



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

Thursday, November 27, 2025

Saint James the Persian & Thanksgiving

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Beloved in Christ,

Today is a day of double remembrance. Our Holy Church commemorates **Saint James the Persian**, a Great Martyr whose life speaks with urgency to us—and our nation observes

Thanksgiving Day, a time to give thanks for God's blessings.

Saint James was born into a Christian family and rose to prominence in Persia as a nobleman and officer. He was admired by King Yazdegerd and enjoyed great honor. But when persecution arose, James—out of fear and desire for favor—denied Christ. For a time, he lived in comfort, but his soul was restless. Then came a letter from his mother and wife: *"You have chosen the love of a king over the love of Christ. You have gained temporary glory but eternal shame."* Those words pierced his heart. James repented, returned to Christ, and boldly confessed his faith before the king.

The cost was unimaginable. The king ordered James to be cut apart—piece by piece—until only his head remained. Tradition says twenty-eight separate mutilations. And yet, at every stage, James prayed and glorified God. He lost everything earthly, but gained the crown of life.

Why does this matter for us on this Thursday of Thanksgiving?

First, **Saint James reminds us of the danger of compromise.**

He fell because he valued earthly favor over eternal truth. How often do we face similar temptations? Not with swords, but with silence—choosing comfort over conviction, career over Christ, culture over Gospel. Thanksgiving calls us to remember: every blessing we have—family, freedom, abundance—comes from God. Let us never trade His love for fleeting approval.

Second, **Saint James shows the power of repentance.** He did not stay in his sin. He turned back, even knowing it would cost his life. That is hope for us! No matter how far we stray, God welcomes us home. Today, as we gather at tables filled with food, let us also fill our hearts with gratitude for His mercy—a mercy that restores us when we fall.

Finally, **Saint James teaches the cost—and the crown—of faith.** He gave his body, limb by limb, but gained eternal life. Today, our martyrdom may be ridicule, pressure, or loss of status. Yet every sacrifice for Christ is precious. Better to lose the world and gain our soul than the reverse.

So today, as we bow our heads in thanksgiving, let us thank God not only for material blessings, but for the gift of faith—and for the courage of saints like James who show us what true gratitude looks like: a life surrendered to Christ.

I offer two spiritual gems from Holy Scripture, the first highlighting St. James the Persian's witness, and the second lifting up the Thanksgiving Day:

- 1. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).*
- 2. "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).*

May St. James' prayers strengthen us to confess Christ boldly, to endure trials patiently, and to love Him above all earthly things.

Thanksgiving Prayer

Let us pray:

O Lord our God, Creator and Giver of every good gift, we bow before You with grateful hearts. We thank You for the blessings of life, health, family, and freedom. We thank You for the gift of faith and for the witness of Your saints, especially Saint James the Persian, who teaches us courage and repentance. As we gather today and this weekend with loved ones, fill our hearts with humility and gratitude. Help us to use Your blessings to serve others and glorify Your holy Name. Keep us steadfast in faith, generous in love, and joyful in hope. For You are good and love mankind, and to You we give glory, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

- Offered by Fr. George Tsahakis