

Address of His Eminence Symeon the Archbishop of Sinai at His Episcopal Ordination



Your Beatitude, Father and Master!

Venerable Choir of Hierarchs,

All ye beloved brethren of the Holy Catalogue,

Your Excellency Mr George Gerapetritis, Representative of the Honourable Government of Greece,

Your Excellency, Representative of the Honourable Government of Egypt,

Your Excellency Mr Dimitrios Angelopoulos, Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem,

Beloved Holy Sepulchre Fathers,

Beloved brethren of Sinai, both those present here and those in our Monastery and its Dependencies,

Beloved fellow pilgrims of the All-holy Tomb and the holy Places of the Holy Land, lovers of Christ, lovers of Jerusalem, and lovers of Sinai,

All ye pious Orthodox Christians of every tribe and tongue who at this holy hour join

us in prayer!

Called by the honourable and unanimous vote of the Venerable Sinai Brotherhood to take upon myself the burden of the cross of the Hegumenship of the ancient Imperial and Autonomous Monastery of Christ the Saviour and of the Holy Great-Martyr Catherine, and with it the Archiepiscopal protection of the God-trodden Archbishopric of Sinai, Pharan and Raitho, I was not able to refuse this new evangelical yoke of my ecclesiastical ministry in remote Arabia, despite my many inner hesitations and grave objections, and despite my relatively advanced age and certain problems with my bodily health. And this because, whereas I never coveted, desired, or in any way whatsoever, directly or indirectly, sought such a position, as all who know me well, and especially my Sinai brethren, can attest, I was found, alas! in a time of exceptionally great tempest and painful historical turmoil of Sinai affairs, useful as it seems and fit in the eyes of my Brethren to take up the sacred duties. Although I am conscious of myself as small and weak for undertaking such a work, most difficult, of great responsibility and perilous, and especially in such grievous times, I was persuaded that the call of my Brethren was a call verily of the Divine Providence and the good pleasure of our patron Saints, Moses the God-seer, Catherine the Great-Martyr and all-wise Bride of Christ, John of the Ladder, and all the Venerable and Venerable Martyrs of the Sinai Peninsula, of whom from my youth I have been a zealous servant and a disinterested minister, yet always with sincerity of soul and fervency of heart, offering diligently whatsoever and as much as my humble powers allowed. I had not, therefore, the right to refuse the call and to desert my post!

And so, having loosed the latchet of my shoes before the mystery of the burning bush in the midst of which I unexpectedly found myself, with bowings of neck and knees I spake, and again I say, unto the All-Holy God: -Lord, I have not sought the honour! I have not desired nor have I pursued golden stoles of positions, glories, and pastoral responsibilities! My humble priestly ministry in Thy Church sufficed me! But I have been pressed into service! Thou hast pressed me into service! I am therefore justified in asking reverently that Thou shouldest help me! Thou who didst strengthen Moses, whom thou hadst chosen of old, feeble of speech, and didst make him truly a Son of Thunder, and a great Ruler of thy people, who with a mighty arm and great signs did shepherd and govern Israel. Thou, the same Lord, who didst burn away the thorns of my transgressions, kindle in my heart a fire of flaming faith and trust in Thee! Enlighten my mind with the lightning of Thy Holy Spirit! Purify mine inward eye, that I may discern the things which profit the Church, the Monastery, the Brotherhood, and the small Sinaitic flock! Increase my love, both for Thee and for man, and especially for my fellow-monk! Direct my mind in the understanding of signs and the discerning of spirits! Make clear my tongue!

Strengthen mine arm and my feet! Strengthen me in this ministry of Thine which lieth before me, unto which I am guided by the mercy and will of Thyself, through Thy children, my brethren! Behold, Lord, I am Thy servant, and into Thy hands I commend my heart and my whole being! Do Thou heal my weaknesses and supply my lacks! Do Thou uphold me, sanctify me, make me sufficient, appoint me a workman approved, unto the promotion, increase, and safeguarding of the sacred inheritance which Thou hast entrusted to me; for the support and edification of my Brethren; for the sanctification of Thy Name on the God-glorified and God-trodden Mount Sinai, and in that ancient and venerable Sanctuary of Thine there! Accept, O Lord, the supplications for Thy servant offered by Thy most pure Mother, the most-blessed, glorious Our Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary; by my protectors Moses, Aaron, and Elijah the Prophets; by Catherine the All-Wise; by John of the Ladder, who is also my predecessor; by the Holy Innocents; by the Abbas of Sinai and Raitho; by Galaktion and Episteme; by Paisios and Porphyrios, the new Sinai and Mount Athos Fathers; and by all the Saints of Sinai; as also by my protector Saints, the Great-Martyr Demetrios the Myrrh-streamer, and Symeon the New Theologian; and here fulfil Thy holy Will upon me!

Your Beatitude Father and Master!

When, some half a century ago, we were both studying Theology together at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, in the selfsame very benches, You were already a Cleric of the Holy Sepulchre, reverent and breathing the Grace of the All-Holy Tomb, while he who stands reverently before You today, awaiting the evangelical yoke of the Archbishopric from Your venerable Patriarchal hands, was still a layman and a novice; then, a mutual love and brotherly friendship united our hearts, which remaineth undiminished even to this day. Yet I never conceived that what happeneth to me today by Divine grace would come to pass, nor that I should have the exceptional honour and blessing that You, my old and venerable fellow-student, should be the minister of the Mystery of my archepiscopal ordination! I thank the Lord also for this exceptional grace and blessing of His! That a Brother should become my Patriarch and Protector, and that I should be bound to make mention of his venerable name in all my humble sacred services, as being subject to him as Archbishop and under his canonical jurisdiction!

The position, Your Beatitude, of the by Royal-providence, Autonomous, Free and Unenslaved Imperial Monastery of Sinai, clearly defined by the prevailing ktitorial Novella of Justinian and by many ancient Golden Bulls, venerable Patriarchal and Synodal Decisions, Sigillia, and Letters, as well as the historic Ahtiname of Mohammed, resting upon sacred institutions and made fully clear, shall be

inviolable and, demonstrated in deeds, shall be an object of absolute respect on my part and of the Sinai Brethren-Fathers around me. Furthermore, being always bound to You, as Archbishop of the Throne, by the bond of peace and the love of Christ, in reverent canonical order, thinking piously and ever rendering due reverence to Your Most Divine Beatitude and to the God-established Patriarchal Throne of the Holy City of Jerusalem, I am ready to labour always, until my last breath, God assisting, with all my strength for the glory of the Lord, for ecclesiastical harmony and peace, for the good testimony of the Monastic Tradition of our late Fathers, who sanctified through their prayers, ascetic labours, tears, sweat, spiritual ascents, teaching, and even their blood, the God-glorified and God-trodden Mount Sinai, the desert, and the famed Monastery of the Divine Transfiguration and Saint Catherine with its Sketes and Metochia; for the manifestation and promotion of the hiero-cultural wealth of our Byzantine Orthodox Greek heritage; and for the greater renown of the Sinaitic name, even as my venerable predecessors have done in a God-loving and God-pleasing manner.

At this point, let it be permitted to me, Your Beatitude, to invoke the holy prayers of all my unforgettable predecessors, both the Saints and the Righteous who dwelt in Tents, and especially of Constantius the Wise, who, as Patriarch of Constantinople Constantius I, formerly of Sinai, who also adorned the most holy Apostolic and Ecumenical Throne, and of my contemporaries Porphyrios III and Gregory II, as well as of my immediate predecessor and until recently my Father and Hegumen, Damianos.

Likewise, I invoke the God-obeying prayers of my unforgettable Spiritual Fathers and counsellors, chiefly my Elder Gregory III, Papoutsopoulos, Metropolitan of Kastoria, who adorned his hierarchal service in Greece as a man of palpable holiness; and furthermore, of Panteleimon Bardakos, Metropolitan of Samos and Ikaria; and Archimandrite of Agathangelos, Michailidis, who were distinguished for their shining virtue and God-pleasing conduct.

I also invoke the prayers of the unforgettable chief shepherds of the city of Piraeus, which bore and nurtured me: Chrysostomos Tavladorakis, who indelibly sealed my adolescence and early youth, and Kallinikos Karousos, who ordained me an Archimandrite and spiritual father.

I invoke the prayers of my ever-memorable, most venerable and much-beloved Asia Minor forebears, Demetrios and Argyro, as well as of my parents, Elias and Angeliki, who taught me the love for the Church and guided me from tender years to live piously and according to God; the prayers of my godfather and of my teachers at all levels of my education.

I make special mention of my most beloved fellow-student, my great Brother, whose monastic name I bear, that is, the All-Venerable Archimandrite Symeon Symeou, Hegumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint George Mavrovouniou in Cyprus, the Geronda of two Archbishops of the Church of Cyprus, who chose not to be seen and not to be heard.

Moreover, and above all these, I desire at this sacred hour to express my many and sincere thanks to You, Your Beatitude, for Your constant support, love, and entire fraternal disposition which You have always shown and continue to show towards my humble person, but also for Your discerning assistance in resolving the recently arisen complex problem of our Monastery. Similarly, I express thanks to the Sacred Synod around You of the Jerusalem Throne and to all the venerable Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre.

Furthermore, as a son of Asia Minor Rhomioi, who never forgot their origin of every kind, and especially that from the Metropolis of Krini and consequently from the Great Church of Christ as such, I desire to express my deepest respect and my filial gratitude to His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, who has often shown paternal love towards the Holy Monastery of Sinai and towards my lowliness.

Due thanks and deepest respect, I also dutifully submit to His All-Beatitude the Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria, Theodore, who has often shown paternal love and interest towards my lowliness and is represented today by His Grace and beloved-to-me, most God-loving Bishop of Hippos, Stephanos.

Likewise, I submit the corresponding respects to His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Hieronymos, whose manifold support in love towards us and whose contribution to the smoothing over of the recent troubled situation has been decisive, and who is represented today on the one hand by the much-revered and beloved-to-me, His Eminence Metropolitan Ignatios of Demetrias, with whom an unbreakable bond and unwavering interest exists, and on the other hand by the All-Reverend Archimandrite Kallinikos Georgakopoulos, whom we also thank.

Warm thanks are due to my most beloved, venerable and foster-brother, His

Eminence Metropolitan Antonios of Glyfada, who especially honours me today with his presence; may his pastoral work be fair and fruitful.

Extremely moving is also the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Kallinikos of Kastoria, who honours me today; he, being the indirect successor of my Blessed Geronda, Gregory, and having become an obedient witness of his holiness under his flock, stands today with members of my own entourage “in the image and place” of his predecessor.

A deep spiritual bond already existing with the Most God-loving Bishop Nephon of Achelous is reconfirmed today by his presence, who also represents His Eminence Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus, whose protection I enjoyed for many years and tasted the many and sweet fruits of his brotherly love.

Simultaneously, I desire to express a heartfelt greeting and my love to all the esteemed friends and supporters of the Holy Monastery of Sinai throughout the world, who stand by our side with the generosity of their manifold and varied contributions. Among these, and indeed first, His Majesty King Charles of the United Kingdom, under whose royal aid the London-based Saint Catherine Foundation operates, the philanthropic organization in the United States, American Associates of The Saint Catherine Foundation, and all the esteemed members of both Organizations; also the esteemed members of the Swiss-based Foundation Swiss Friends of The Saint Catherine Foundation; the German Archaeological Institute of Cairo, which, responding graciously to a request from the Monastery, excavated the early Christian city of Pharan through Dr. Peter Grossmann; the Metropolitan Museum of New York; the Getty Museum in Los Angeles; and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, for graciously hosting major Exhibitions of Sinaitic Holy Icons and Relics. For the same reason, the Byzantine Museum in Athens, the Pierre Giannada Foundation in Martigny, Switzerland, and the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Likewise, to the distinguished statesmen and scholars in the United States, friends of the Monastery, who have brought the Monastery, its history, its spiritual treasures, and its unique position to the forefront of Pan-Christian and ecumenical cultural discourse.

My great love and my wholehearted blessing and prayer I direct to each and every one of my Sinai Brethren-Fathers, both those in the Monastery and those in its Metochia. Christ is in the midst of us, my most beloved Brothers and Fathers, and is and shall be unto the ages of ages! Being of one soul, being of one mind, bearing one another’s burdens, and in honour preferring one another, let us proceed in

peace and blessing until each one's end!

Similarly, I direct the same to each one of my spiritual children.

Finally, a greeting of respect and love I direct from the heart to His Excellency the President of the great Nation of Egypt, Mr. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, upon whose recognised justice, upright judgement, and supportive care we firmly base many hopes.

A corresponding greeting of love and honour I direct to the honourable Greek State and to the devout Greek Orthodox Diaspora in Cyprus and everywhere upon the earth. My prayers will always be offered fervently to God for all the aforementioned.

Lastly, I earnestly pray for peace and a harmonious coexistence in justice for the peoples of the Holy Land, whose blood-shed ordeal in recent times has greatly torn my heart!

Your Beatitude,

The rest of the things which flood my soul at this sacred hour, honouring them with silence, I commit to God, entrusting now to You in compunction and sacred awe my right hand, for Your further actions concerning me! O Lord, save now! O Lord, prosper now! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!...

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