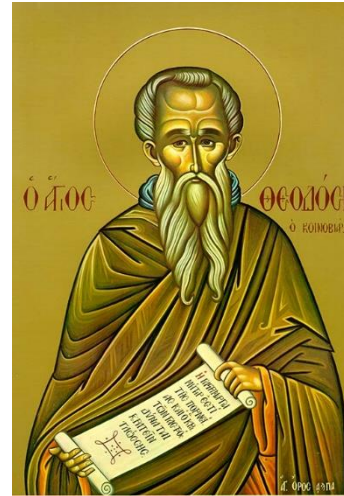**January 11**

Our Venerable Father Theodosius,
Founder of the Cenobitic Monastic Life (529)

St. Theodosius, whom we commemorate today, was born in Cappadocia, Asia Minor (Turkey), in the year 423. His loving parents inspired him with a love for holy virtues and a great love for the Holy Scriptures.

As a youth, Theodosius was ordained a reader. One day, he was inspired by the words of the Gospel to leave everything and to embrace monastic life. He set out on the road to Jerusalem and came to the Church of the Resurrection, where he was trained by Longinus, an elder from Cappadocia and a dedicated monk who served at the church there.

Once he was prepared, Theodosius went to Bethlehem and began his monastic life, living in a care, where it was believed that the Magi stayed after they had found Jesus and worshipped him.

Theodosius then focused all his attention on the purification of his soul, with unceasing prayer, the reading of the psalter, long vigil, and various ascetic practices. When he was exhausted from standing, he supported himself with ropes hanging from the roof of the cave. He lived on dates, beans, and some herbs that grew in the cave.

In time, Theodosius began to attract disciples who came to him. At first, he accepted only six of them, then twelve, and in the end, all whom God sent.

On year on the eve of Easter, there was no food at all, not even bread to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. St. Theodosius advised his brothers to put all their trust in God. And by nightfall, two monks arrived at the monastery gate with provisions that lasted until Pentecost.

As the number of disciples grew, the cave became too small. So, the monastery was moved to a new location, about four miles away from Bethlehem. At the new location, new building were built, workshops, two guest houses (one for visiting monks and the other for the poor and homeless), a hospice for aged monks, and a hospital for the insane.

Theodosius made himself all things to everyone: an eye for the blind, a support for the lame, a roof for the homeless, and clothing for the naked. He himself would clean the most repulsive wounds of lepers and tenderly embraced them.

The community grew to the number of four hundred monks, of different nationalities. The saint therefore built four churches within the monastic enclosure. In one church, prayers were offered in Greek, Syriac in the second, Armenian in the third, and the fourth was reserved for those who struggled with illness or possession.

In the year 513, the Emperor Anastasius took up the defense of the Monophysite heresy, in other words, he supported the opponents of the Council of Chalcedon, which stated clearly that in Jesus, there are two distinct natures without comixion. He is fully God and fully man. The Emperor deposed Patriarch Elias of Jerusalem and attempted to win over the support of the monks in Palestine.

St. Theodosius assembled as the desert dwellers and told them that the time had come for the monks to become warriors. He wrote to the Emperor that the monks will remain faithful unto

death to the teachings of the Church and the Ecumenical Councils. He went up to the Church of the Resurrection and cried out from the ambo, "If anyone refuses to accept the holy Councils as the holy Gosples, let him be anethema! (i.e., cut off from the Church)." Then, at the head of an army of monks, he went through the city, confirming the people in their faith.

By order of the emperor, Theodosius was arrested and was sent into exile for two years. Under the rule of the next emperor, Justin I (518), he was permitted to return to his monastery.

St. Theodosius continued to pour out God's blessings upon people. He healed the incurably sick. He once filled a whole grainary from one singe grain of wheat; he removed barrenness in women; he drove away swarms of locusts; he caused rain to come; he delivered travellers from danger; and he predicted, seven years in advance, the earthquake that destroyed the city of Antioch in 526.

Towards the end of his life, St. Theodosius was afflicted by a long and difficult illness, which he bore patiently. He promised to intercede in heaven for all the monks at the monastery. In the presence of the abbots (superiors) of Palestine, St. Theodosius passed away in the year 529, at the age of 105. He was buried in the cave near Bethlehem, where he first lived and began his monastic life.

St. Theodosius, pray for us!