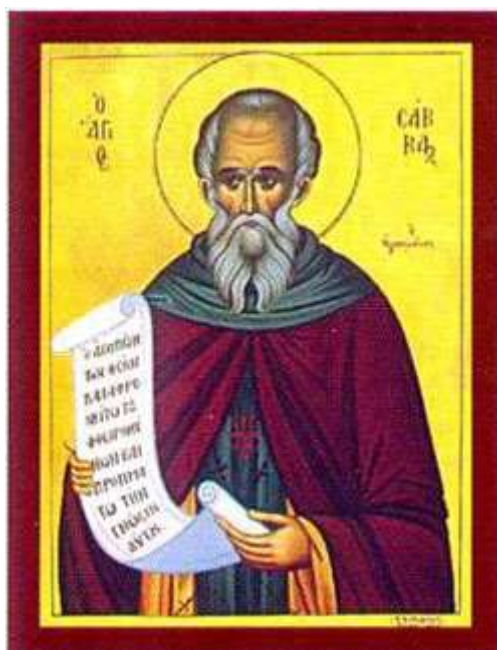


## St. Sabas



Sabas was born at Mutalaska, Cappadocia, near Caesarea. He was the son of an army officer there who when assigned to Alexandria, left him in the care of an uncle. Mistreated by his uncle's wife, Sabas ran away to another uncle, though he was only eight. When the two uncles became involved in a lawsuit over his estate, he again ran away, this time to a monastery near Mutalaska. In time the uncles were reconciled and wanted him to marry, but he remained in the monastery. In 456, he went to Jerusalem and there entered a monastery under St. Theoctistus. When he was thirty, he became a hermit under the guidance of St. Euthymius, and after Euthymius' death, spent four years alone in the desert near Jericho. Despite his desire for solitude, he attracted disciples, organized them into a lura in 483, and when his one hundred fifty monks asked for a priest and despite his opposition to monks being ordained, he was obliged to accept ordination by Patriarch Sallust of Jerusalem in 491. He attracted disciples from Egypt and Armenia, allowed them a liturgy in their own tongue, and built several hospitals and another monastery near Jericho. He was appointed archimandrite of all hermits in Palestine who lived in separate cells, but his custom of going off by himself during Lent caused dissension in the monastery, and sixty of his monks left to revive a ruined monastery at Thecuna. He bore them no illwill and aided them with food and supplies.

In 511, he was one of a delegation of abbots sent to Emperor Anastasius I, a supporter of Eutychianism, which Sabas opposed, to plead with the Emperor to mitigate his persecution of orthodox bishops and religious. They were unsuccessful. Sabas supported Elias of Jerusalem when the Emperor exiled him, was a strong supporter of theological orthodoxy, and persuaded many to return to orthodoxy. He was a vigorous opponent of Origenism and monophysitism. In 531, when he was ninety-one, he again went to Constantinople, this time to plead with Emperor Justinian to suppress a Samaritan revolt and protect the people of Jerusalem from further harassment by the Samritans. He fell ill soon after his return to his lura from this trip and died on December 5 at Laura Mar Saba, after naming his successor.

Sabas is one of the most notable figures of early monasticism and is considered one of the founders of Eastern monasticism. The laura he founded in the desolate, wild country between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, named Mar Saba after him, was often called the Great Laura for its preeminence and produced many great saints. It is still inhabited by monks of the Eastern Orthodox Church and is one of the three or four oldest monasteries in the world. His feast day is December 5th.