



Prince Theodore

(Amir Tadros El Shatebi)

**“For this God is our God for ever and ever
he will be our guide even unto death” (Isaiah 30:21)**

Prince Theodore was born in 281 in Achaea, a port city, on the Black Sea. Later, he lived in Herculea, in Asia Minor. His father, John, was a Christian Egyptian from a city called Shateb in Upper Egypt. His Mother Qussawaia was a pagan (she worshipped idols). Even though many of us are under the impression that all the saints in the church grow up in a perfect environment and live with a perfect family, Prince Theodore was raised by a pagan mother. We can only imagine how hard his childhood truly was.

His father was a soldier in the Roman army. He went to Antioch to fight against the Persians. And because he was a man of courage he was given the prince's daughter Oussawaia to be his wife.

Oussawaia gave birth to a child and named him Theodore. Oussawaia tried very hard to attract her husband John to idol worshipping, but John had a strong faith in our Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, his wife used to belittle him by saying that her father the prince bought him as a slave and gave him a princess (herself) for a wife, and that he was not grateful. John always felt humiliated and not welcome in his own house. He used to pray and ask for God's help and guidance.

In his sleep, he saw a vision. An angel appeared to him and said, “Do not be afraid John. Leave your pagan wife, and return to your country. Do not worry about your son Theodore. He will become a great Christian, and because of his strong faith, thousands will believe in Lord Jesus.” Here we see that Theodore's faith even as a child was strong and that his pagan mother could not change his belief in God.



***St. Theodore Stratelates (el Amir
Tadros) Coptic Church of the Holy
Virgin Mary. Old Cairo.***

John left his house and went back to Egypt believing in the Lords' word “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path” (Proverbs 3:4-6). John never stopped praying for his son. Theodore was sad when he learned that his father had been kicked out of the house because of his faith in our Lord Jesus. One day he told his mother that his father's God was crucified to save the world, but her idol was weak that it could not even defend itself. Then he pushed the idol to the floor and the statue broke into pieces. A bad spirit came out of the idol in the form of a black giant and burned into smoke in front of them.

Prince Theodore was baptized by a priest called Oliganos at the age of fifteen. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and because of his boldness and courage in battles, he became very famous. When Diocletian heard about him, he appointed him commander over five hundred knights, and called him, Prince Theodore The Esphehlar (Brave Commander). “He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increases strength (Isaiah 40:29).”

One day after Prince Theodore and his soldier's had fought a fierce battle in the desert, they ran out of water, and were about to die from thirst. Prince Theodore prayed earnestly and said, “My Lord Jesus who gave the Israelites water from the solid rock, please quench our thirst,” And suddenly, a strong wind blew, and heavy rain started falling. After the soldiers drank as much as they wanted, they knelt down before the Prince, and said, “Blessed is your True God Jesus, who answered your prayer with great might.” On that day they were all baptized



in the Lord Jesus Christ's name.

Later, an Angel of the Lord appeared to Theodore and told him to travel to Egypt to see his father. The prince was very happy to learn that his father was still alive. He took some of his faithful soldiers and sailed to Alexandria. Then they walked to Elbehna and went straight to the Church of Shateb to ask about the prince's father, John.

At that time the father was old and was lying sick in bed. Nevertheless, it was a very emotional reunion. Five days later the father died, and the prince buried him. Theodore told the people of that city that his wish was to be buried beside his father, because he knew that he would soon die as a martyr.

Prince Theodore left Egypt, and went back to Antioch. After his departure, the Egyptians built a pillar on the River Nile's bank. On top of the pillar they hung the picture of the saint, whom they loved.

Shortly after, Prince Theodore went to fight the Persians and with him there was another saint called Prince Theodore El Mishriky. In the battlefield, the Archangel Michael appeared to encourage and support them. After they defeated the enemy, The Emperor proclaimed Prince Theodore El Shatebi to be the Hero of the Roman Empire, and appointed him a ruler of the city of Otichos. In Otichos a demon possessed dragon (maybe a large crocodile) lived in the nearby mountains. The people feared that dragon very much to the point that they would throw children to him to satisfy his appetite.

At that time they took two children from a Christian widow, to offer them as a sacrifice to the great dragon. The woman wept and prayed to God to save her children. Then, she heard a voice saying, "Don't be afraid. Theodore is capable of saving your children." After the saint heard the woman's story, he set off immediately to kill the dragon. On his horse, he fought the dragon for an hour. Then, Michael the Archangel appeared to him and helped him until the dragon was killed. The people

of the city were very happy to get rid of the evil dragon, and many were baptized in the name of Lord Jesus Christ.

The idols' priests complained to Emperor Lucinius, who ordered St. Theodore to renounce the Lord Jesus Christ, or face death. When the saint refused to offer sacrifices to the idols, he was tortured in many cruel ways, but the Archangel Michael would appear to comfort him, and remind him of the Lord Jesus' promise, and the eternal glory that is waiting for him.

At the end, the king ordered the soldiers to cut off his head by the sword, and to burn the body. The saint prayed, "My Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, accept my spirit, and protect my body from the fire, so that everyone may know that You are the real God, to You is the power and the glory forever."

Suddenly the Lord of Glory Himself appeared to the Prince in a cloud. He told him, "My beloved Theodore, come to your eternal rest in the Kingdom of Heaven. You have been crowned with the great crown of martyrdom. The fire will not burn your body, for miracles and wonders will be performed through your blessed body, and also through the mentioning of your name."

After Prince Theodore died his mother Oussawaia carried his body to Egypt and buried it beside his father's in the city of Shateb.

Today, more than ever miracles happen through the intercession of this great saint. May the prayers and the blessings of Prince Theodore the Martyr be with us all. Amen.

Let us all pray to God to help us through the prayers of this great saint.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy Victory" 1 Corinthians 15:55.