

THE FEAST OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD IN THE TEMPLE AND OF SAINT SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER IN KATAMON

On Thursday, 3/16 February 2023, the feast of Saint Simeon the God-receiver was celebrated at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, called Katamon, in west Jerusalem near the Holy Monastery of the Cross and the Jewish Knesset on Katamon hill.

The feast of the Meeting of the Lord was celebrated also in this Monastery, to especially honour Saint Simeon the God-receiver who was the main person serving the Lord in this event, and said when he received the Lord in his arms, "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 Saint Simeon, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor and Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Archimandrites, Mattheos, Ieronymos, Priests and Hieromonks from various Orthodox countries, among whom, the Head of the Russian MISSIA in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Alexander, Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacons, Eulogios, Simeon and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal school students, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the Consul Mrs Zaharioudaki, members of the Consulate, the Ambassador of Georgia to Tel Aviv Mr Lasha Zhavania and many faithful Christians from

Greece, Russia, Romania and Palestine.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon in Greek, Arabic and Russian:

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon... Then took he him [Christ] 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: 2:25-32).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy place, where the tomb of Saint Simeon the God-receiver is preserved, to celebrate his holy commemoration and synaxis along with that of Saint Anne the Prophetess.

The Evangelist Luke precisely narrates the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple of Solomon, forty days after His Nativity, according to the custom of the Law of Moses.

The presentation of Jesus in the Temple by His mother, the Virgin Mary and Joseph the Betrothed, as well as the meeting, namely the welcoming by the righteous Simeon and Anne the Prophetess are the content of today's feast. The righteous Simeon, being a Priest under the Law of Moses, became a true witness of the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely of the Incarnation of God the Word, which refers to the salvation of man. “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:30-31) the Elder Simeon exclaims.

Interpreting these words of Simeon, Saint Basil the Great says: “He calls salvation the Christ of God in the

Scriptures"; while Athanasius the Great says, "by salvation he means His presence in the flesh". "He calls salvation the incarnation of the Only-begotten Son and Word of God", Saint Theophylaktos remarks.

God had prepared this "salvation of God" which the Elder Simeon's eyes beheld, since the foundation of the world for the whole human race. "He prepared [the salvation of] Christ since the foundation of the world, and revealed it in the end of times", Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

God, my dear ones, is the God of love, light and peace, as witnessed by the holy Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists and in general by the Holy Scriptures. "God is love" (John 4:8). "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33), Saint Paul preaches. And Saint Cosmas, Bishop of Maiouma composes a hymn referring to Prophet Isaiah: "When Isaiah beheld God symbolically on an exalted throne attended by Angels of glory, he cried: o wretched man that I am! For I have seen beforehand the incarnate God, the Lord of peace and unwaning light" (Katavasia, Ode 5).

In other words, the prophet Isaiah was deemed worthy to see the exalted throne of God, which was a symbol of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, who became a living throne of God by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, as the God-man Lord and our God and Saviour received flesh from her pure flesh. Therefore, the hymnographer adds the words: "the incarnate God" is the "Lord of unwaning light and peace".

Saint Simeon the God-receiver became a communicant of this unwaning light and peace, not only through his bodily eyes but also through the eyes of his soul and pure heart. "Then took he [Simeon] him up in his arms, and blessed God" (Luke 2:28), the Evangelist Luke says. He blessed, namely he glorified God the Elder Simeon because his eyes saw the salvation of God (cf. Luke 2:30). "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to

him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23), the Lord says.

And the salvation of God is no other than His spiritual light, which will reveal to the nations the true God and the true path of salvation, namely of Christ, Who is the revealed light, "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). The established Father of the Church, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, "Christ became the light to those who were led astray in the darkness and had been fallen by devil's hand".

Our Holy Church, being the body of Christ, and Christ is its head (cf. Col. 1:18), is the only source of the true light, which sheds light upon every man in this world (cf. John 1:9). Therefore, the hymnographer says, "Thou foundation of them that hope in Thee, O Lord, make steadfast the Church, which Thou hast purchased with Thy precious blood" (Katavasia, Ode 3). Saint Paul is also referring to this when he says, "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). And that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it" (Eph. 5:25-26).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, my dear brethren, calls all those "who believe in Him" through the righteous and God-receiver Simeon, to remain steadfast and firm in our faith in our life in Christ because the only true way of light and salvation lies in true reverence.

And the hymnographer of the Church urges us by saying: "Let us hasten to the Theotokos, we who wish to see her Son brought unto Simeon. When the incorporeal powers looked on Him out of Heaven, they were astonished, saying: Now do 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"

(Matins, Oikos). Amen! Many happy returns and blessed the forthcoming Great lent period!"

The Patriarchal entourage and the congregation were offered a reception by the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Theodoritos.

From Secretariat-General