



■ Prerequisites: Fasting and Prostrations

The Theotokos As a Teacher of Letters*

“My Son, help this child...”

The renowned Elder Hadji-George was born in 1809 in the village of Kermil in Cappadocia. His parents' names were Jordan and Maria, and his baptismal name was Gabriel.

The night before his repose, he was very weak and communed of the Holy Mysteries. The next day, December 18, 1886, he communed again. Shortly thereafter, having asked forgiveness and the blessing of all of his disciples present, Hadji-George gave up his soul in peace to the Lord.

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When he was young he was very distressed that he could not learn to read and write. Seeing him upset, his parents told him: “Gabriel, go to Church and pray to the Most Holy Theotokos. She will help you learn!”

At their parish Church there was a wonder-working Icon of the Mother of God. After fasting three days and making one thousand prostrations, he went by night to the Church so that no one would find out. Kneeling before the doors of the Church, he began to beseech the Theotokos with tears:

“Queen of Heaven, help me to learn!”



Suddenly, the Church's iron gates swung open and a regal woman emerged, who took him by the hand and led him to the Icon of our Savior, saying:

“My Son, help this child, Gabriel, to learn!”

With these words, she blessed him and gave him her hand to kiss.

“Now you know how to read and write!” she told him.

With that, she entered the Altar from the north door. Seeing that she did come back out, he followed her into the Altar, but did not find her there.

When it was time for the Church service, the Sacristan opened the outer door and was startled to see Gabriel inside. Looking at him in surprise, he asked him:

“How did you get in here?”

The young boy described to him in detail all that had taken place. Taking a book, the Sacristan gave it to him, saying:

“Here, read this, and we will see if you are now literate, as She told you.”

Gabriel began to read beautifully and with ease, and the Sacristan exclaimed:

“Indeed, it was the *Panagia* and no ordinary woman!”



(* Hieromonk Antonios, *Lives of Athonite Monks of the Nineteenth Century* [in Greek], Vol. II (Ormylia: *Hierou Metochiou Evangelismou tes Theotokou*, 1995), pp. 213 and 244.