

Life of St. Nikiphoros Leper

Commemorated on January 4th

Story compiled from OCA.org and the *Paraklesis to St. Nikiphoros* published by the Monastery of the Lifegiving Spring, Dunlap, California. To order the Paraklesis visit store.zoepress.us.



Father Nikiphoros was born in a mountainous village on the island of Crete in 1890. His parents were simple and pious villagers, who died when he was still a young child. His baptismal name was Nicholas. When at the age of thirteen, the first signs of leprosy appeared on his skin, Nicholas left home without telling his relatives and siblings, so as not to be a burden to them. He found work in a barber shop.

Nicholas was sixteen years old when the signs of the disease began to become more conspicuous, so he sailed to Alexandria, Egypt, where he again worked in a barber shop. Over time the signs of the disease became more apparent on his hands and face. Through the intervention of a bishop, he went to the Leper Colony of Chios, which was served by Father Anthimos Vagianos, later St. Anthimos (comemmorated February 15).

After two years in Chios, Father Anthimos tonsured Nicholas a monk, taking the name Nikiphoros. Father Nikiphoros lived with unquestioning, genuine obedience to his spiritual father, and with austere fasting, working in the gardens. He also recorded the miracles of St. Anthimos, which he had witnessed with his own eyes. Father Nikiphoros prayed at night for hours on end making countless metanias, he did not quarrel with anyone, nor injure anyone's heart, and he was the master chanter of the temple. Because of his illness he slowly lost his sight, and so he chanted the troparia and the Epistles from memory. The disease progressed and evolved in the

absence of suitable drugs; only in 1947 was an efficacious medication found.

The Leper Colony of Chios closed in 1957 and the remaining patients, including Father Nikiphoros, were sent to St. Barbara's home for lepers in Athens. Another monk with leprosy lived there, but with the new medication, he was completely cured. He was ordained a priest and took the name Evmenios. Father Evmenios continued living at St. Barbara's and cared for his fellow lepers with much love. Father Evmenios cooked for Father Nikiphoros, washed him, dressed him, and stayed by his side until the end of his life.

Father Nikiphoros reposed on January 4, 1964 at the age of 74. After three years, his holy relics were exhumed and found to be fragrant. Father Evmenios and other believers reported many cases where miracles through the prayers of St. Nikiphoros. A person who met him said:

He had the charisma of consoling those who were sad. His eyes were permanently irritated, and he had limited sight. He also had stiffness in his hands and paralysis in his lower limbs. Nonetheless, he endured all of this in the sweetest, meek, smiling, delightful way, and he was also pleasant and lovable.

The life of Saint Nikiphoros was a brilliant example and model for everyone. He was pleasing to God because he had endured so much. For this reason, we have many testimonies that our saint received from the Holy Spirit the gift of discernment as and a host of other gifts. Many miracles are recorded, and today the saint gives generous help to anyone in need. Surely there will be many more miracles which have not yet been made manifest. ❖

A Hymn to St. Nikiphoros

Enduring the pains of leprosy throughout
your life, with courage of soul and a most valiant
frame of mind, you sang to God with eagerness,
O Saint Nikiphoros, a joyful song, and with
your holy lips you magnified unceasingly God's
divine benevolence.