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The monastery of St. Gerasimus of the Jordan (Deir Ḥajla, Deir Mar Gerasimus, Deir Ḥijleh) or the monastery church of our lady of Calamon (Deir Mar Yuhanna Ḥajla, Qaṣr Ḥajlah) in the Judaeen desert: some recent photographs

By

**Maria Vaiou**

Today's monastery is situated on the West Bank, north of the Dead Sea at the valley of Jordan river. St. Gerasimus (d.475),<sup>1</sup> a prominent fifth century Palestinian anchorite, founded a *coenobium* (ca. 455) east of Jericho where he was buried in the year 475. It was a type of 'composite institution' consisting of a *laura*<sup>2</sup> with a *coenobium* at its centre serving 'as a novitiate for the training of younger monks'. Desert monks lived either in caves or in monasteries. The importance of St. Gerasimus's model lies in the coordination within the same monastery between the *coenobium* and the *laura*, the first being the obligatory passage for the novices who were to embrace the anchoritic solitude. The Life of St. Gerasimus was written in the second half of the sixth century by a monk of the *laura*.<sup>3</sup> According to the text of the rules of the monastery, Gerasimus had 'decreed that the beginners should stay in the *coenobium* and learn the monastic discipline, while those who were perfect in God's eyes, excellent in the ascetic labours and superior to most in their ascent to God, such men he settled in the cells'. Gerasimus modified the time of the anchorites' retreat reserving the first five days of the week for it instead of six, as it has been before in the *laura* of Pharan:<sup>4</sup> 'For five days of the week each must live in seclusion in his own cell, eating nothing but bread and dates, and (drinking) water'.<sup>5</sup> Gerasimus brought

<sup>1</sup> For the story that relates St. Gerasimus to a lion, see the saint's *Life* found in the late sixth-century collection of John Moschos, *Pratum spirituale, Patrologia graeca* 87 (3), cap. 107, cols. 2965–8; translated in J. Wortley, *The Spiritual meadow* (Kalamazoo, MI 1992), 86–8; St. Gerasimus is also mentioned in Cyril of Scythopolis's *Lives*. The story of Moschos was used in the Life of Gerasimus written by a monk at his *laura* in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the sixth century. See H. Grégoire, 'La vie anonyme anonyme de S. Gerasime', *BZ* 13 (1904), 114–35; see also, E. Bakalova, 'Scenes from the Life of St. Gerasimos in Jordan in Ivanovo', *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 21 (1985), 105–21; S. Tomekovic, 'Note sur saint Gerasime dans l'art byzantin', *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 21 (1985), 277–84; E. Hausteijn-Bartsch, 'So gehorchten die wilden Tiere Adam'. Zur Ikonographie einer Ikone des heiligen Gerasimos mit dem Löwen', *Studien zur byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* (Amsterdam, 1995), 259–78; J. Prolovic, *Die Kirche des Heiligen Andreas an der Treska* (Vienna, 1997), 168. S. Nes, *The mystical language of icons* (Michigan, 2004), 101; J. Forest, *Praying with icons* (Maryknoll, NY, 2008); C. Nellist, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity and animal suffering. Ancient voices in modern theology* (Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2018), 109; D. J. Sahas, *Byzantium and Islam: collected studies on Byzantine-Muslim encounters* (Leiden, 2021), 208; R. Grover, 'Placed in paradise: the messianic age imagery of a lion facing a bull in the Byzantine church floor mosaics in Jordan', *LA* 62 (2012), 455–93; see N. Ševčenko, 'The hermit in the desert', in D. C. Smythe, *Strangers to themselves: the Byzantine outsider. Papers from the thirty-second Spring Symposium of Byzantine studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998* (London and New York, 2000), 75–86.

<sup>2</sup> A type of monastery consisting of a cluster of cells or caves for hermits with a church at the centre. [www.lavra.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.lavra.en.wikipedia.org). The *laura* of St. Gerasimus, which was established ca. 450, has been identified 'with a site less than a kilometre northeast of the modern monastery' Y. Hirschfeld, 'List of the Byzantine Monasteries in the Judean Desert', in G. C. Bottini, L. Di Segni, E. Alliata (eds.), *Christian archaeology in the Holy Land. New discoveries. Essays in honour of Virgilio C. Corbo OFM* (Jerusalem, 1990), 18–19. Another *laura* was established in c. 455 around the site of the present monastery. O. Sion, 'The monasteries of the Desert of the Jordan', *Liber Annus* 46 (1996), 245–64, 248–9, 262. [www.Deir Hajla.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.Deir Hajla.en.wikipedia.org).

<sup>3</sup> Anonimo (Pseudo-Cirillo di Scitopoli), Antonio di Coziba, *Nel deserto accanto ai fratelli. Vite di Gerasimo e di Giorgio di Choziba*, a cura di L. Campagnano Di Segni, Bose – Magnano (VC) 1991. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta Ierosolymitikis Stahyologias A* (Petroupolis, 1897), 175–84; K. Koikilides, *Αἱ παρά τόν Ἰορδάνην λαύραι Καλαμώνος καί Ἁγίου Γερασίου καί οἱ Βίοι τοῦ ἁγίου Γερασίου καί Κυριακοῦ τοῦ Αναχωρητοῦ* (Jerusalem, 1902), 1–11. For the attribution of the Life to Cyril of Scythopolis, see Grégoire, 'La vie anonyme'. B. Flusin, *Miracle et histoire dans l'oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis* (Paris, 1983), 35–4

<sup>4</sup> In the northern Judaeen desert. See J. Patrich, *The Sabaite heritage in the Orthodox church from the fifth century to the present* (Leuven, 2001), 14, index. Y. Hirschfeld, 'Pharan, 'Ein Fara (in 'List of the Byzantine monasteries in the Judean desert', 1–90)', in *Christian archaeology in the Holy Land. new discoveries. Essays in honour of Virgilio C. Corbo OFM*, ed. G. C. Bottini, L. Di Segni, E. Alliata (Jerusalem, 1990), 6–7, no. 1. L. Di Segni, 'The Life of Chariton', in *Ascetic behavior in Greco-Roman antiquity, a sourcebook*, ed. V. L. Wimbush (Minnneapolis, 1990), 393–421. Y. Tsafir, L. Di Segni, and J. Green, *Tabula Imperi Romani - Iudaea-Palaestina: Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods* (Jerusalem, 1994). H. Goldfus, *Tombs and burials in churches and monasteries of Byzantine Palestine (324–628 A.D.)* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton Uni., 1997); Y. Magen, and E. D. Kagan, 'Corpus of Christian sites', in *Christians and Christianity I: Corpus of Christian Sites in Samaria and northern Judea*, ed. A. H. Malka (Jerusalem, 2012), 93–112. O. Meinardus, 'Ain Fara (Laura) (in: 'Notes on the laurae and monasteries of the wilderness of Judaea', 220–50)', *LA* 15 (1964–1965), 226–8. J. Patrich, 'Judean desert, secret passages and caves', *ESI* 3 (1984), 61–2.

<sup>5</sup> K. Twardowska, 'Eating habits and food of the monks of Palestine in the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> c.', *Res Gestae* 4 (2017), 1–14, 8. Y. Hirschfeld, 'The

together the hermits who lived in isolated cells around the plain on Saturdays and Sundays at a central area of the *laura* to hold the psalmody, the celebration of the mysteries and the meal in common: ‘on Saturday and Sunday they come to the church and take part in the divine mysteries, then eat a cooked meal in the *coenobium*, accompanied by a little wine’. Gerasimus regulated the conduct to be followed during the week by the anchorites in their cells: ‘Gerasimus did not permit to anybody to light a lamp in his cell, to make himself a hot drink or to eat cooked food; but all were poor and humble. Each of (the anchorites) would bring his weekly work to the *coenobium* on Saturday, and on Sunday evening he would receive his weekly allowance - loaves of bread, dates, water and palm-leaves - and go back to his cell. And they were so unconcerned with all things human - in a word, dead to the worldly life and alive only for God - that nobody had in his cell any material thing, except the merest necessities: a tunic, a mantle and a cowl. Each had one rush-mat for his bedding and one earthen jar that served both for drinking and for soaking the palm-leaves’.<sup>6</sup> These precise instructions were inscribed in the framework of a text which intended to be a hagiographical narrative on the founding father. His institution help us to understand better the forms of monastic life in the Judaeen desert in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century, in a semi-anchoretic community. After the death of Gerasimus in 475 the administration of the *laura* passed into the hands of Basil and Stephen, who were in charge of it until the year 481. When they died, Eugenius succeeded them until the year 526. Also, Eugenius, abbot of the *laura*, was appointed second in command to the monastery of Sabas<sup>7</sup> following the death of abba Marcianus in 492 AD. Cyril of Scythopolis mentions in his Life of Cyriacus<sup>8</sup> that Cyriacus was sent by St. Euthymius to the monastery of St. Gerasimus (467–75). Gerasimus received him but, seeing that he was young, ordered him to stay in the *coenobium* ‘hewing wood, carrying water’ and cook. Cyriacus excelled himself in asceticism; he led the way of the life of the anchorites,

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importance of bread in the diet of monks in the Judean Desert’, *Byzantion* 66 (1996), 144–58.

<sup>6</sup> See Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sancti Euthymii on Kyrillos von Scythopolis*, ed. E. Schwartz (Leipzig, 1939), 9–85, tr. L. di Segni, in [www.dig.ciorps-cmhl.huji.ac.il](http://www.dig.ciorps-cmhl.huji.ac.il). The text of the rules of the monastery is compared to the brevity that characterizes the *typikon* of the monastery of St. Sabas. On the importance of St. Gerasimus model and the success of this structure among the *lauras* of the Judaeen desert, starting with that of St. Sabas, see L. Perrone, ‘La vie quotidienne des moines en Palestine (ive–xe s.): l’ état des sources littéraires’, in O. Delouis, M. Mossakowska Gaubert eds., *La vie quotidienne des moines en Orient et en Occident (iv–xe siècle). 1: L’ état des sources* (Cairo, 2015), 151–78. J. Patrich, ‘Palestinian desert monasticism. The monastic systems of Chariton, Gerasimus and Sabas’, *Cristianesimo nella storia* 16 (1995), 1–9. The impact of the system of the Gerasimus monastery was not restricted to the Sabaite monasteries but influenced the hermits in Wadi Qelt, who adopted it by giving life to the *coenobium* of St. George Choziba; see ‘La vie quotidienne, n. 46.

<sup>7</sup> For a bibliography, see J. Patrich, ‘The Sabaite monastery of the Cave (Spelaion) in the Judean desert’, *LA* 41 (1991), 429–48; idem, ed., *The Sabaite heritage*; E. Mercenier, ‘Le monastère de Mar Saba’, *Iren.* 20 (1947), 283–97. *Anonymous Martyrion of the twenty fathers of the Great Lavra of St. Sabas*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Sylloge, Pravoslavnij Palestinskij Sbornik* 19/3 (1907), I, 1–41; R. P. Blake, ‘Deux lacunes comblées dans la passio XX monachorum Sabaitarum’, *AB* 68 (1950), 27–43; *ODB*, 3, 1954–5; A. Kazhdan, ‘The monks and the Arabs: martyrdom of the Sabaites (BHG 1200)’, in A. Kazhdan, *A history of Byzantine literature (650–850)* In collaboration with Lee F. Sherry-C. Angelidi (Athens, 1999), 169–181; V. Grumel, ‘L’ ère mondiale dans la date du martyre des vingt moines sabaïtes’, *REB* 14 (1956), 207–208; P. Peeters, ‘La passion de S. Michel le Sabaïte’, *AB* 48 (1930), 65–98; M. J. Blanchard, ‘The Georgian version of the martyrdom of Saint Michael, monk of Mar Sabas monastery’, *Aram* 6 (1994), 149–63; S. H. Griffith, ‘The *Life of Theodore of Edessa*: history, hagiography, and religious apologetics in Mar Saba monastery in early Abbasid times’, in Patrich, ed., *The Sabaite heritage*, 147–69; idem, ‘Michael, the martyr and monk of Mar Sabas monastery, at the court of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik: Christian apologetics and martyrology in the early Islamic period’, *ARAM* 6 (1994), 115–48; idem, ‘Anthony David of Baghdad, scribe and monk of Mar Sabas: Arabic in the monasteries of Palestine’, *CH* 58 (1989), 7–19; M. Levy-Rubin, ‘A Spanish source on mid-ninth century Mar Saba and a neglected Sabaïte martyr’, Patrich, *The Sabaite heritage*, 63–72; S. Brock, S. Brock, ‘From Qatar to Tokyo, by way of Mar Saba: the translations of Isaac of Beth Qatraye (Isaac the Syrian)’, *ARAM* 11&12 (1999–2000), 475–484; B. Z. Kedar, ‘Latin in ninth-century Mar Sabas?’, *B* 65 (1995), 252–4.

<sup>8</sup> Cyriac of Corinth (448–557). tmit in the Judaeen deserrHe. Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita sancti Cyriaci*. ed. E. Schwartz, Kyrillos von Scythopolis (Leipzig 1939), 222–35. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)

eating on alternate days, only bread and water, touching neither oil nor wine. Gerasimus began to take Cyriacus into the utter desert of Rouba<sup>9</sup> until the period of Lent. Living in seclusion until Palm Sunday they received every Sunday the communion from St. Euthymius. At the death of St. Euthymius, Gerasimus took Cyriacus to the monastery and bestowed St. Euthymius the last honours. When Basil and Stephen took the leadership of the monastery Cyriacus went to the *laura* of St. Euthymius<sup>10</sup> where he lived a solitary life at the age of 27<sup>t</sup>.<sup>11</sup> The monastery attracted many pilgrims in the sixth century: the sudarium<sup>12</sup>, the cloth that covered the crucified Christ's face, one of the most important relics of the Passion was venerated there. John Moschus (d. 619) mentions that Peter, the priest of the *laura* of St. Sabas recounted a miracle performed by Hagioudoulos, the abbot of the *laura* of St. Gerasimus. Leontius of Neapolis (d. after 668) in his mid. seventh century *Life of Symeon the Fool* (6<sup>th</sup> .c.)<sup>13</sup> says that Symeon and his friend John entered the monastery of St. Gerasimus to renounce the world and receive the monastic habit. Both left the monastery with the approval of the abbot Nikon after they stayed seven days in it to pursue ascetic life in the desert.<sup>14</sup> The monk Epiphanius (750–800) in his description of the holy places (wr. before 787) says that the tomb of St. Gerasimus was situated east of Jericho, at a distance of about three miles, in a *kastellion* (a walled and fortified building). The *Commemoratorium de casis Dei* (808) says that the monastery was near Jericho, had ten monks and mentions the tomb of Gerasimus. In *Symeon the Fool's Life* it is referred to as an enclosed monastery. In the *Life of St. Gerasimus* it is reported that the fathers of the *laura* were not interacting with society; they are portrayed as running to avoid meeting citizens of Jericho who brought them food.<sup>15</sup> One of the five *coenobiae* in the Judaeian desert among those of Theodosius,<sup>16</sup> Euthymius,<sup>17</sup> the

<sup>9</sup> The deep desert in the south near the Dead Sea. Patrich, *Sabaite*, 48, 57, 59. A. Ryrie, *The desert movement. Fresh perspectives on the spirituality of the desert* (London, 2011), index.

<sup>10</sup> Y. Hirschfeld, 'Euthymius and his monastery in the Judaeian desert', *LA* 43 (1993), 339–71; idem, 'Survey and excavations in the region of the Euthymius monastery', *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 86.42–4 (Hebrew); idem, 'The monastery of St. Euthymius, survey and excavations', *ESI* 3 (1984), 80–2; and R. Birger, 'Khan el-Ahmar', *ESI* (1988-9), 110; S. Vailhe, 'Saint Euthyme le grand, moine de Palestine (386–473)', *ROC* 14 (1909), 256–63; idem, *Bessarione* 3 (1897-8), 209–25; J. L. Federlin, 'Découverte des laures de saint Euthyme le grand et de saint Theoctiste, dans le désert de Judée a l' est de Jérusalem', *La Terre Sainte*, 11.1 (1894), 81–5; D. Chitty, 'The monastery of St. Euthymius', *PEFQS* 65 (1932), 188–203; idem and A.H. M. Jones, 'The church of St. Euthymius at Khan ed Ahmar near Jerusalem', *PEFQ* St. (1928), 175–8; A. E. Mader, 'Ein Bilderzyklus in der Gräber höhle der Euthymios-laura auf Mardes (Chirbet el-Mard) in der Wüste Juda', *OrChr* 34 (1937); B. Bagatti, 'Khan el-Ahmar. Il monastero di S. Eutimio', *TS* 47 (1971), 399–404; M. von Riess, 'Das Euthymius kloster, die Peterskirche der Eudokia und die Laura Heptastomos in der Wüste Juda', *ZDPV* 15 (1892), 212–33; A. Jotischky, *The perfection of solitude: hermits and monks in the Crusader states* (Pennsylvania, 1995), 77; I. Hershkovitz, R. Yakar, C. Taitz, V. Eshed, S. Wish-Baratz, A. Pinhasov, B. Ring, 'Palaeopathology at the Khan-el-Ahmar site: health and disease in a Byzantine monastery in the Judaeian Desert, Israel', *International journal of Osteoarchaeology* vol. 5.1 (Mar. 1995), 61–76.

<sup>11</sup> [www.logismoj.touaaron.blogspot.com](http://www.logismoj.touaaron.blogspot.com). For his later life, see Ryrie, *The desert movement. Fresh perspectives on the spirituality of the desert*, 92.

<sup>12</sup> M. Hesemann, *Mary of Nazareth: history, archaeology, legends* (San Francisco, 2016); J. Bennett, *Sacred blood, sacred image: the sudarium of Oviedo. New evidence for the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin* (San Francisco, 2001); C. Barta, *The Sudarium of Oviedo: signs of Jesus Christ's death* (Singapore, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> *Léontios de Néapolis: Vie de Syméon le Fou et vie de Jean de Chypre*, ed. L. Rydén and A. J. Festugière (Paris, 1974), 1–222, 64; *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's "Life" and the Late Antique City*, trans. D. Krueger (Berkeley, 1996), 131–71, 139.

<sup>14</sup> For the incident, see D. Krueger, 'Between monks: tales of monastic companionship in early Byzantium', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20.1 (January 2011), 28–61, 44–5.

<sup>15</sup> Koikilides, *Αἱ παρά τόν Ἰορδάνην λαῦραι*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> J. Patrich, 'The impact of the Muslim conquest on monasticism in the desert of Jerusalem', in *Continuités de l'occupation entre les périodes byzantine et abbasside au Proche-Orient, viie-ixe siècles [Colloque Intrenationale Proche-Orient, Paris, 18-20 Octobre 2007]*, ed. A. Borrut, M. Debie, et al. (Paris, 2011), 205–18, 203–16, 210.

<sup>17</sup> Patrich, 'The impact of the Muslim conquest', 212–3.



Kastellion (Khirbet el-Mird)<sup>18</sup> (ca. 492 AD) and John the Baptist (Ain el-Habis)<sup>19</sup> that survived after the seventh century.<sup>20</sup> The monastery, which flourished in the Byzantine period, continued to exist until the eleventh century and went through many stages of restoration. A Gospel lectionary that was owned by the monastery in the year 1060/1 was found among the surviving Greek manuscripts in the holy land.<sup>21</sup> The monastery of St. Gerasimus and that of Calamon were restored by the Crusaders when they occupied the Jericho oasis in 1099.<sup>22</sup> John Phocas found in the year 1185 the monastery of St. Gerasimus in ruins; nothing of it remained except for one column. Next to it there was a stylite, who was Georgian in origin, whose miracle Phocas recounts a few days before his visit: ‘he was feeding a family of tame lions and induced them to collect wood from the river to make them into crosses to give to pilgrims’<sup>23</sup>. By the end of the thirteenth century, the dedication of the church and the relics of the saint had been transferred to the monastery of Mary of Kalamon<sup>24</sup>. The present monastery, which lies 1 km south-west of Ain Hajla, is built not on the ruins of the monastery of St. Gerasimus, which is far northern of today’s monastery, but on the ruins of the *laura* of Calamon. The latter was founded on the third quarter of the fifth century to provide asylum and protection to the anchorites of the Valley of Jordan river in the same period as Gerasimus’s foundation of the monastery. The monastery of Calamon existed without interruption until the twelfth century. It was rebuilt in the time of the emperor Manuel I (1143–80).<sup>25</sup> A bilingual inscription on a limestone block which dates from 1150s–60s mentions that the monastery was renewed the middle of the century by the patriarch John –probably John IX (1156–66).<sup>26</sup> It has been argued that the emperor Manuel’s restoration of various monasteries in the Judean desert and his commission of artists to redecorate shrines in the holy land took place in the context of his reassertion of his traditional role as protector of the holy places and of the Orthodox community in the holy land.<sup>27</sup> The building is recorded by the twelfth-century pilgrims Abbot Daniel and John Phocas. The first describes it as having walls and being inhabited by around twenty monks; he mentions it as the monastery of the Holy Virgin at Kalamoniya (‘the good place’). He associates

<sup>18</sup> Patrìch, ‘The impact of the Muslim conquest’, 212; E. Mader, ‘Conical sundial and ikon inscription from the Kastellion monastery on Khirbet el - Mird in the wilderness of Juda’, *JPOS* 9 (1929), 122–35. Ch. Th. Fritsch, *The Qumran community its history and scrolls* (NY, 1956, repr.1972), 50-61.

<sup>19</sup> Patrìch, ‘The impact of the Muslim conquest’, 214. See [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org) D. Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader kingdom*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1993), 24-26, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Hirschfeld argues that 72% of the monasteries in the Judean desert were abandoned in the seventh century. Hirschfeld, ‘The Judean desert monasteries, 16-7; Patrìch, ‘The impact of the Muslim conquest’, 210.

<sup>21</sup> I. Shagrìr, C. Gaposchki eds., *Liturgy and devotion in the Crusader states* (Oxon, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> M. Sala, ‘Comparative stratigraphy and history of occupation in the Jericho oasis’, in L. Nigro et al., *Archaeological heritage in the Jericho oasis. A systematic catalogue of archaeological sites for the sake of their protection and cultural valorisation* (Rome, 2011), 28–32, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Jotischky, ‘Greek Orthodox and Latin monasticism’, 88.

<sup>24</sup> D. Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291*(Famham, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Jotischky, *Perfection of solitude*, 82 suggests that the restoration was financed by the emperor.

<sup>26</sup> Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader kingdom*, I, 197. J. Murphy-O’Connor, *The holy land: an Oxford archaeological guide from earliest times to 1700* (Oxon, 2008), 264–6, 265.

<sup>27</sup> A. Jotischky, ‘Greek Orthodox and Latin monasticism around Mar Saba under Crusader rule’, in Patrìch, *Sabaite heritage*, 85–96, 86; for examples of monasteries, such as those of Sts. Euthymius, Theodosius, St. George Choziba, St. John the Baptist, and St. Gerasimus, which were restored under the patronage of the emperor Manuel and the renovation of churches, such as of the church of Mar Saba, see Patrìch, *Sabaite heritage*, 4. for the emperor’s patronage of the church of the Nativity, see A. Jotischky, ‘Manuel Comnenus and the reunion of the churches: the evidence of the conciliar mosaics in the church of the nativity in Bethlehem’, *Levant* 26 (1994), 207–23. For the church of Abu Ghosh, see A. Weyl-Carr, ‘The mural paintings of Abu Ghosh and the patronage of Manuel Comnenus in the Holy Land’, ed. J. Folda, *Crusader art in the twelfth century* (Oxford, 1982), 215–44. For the emperor Manuel’s patronage of the Holy Sepulchre and Nativity, see J. Folda, *The art of the crusaders in the Holy Land* (Cambridge, 1995), 347–64, 379–82. B. Hamilton, *The Leper king and his heirs Baldwin IV and the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge 2000), 67n. 16.

it with the place where the Holy Family rested on their way to Egypt; he also mentions a miraculous icon of the Virgin. This icon is described later by John Phocas, who compared it with the icon of Hodegetria in Constantinople.<sup>28</sup> John Phocas mentions that ‘the monastery of Kalamon itself is built with towers and curtain walls of fine squared stone and in the middle of it is sited a spacious domed church, seated upon cylindrical vaults. Adjoining this on the right-hand side is another exceedingly small domed church, built, as they say, in the time of the Apostles, in the apse of which there is an image of the Mother of God holding in her arms the saviour Christ; this displays the form, colour and height of the image of the Hodegetria in Constantinople’.<sup>29</sup> The Greek Anonymous mentions that both monasteries were existing in the period between 1250–1350. The monastery of Calamon was occupied by Greek monks at the end of the thirteenth century. By this time it was identified as the monastery of St. Gerasimus named after the monastery which was situated nearby. In the fourteenth century the Venetian historian Mario Sanuto (d.1536) mentions it as Bet Agla. In the same century, the nun Martha Palaiologina Diplobatzina gave a *paterikon* book as a gift to her spiritual father Galaktion in the monastery of St. Gerasimus *tou Kalamonos*.<sup>30</sup> It was known to the Latins as the monastery of St. Jerome in the fifteenth century. It is mentioned in the Latin map of Paulus Milonis, a French Franciscan father, as the monastery of St. Hieronymus (ca.1687). In the sixteenth century it was inhabited by monks of the order of St. Basil. Rebuilt in the year 1588, destroyed in 1734 and rebuilt in its present state in the year 1882-5. The present monastery is being built around a deep well. A three-aisled church dedicated to St. Gerasimus, Euthymius, Zosimas and St. Mary of Egypt is located to the north side of the present monastery. Beneath the monastery church there is a crypt in which the event of the fleeing of the holy family from Herod the Great is commemorated. The upper floor church contains paintings of Gerasimus and his lion. The earliest iconography relating to St. Gerasimus dates in the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and exists in the hermitage of St. Neophytos near Paphos and the cave of the monastery of St. Theoctistus in the Judaeian desert.<sup>31</sup> He was particularly venerated in Serbia. All the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century monuments where he is portrayed were linked with this country.<sup>32</sup> The only surviving Byzantine portrayal of St. Gerasimus on a portable icon is a Jerusalem icon; he is seen caring for a lion that had a thorn in its paw. The icon, which dates to ca. 1300, was commissioned for the monastery of Calamon according to the surviving inscription.<sup>33</sup> The site of the original monastery, its core and cells is thought to have been 350m.–400m to the east of the present day monastery. The monastery was surrounded by 70 hermitages; some are situated in the rock of the south bank of the Wadi en-Nukheil. Other hermit caves

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<sup>28</sup> A. Carr, ‘Reflections of the medium of the miraculous’, in S. E. J. Gerstel, *Viewing Greece cultural and political agency in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean* (Turnhout, 2016), 45 n.51.

<sup>29</sup> Pringle, I, 197.

<sup>30</sup> T. May et al., *New approaches to Ilkhanid history* (Leiden, 2021), 392.

<sup>31</sup> G. Soteriou, ‘Τά βυζαντινά μνημεία της Κύπρου’ (Athens, 1935), pl. 72b. C. Mango-E. Hawkins, ‘The hermitage of St. Neophytos and its wall paintings’, *DOP* 20 (1966), 170–1, f. 78. G. Kühnel, *Wall painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Berlin 1988), 187–8, pl. LXVIII.123; for more examples, see P. Vokotopoulos, ‘Two Palaiologan icons in Jerusalem’, *Deltion tes Hristianikis Arhaiologikis Etairias* 20 (1999), 291–308, ns. 10–18. His depiction in wall paintings in the 14<sup>th</sup> century has been attributed by Bakalova to the influence of the hesychasts and by Tomekovic of Mount Athos. Bakalova, ‘Scenes from the Life of St. Gerasimus’, 105–22; Tomekovic, ‘Note sur saint G erasime’, 277–84.

<sup>32</sup> Vokotopoulos, ‘Two Palaiologan icons in Jerusalem’, 295.

<sup>33</sup> Vokotopoulos, ‘Two Palaiologan icons in Jerusalem’, 291–4, 297.

which belonged to the *laura* are found 3.5 km to the south-west of the monastery around en Abu Mahmud.<sup>34</sup> Recent surveys indicate that clusters of hermit cells can be dated to the Byzantine period and are found near the modern monastery. Other architectural remains are likely to be dated to the crusader period. According to the Survey of Western Palestine (SWP) which took place in 1873 and 1875 the ruins of the monastery of Calamon ‘included a large chapel, a second smaller to the south, and a third in the vaults below’. The survey provides a description of the chapels and gives information on other structures found in the area. Many frescoes of saints and angels were discovered in the main chapel which were accompanied by Greek inscriptions.<sup>35</sup> Augustinovic argues that the builders of the modern monastery had made use of the stones existing at the location of the original core.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *The holy land*, 264–6.

<sup>35</sup> [www.dig.corps-cmhl.huji.ac.il/Monasteries/deir-hajla-gerasimus](http://www.dig.corps-cmhl.huji.ac.il/Monasteries/deir-hajla-gerasimus); [www.WikiDeirHajla.org](http://www.WikiDeirHajla.org)

<sup>36</sup> A. Augustinović, *Gerico e dintorni* (Jerusalem, 1951), 109–10.



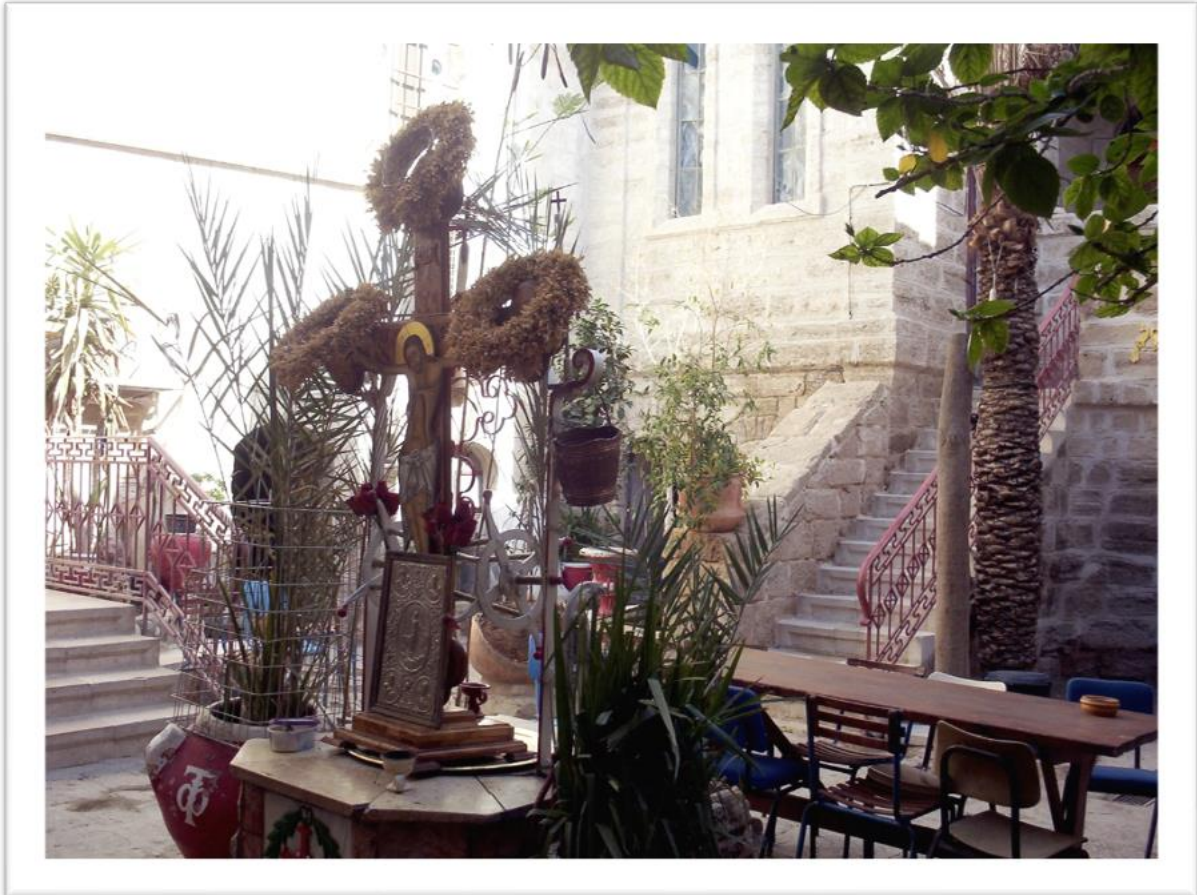


External view of the monastery



Entrance to the church and monastery



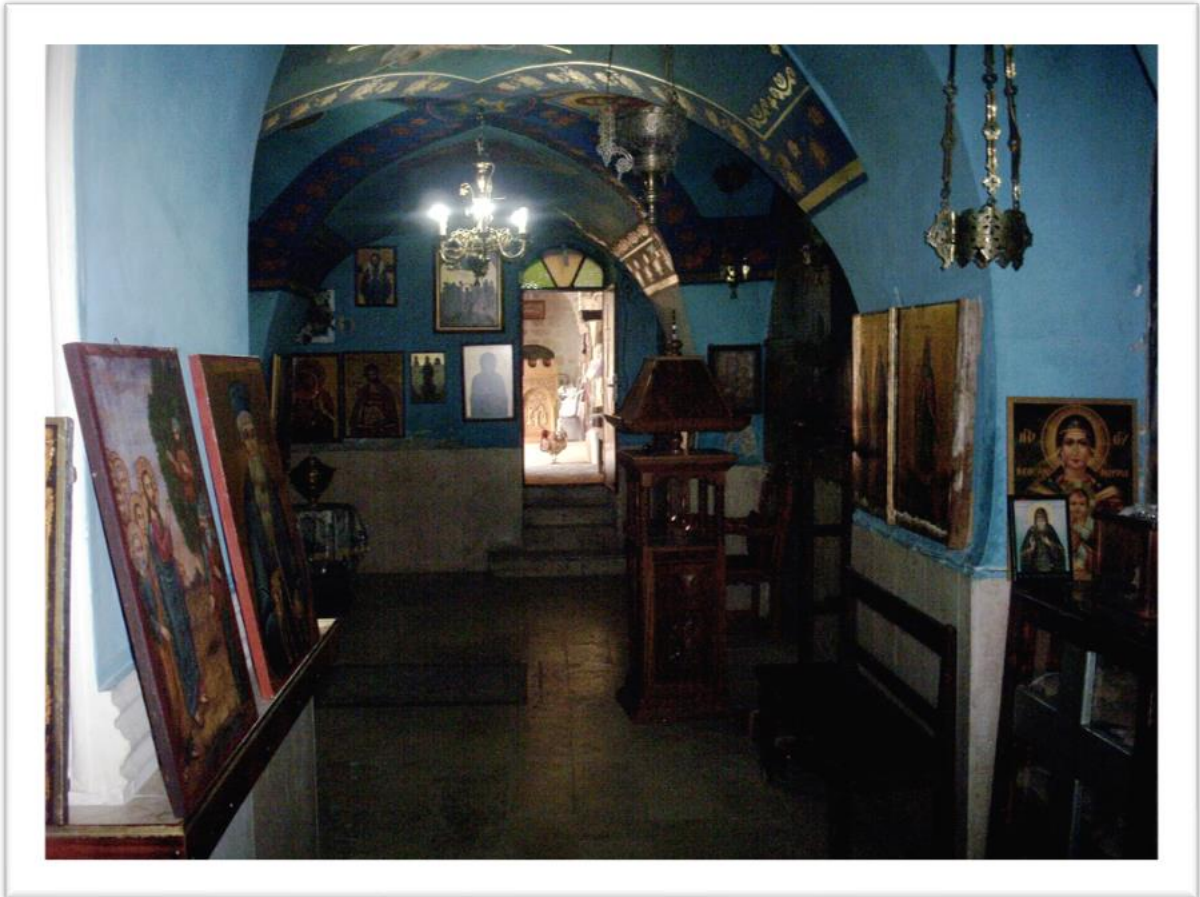
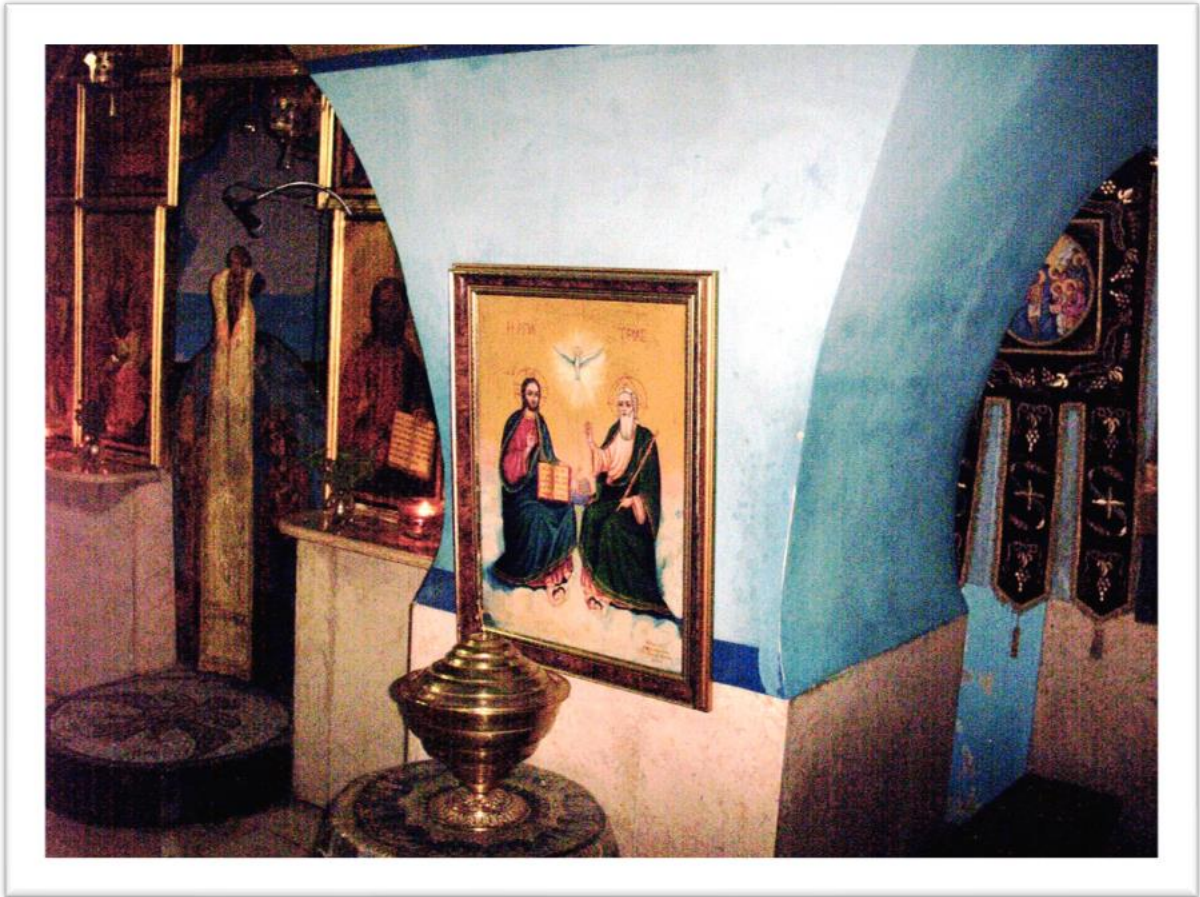


Interior–courtyard



The bell tower of the church of St. Gerasimus

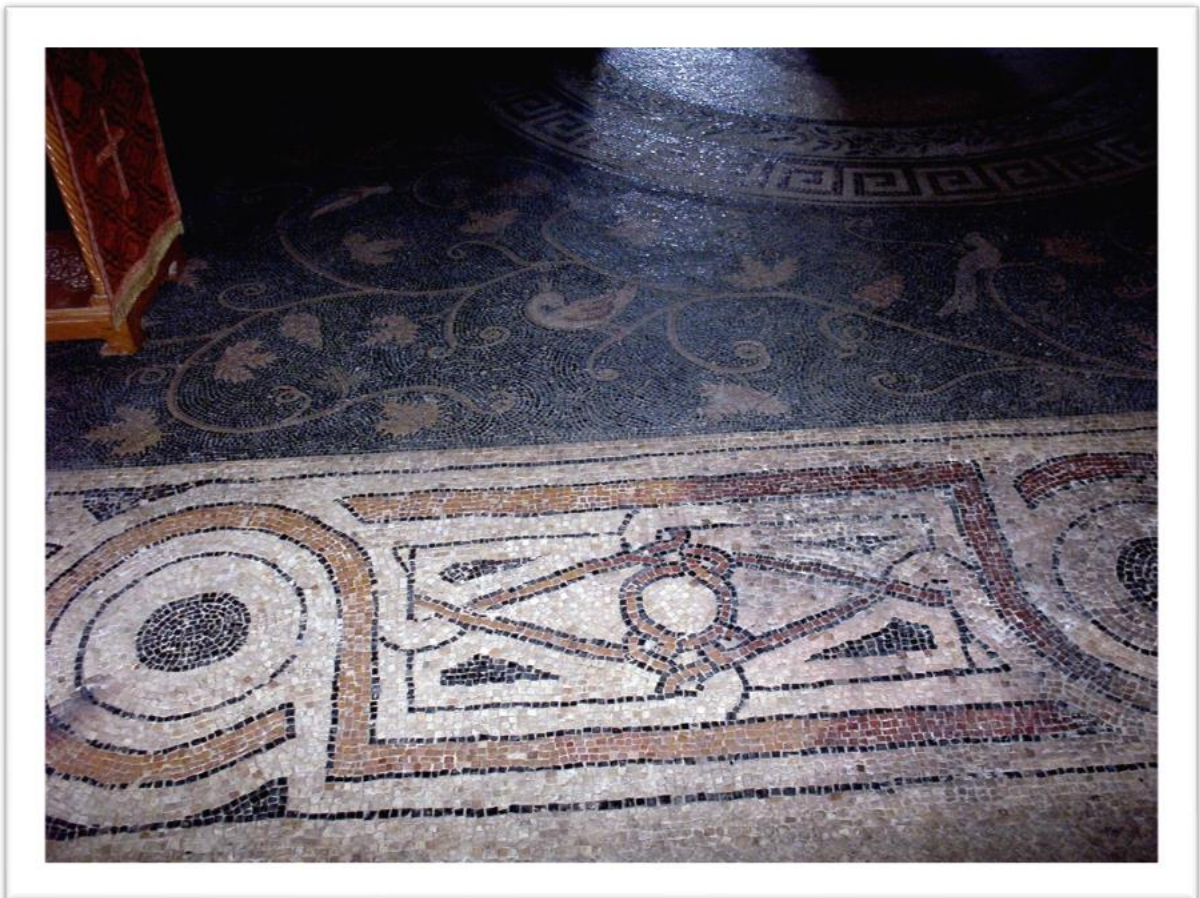










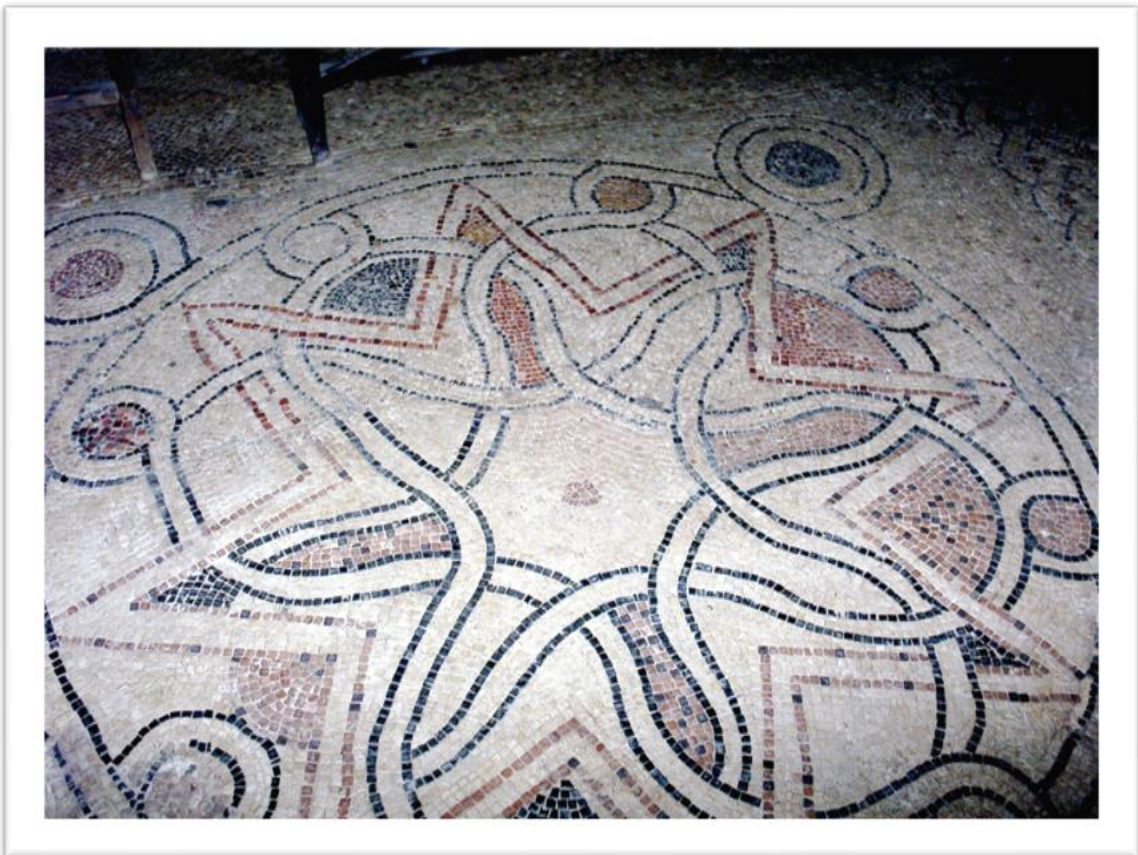
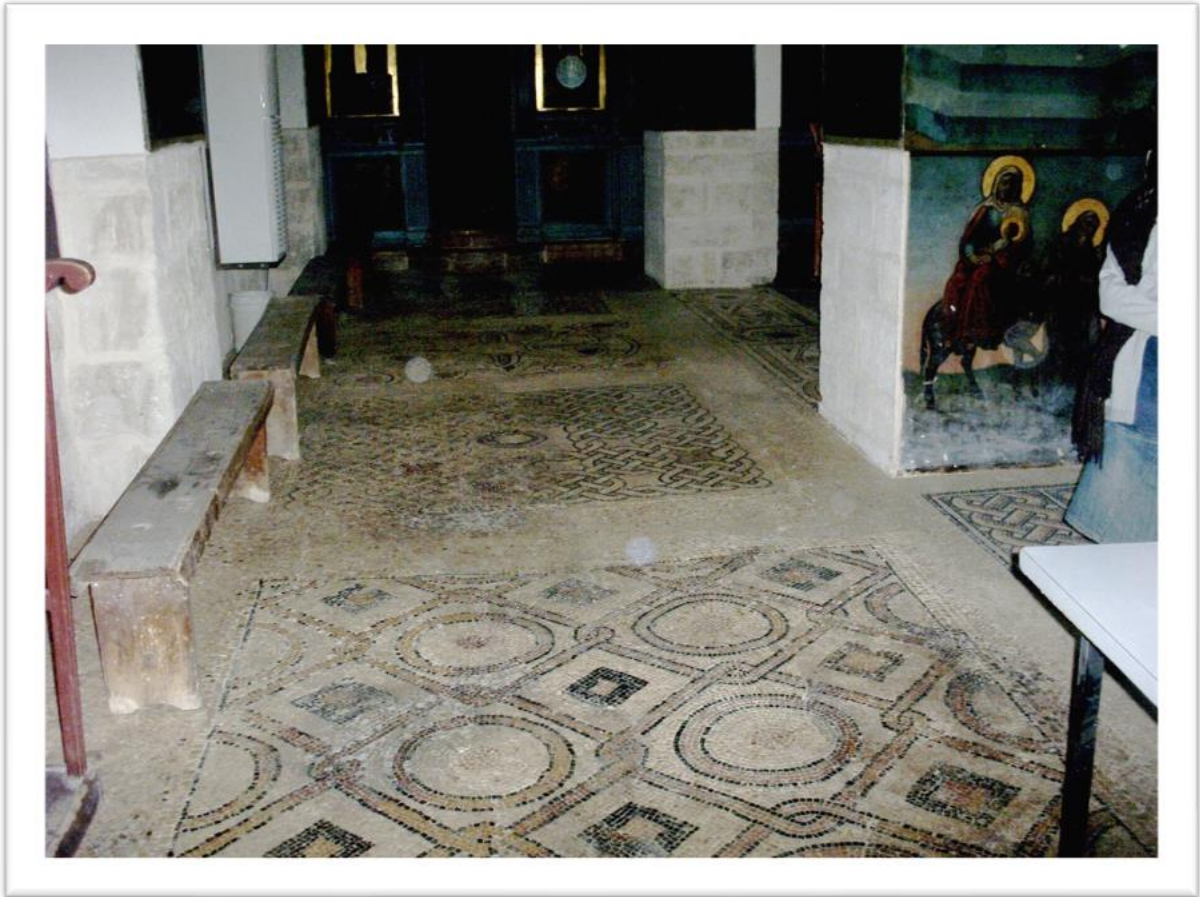






This mosaic pavement is similar to the mosaic in the north aisle of the church





Floor mosaics preserved in the church



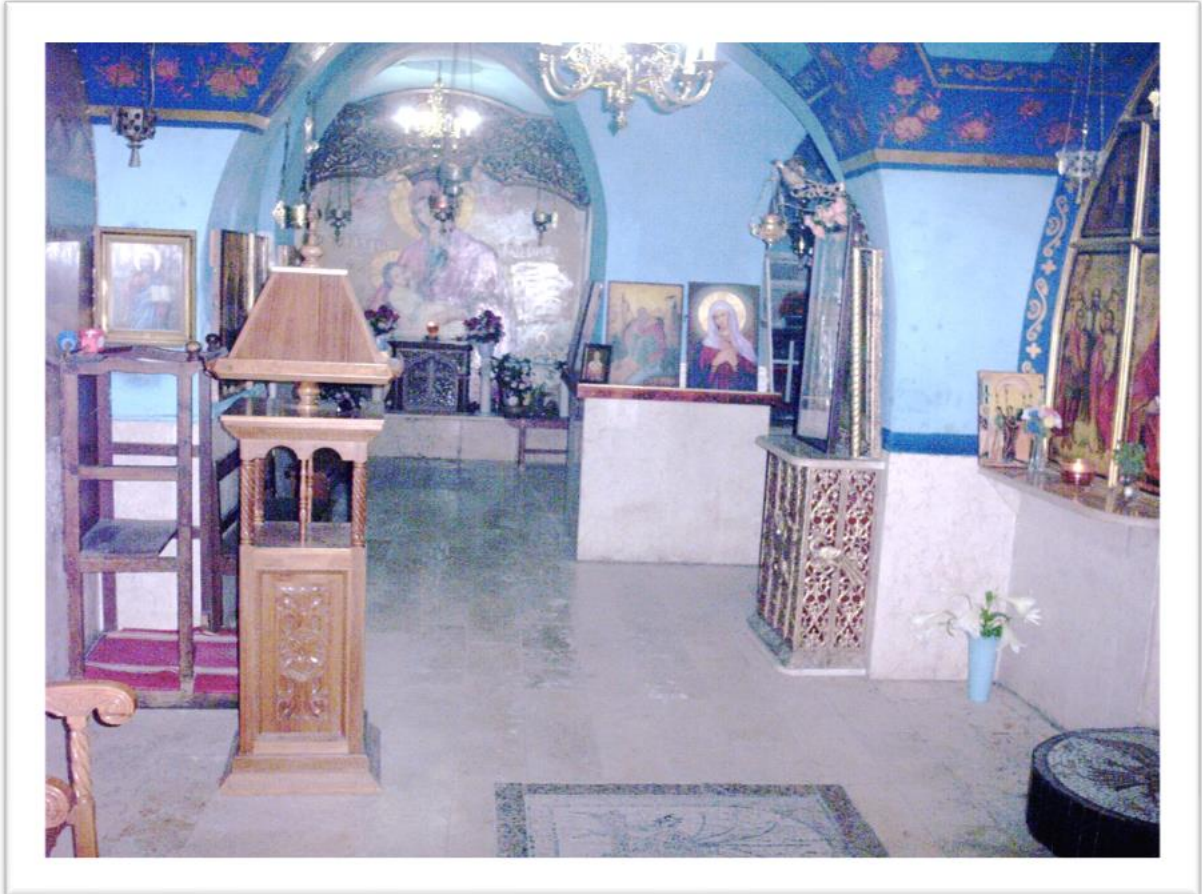


Interior of the church

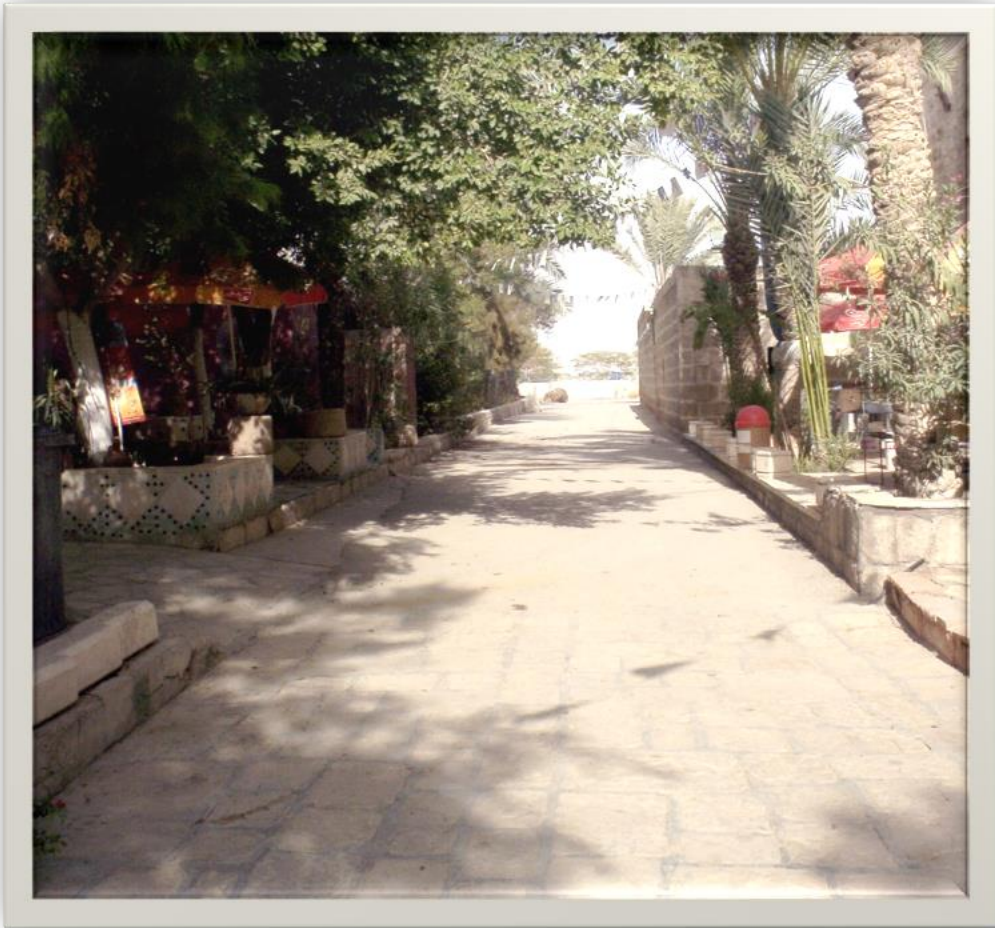


Icon of St. Gerasimus a

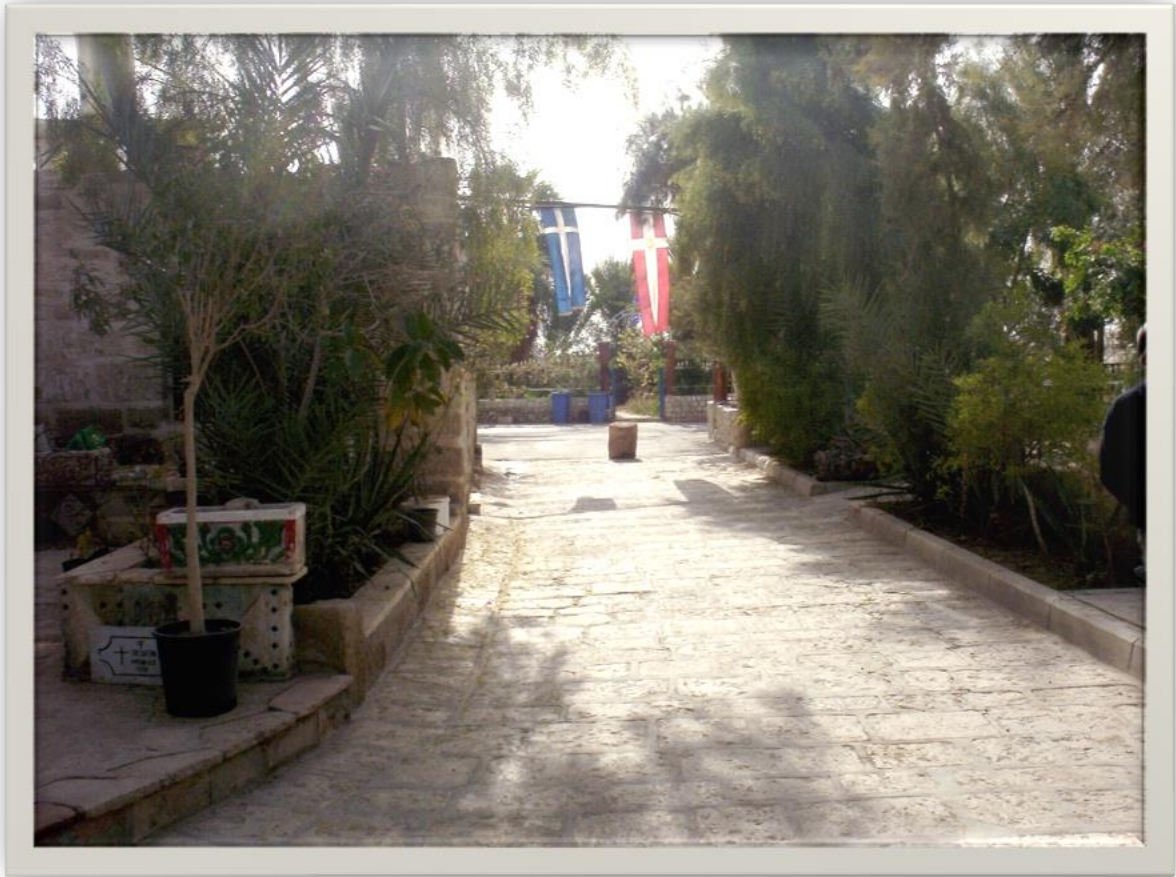




The church of Virgin Mary which commemorates the place where she allegedly found refuge on her way to Egypt. It occupies the northern part of the complex. The present church built in the 1880s follows the dimensions of its predecessor. The icon of Virgin Mary recorded by Phocas is now preserved in the chapel of St. Constantine in Jerusalem







View of the compound of the monastery



A general view of the monastery

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