the devil, but like St. Paul tells us, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Ephesians 6:11-13) St. George continues to stand even to this day. May we stand with St. George, faithful to the end.