

Elder Theodore*

Near Yaroslavl [in Russia] there lived a boy by the name of Theodore. When he was six years old, he visited an Eldress named Xenia, who had the gift of foresight; and she said to him:

“Who has come to see me? Theodore, what joy! For forty-five years you will pasture cows and goats. Never use a stick or a staff on them and never speak nasty or angry words, and the animals will obey you. Then you will go to St. Petersburg, to Blessed Xenia, my patron Saint; after which you will go to our holy land, to Vyritsa, to the Elder there.”

Theodore lived with his parents, and such thoughts as these never crossed his mind. However, soon he was left an orphan, and from the age of six he did indeed pasture cattle. He worked as a herdsman for exactly forty-seven years, as the Eldress had foretold to him. He never beat any animal and he never uttered a nasty word; nor did he ever lose a single cow. He had fashioned a horn, which he would blow, and with it he would call the cows. He herded cattle until he was fifty years old. He never received any wages, but ate in the homes of the cattle-owners, who also provided him with clothing. Everyone was fond of him on account of his affability and guilelessness.

He was often very distressed at not being able to go to Church on the great Feasts, because he had to take the cows out to pasture every day. On one occasion, on the Feast of the Transfiguration, he was especially sorrowful and prayed to God: “All the Faithful are praying in Church today, and I am unable to be with them. I am always with the cows and the goats.”

When Theodore had taken the cows out to pasture, he placed an Icon on a tree and prayed there for hours before it. On that day, he prayed with particular ardor.

Suddenly, he saw a flash of extraordinary light above the Icon; the light was brighter than the sun. Then our Savior appeared with Moses, Elias, and the Holy Apostles Peter, James, and John. Theodore had no idea how long the vision lasted.

By the time he came to his senses, it was already afternoon. He realized that he would have to return the animals to their owner’s house, because it was milking time, and at that moment the vision disappeared. Theodore got up and wept, beseeching the Lord to reveal to him whether what had happened was a genuine vision or just his imagination. He took his horn, called the cows, and turned towards the herd. He was astounded by what he saw: all the cows were kneeling, and tears flowed from their eyes!

For forty-seven years Theodore worked as a herdsman, and then he

retired. He did not have any relatives, nor was he married. He remembered the guidance that he had been given in his childhood and travelled to St. Petersburg. It was then 1949....

* Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 297 (July-August 2000), p. 323. Translated from the work of Vasily Nikolaevich Mouraviev, *Elder Hieroschemamonk Seraphim of Vyritsa, 1865–1949*, adapted by Alexander Trofimov [in Russian] (Moscow: St. Alexey Brotherhood, 1996), pp. 131–132.