17/02/2025

The feast of Saint Simeon the God-receiver



On Sunday, February 3/16, 2025, the memory of Saint Simeon the God-receiver was celebrated in his Holy Monastery, located in the New Jerusalem in Katamon, in the church where his tomb and a small relic of his remains are also kept. The Divine Liturgy was led by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos, with the participation of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, and Dimitrios of Lydda, along with the Hieromonk Fathers of the Holy Sepulchre, with first in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, the Hegumen of Beit Jala, Archimandrite Ignatios, Archimandrite Christodoulos, Archimandrite Vassian of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem (MISSIA), Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, as well as other Priests and Deacons from other Orthodox territories. The services were accompanied by the chanting of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with prayers from Greek-speaking, Romanian-speaking, Slavic-speaking, Serbian, and Georgian faithful, and the representative of the

Greek Consulate.

His Beatitude delivered a sermon to the congregation, as follows:

“And Simeon took him up in his arms and blessed God, and said,

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
A light to lighten the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel.” (Luke 2:28-32, KJV)

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,
Devout Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all together in this renowned monastic Church of the Righteous Simeon so that we might celebrate the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple, when “Simeon the Elder received Him in his arms”.

Today’s feast of the Meeting of the Lord refers to the event of the condescension of our Lord and God. He, the Lawgiver of the Old Testament, submits to the ordinances of the Mosaic Law. Therefore, the Son of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, fulfilled the legal requirement which applied to every firstborn male child, “as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord; and to offer a sacrifice, according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:23-24, KJV).

This holy child, Jesus, was received into the arms of Simeon the Elder, a righteous man, who blessed Him and became an unerring witness to the revelation to the nations, that is, to the idolaters, of the “Saviour” and the “Light” of God. And this Saviour and Light of God is none other than the Messiah, Christ, the Son and Word of God, whom the Prophets proclaimed and foretold.

This Divine Word humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient to the Mosaic Law, “That he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:5, KJV), as the divine Paul says. This means that Christians are the sons of God through their faith in Christ, bearing within their hearts the Holy Spirit, which makes them adopted sons of God. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear” (Romans 8:15, KJV), “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2

Corinthians 3:17, KJV), the wise Paul proclaims.

The eyes of the righteous Simeon saw the salvation of God, which is the spiritual light, as the psalmist testifies, saying: “Light is sown for the righteous” (Psalm 97:11, KJV). For anyone good and righteous, this divine and spiritual light rises in the mind and heart, as St. Cyril of Alexandria comments. This spiritual light is that which will reveal to the nations the true God and the true path of righteousness, that is, of salvation, as the psalmist also says: “The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen” (Psalm 98:2, KJV).

This work of the Lord, the work of salvation, concerns the entire human race, as the Evangelist Luke affirms, invoking the Prophet Isaiah: “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6 / Isaiah 40:5, KJV). St. Cyril of Alexandria explains this verse: “By ‘flesh’ here, the whole of mankind should be understood, and the whole human race is meant.” For thus “all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” Not only Israel, but all flesh. For the Saviour and Lord of all, His goodness (or kindness) is not limited, nor did He save only one nation; rather, He has drawn to Himself all those under heaven.

In other words, my beloved brothers, our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to save the entire human race. For this reason, the Elder Simeon greets in the face of the “child Jesus” the Christ, “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32, KJV).

“And Simeon blessed them [Joseph and the mother of the child Jesus], and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:34-35, KJV), the Evangelist Luke says.

In this prophetic word of the Righteous Simeon, the following points are highlighted:

First: The coming of Christ into the world will become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence for many. And this is because the goodwill of God is limited by the free will of men, that is, by people’s choices. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24, KJV), the Lord says. In explaining the words of the Holy Simeon, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: “The Emmanuel, set by God the Father as a foundation for Zion, is a chosen and precious cornerstone. But those who believed in Him were not ashamed, while the unbelievers, not able to understand the mystery, fell and were broken”. For God

the Father also said: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and a rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Isaiah 28:16, KJV). “And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken” (Matthew 21:44, KJV).

Second: The coming of Christ into the world will be “for a sign which shall be spoken against.” In his explanation of this, Zygabinos says: “It will be a marvel spoken against by the unbelievers, a contradiction of sorts. For it was a marvel, as He was neither only man nor only God, but the God-man. And because He was of a supernatural nature, they contradicted Him, trying to analyse Him according to nature, and unable to comprehend anything supernatural.” [In simpler terms, it will be a marvel spoken against by the unbelievers, meaning it will be subject to contradiction. It was a marvel because Christ was not only man, nor only God, but the God-man. Therefore, they contradicted Him, as they tried to rationalise this supernatural marvel, but could not understand that it was supernatural.]

Thirdly, the Elder Simeon prophesies concerning the trial of the Theotokos, Mary, by the sword, which will pierce her soul. “And a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:35, KJV).

Interpreting these words, Zygabinos says: “The Elder Simeon called the sword the most honourable and sharp pain that passed through the heart of the Theotokos when her Son was nailed to the cross. For it is concerning this pain that he prophesied now.” Similarly, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: “For the Holy Virgin was slaughtered by the sword (with the sword), seeing her Son, who was born of her according to the flesh, being crucified.” And this happened because it was necessary for the thoughts and dispositions of those who had remained hidden by the rejection or acceptance of the Messiah Christ to be revealed.

Our Holy Church, dear brothers, carrying in its arms our Saviour Christ, calls us today, on the one hand, to glorify Him as our Redeemer and God, and on the other hand, to prepare ourselves through the humility of the publican and the repentance of the Prodigal Son, that we may make ourselves worthy of receiving Christ into our hearts.

After the hymnody, let us say: “Now we see strange and wondrous things, incomprehensible and inexpressible. He that made Adam is carried as a babe; the Uncontainable is held in the arms of the Elder. He that abideth uncircumscribed in the bosom of His Father is willingly circumscribed in the flesh, but not in His Godhead, even the only Friend of man” (Oikos of the feast).

Amen. Many happy returns and peace from the Lord.”

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegumen of the Monastery and Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Hierodeacon Simeon, received the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation in the rectory and the courtyard of the Holy Monastery.

From the General Secretariat

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