

THE FEAST OF SAINT SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 3/16 February 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Simeon the God-receiver at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, also known as Monastery of Katamon at the West New Jerusalem.

On this feast, the Church according to the Gospel narrative (Luke 2:22-40) commemorates Saint Simeon the God-receiver as the primary person in the event of the Lord's presence in the Temple on the fortieth day after His Nativity.

The Church commemorates that the Holy Spirit had informed Simeon that he was not going to face death before seeing the Christ of the Lord. This happened when Simeon received the Lord in his arms and recognized Him, saying "“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 2:29-32).

In honour of the events of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple and of Saint Simeon, at this Monastery Vespers was held on Tuesday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Wednesday morning. The Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Aristovoulos of Madaba and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab and Russian-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and Hierodeacon Dositheos, as the Service was attended by many faithful from

the Katamon Greek Community, Arab-speaking, Russians, Romanians, as well as the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever” (Psalm 145:21), the psalmist cries out.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in the Holy Monastery of Saint Simeon the God-receiver and righteous, where his tomb lies, to celebrate his holy commemoration, in praise and doxology of the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying: “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 2:29-32).

The feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple of Solomon, which was the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple brought by His immaculate Mother and the righteous Joseph, according to the custom of the Law of Moses, is linked with today’s synaxis of the Holy and righteous Simeon the God-receiver and the prophetess Anna. We observe their synaxis today, we confess the unspeakable God’s condescension to us, humans.

This unspeakable condescension of God toward the human race through the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is confirmed and testified on the one hand by the embracing of God the Word, Who had become flesh and was a baby, by Elder Simeon; on the other, the confession of both Simeon and Anna that the Son

of God, namely Christ, is the salvation God had prepared “before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32, 2:38).

This Divine condescension is proclaimed also by the hymnographer, saying: “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, not in His Godhead, even the only Friend of man” (Minaion, Matins, Oikos).

And God’s condescension refers to the work of the salvation of man by Christ the Messiah and the revelation of his righteousness as light before all peoples and nations as the Prophet David foretold: “The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen” (Psalm 98:2). The universal nature of the redeeming mission of the Messiah, namely of the Divine Providence, is evangelized by Saint Luke, who refers to the Prophet Isaiah: “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6, Isaiah 40:5).

Interpreting these words of Isaiah, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “the mystery of Christ had been prepared before the beginning of the world; it was though revealed at the end of times, and became the light to those sitting in the darkness who had fallen into fallacy, fallen by evil hand”. These words of our Father Cyril find their origin in those of the Apostles Peter (1 Peter 1:20) and Paul, according to which the people, having been led astray by the devil, “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25).

Indeed, Christ became the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people. As for the phrase “and the glory of thy people Israel”, according to Saint Cyril is “a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5) of the

people of God. "Even if some of them [of the people of God] became abusive and disobedient, having their minds filled with imprudence, however, the 'remnant' is saved and is glorified by Christ. The beginning of this remnant was the Holy Disciples and Apostles, whose merriment of goodness illumines all under the sky" Saint Cyril notes.

"And Simeon blessed them, 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" (Luke 2:34). Being brought by the Holy Spirit, the Elder Simeon blessed the Virgin because she conceived not by a man but by the Holy Spirit, and he blessed Christ saying: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:34).

Interpreting Simeon's prophetic words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria quotes the words spoken by the Prophet Isaiah "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16, Romans 9:33); "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever, it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:44).

In other words, God the Father has placed at the foundations of Sion a precious and righteous cornerstone, that is Christ, and those who believed in Him were not put to shame; while those who did not believe nor understood the great mystery of salvation of God in Christ, stumbled upon that rock and fell and were ground into powder; on the contrary, those who believed in Him were raised up.

"The sign that shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:3) according to Saint Paul is the Cross; "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). This very Cross and the shameful

and martyr's death of Christ on it, did righteous Simeon mean when he told the Virgin: "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35).

Christ, whom the Elder Simeon received in his arms, is the cornerstone of the Church, and its members "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Therefore we, my dear brethren, are called to receive in our spiritual arms, namely in our minds and hearts, the marvellous light of Christ. And say along with the psalmist: "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness" (Psalm 119:123). Amen. Many happy returns in health!"

After the Divine Liturgy the elder Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, reverend Archimandrite Theodoritos hosted a reception for His Beatitude and all congregation at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

From Secretariat-General