



Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the brethren of Filotheou Monastery with a homily dedicated to St. Simeon the New Theologian

Reverend father abbot, dear fathers and brothers!

First of all, I would like to thank father abbot and the brethren on behalf of our pilgrims' group for hospitality and concelebration of the Divine Liturgy.

"Today we commemorate St. Simeon the New Theologian (949-1022), an abbot of the Monastery of St. Mamas in Constantinople. St. Simeon is renowned for his ascetic life and theological writings, which include three theological, fifteen moral, and thirty-four catechetical discourses, as well as three hundred chapters about prayer and virtuous life. However, his most remarkable and important book is, maybe, the Hymns of Divine Love. St. Simeon wrote on theological and moral subjects, but the most vivid are pages, on which he described his own spiritual life and his communion with God, which he experienced during his entire monastic life.

"As a youth and novice and disciple of St. Simeon the Studite, he was vouchsafed with the vision of the Divine Light. As he prayed, the roof of his cell opened, and the Divine Uncreated Light descended on his head. When he was ordained priest, the Divine Light descended on his head as a fire, as was witnessed by his disciple, St. Nicetas Stethatos, who wrote his Life, the excerpts from which we heard yesterday and today at our repast.

"St. Simeon the New Theologian believed that all people, if they wish, could see God, and if a man does contemplate God in prayer and does not see the Divine Light, he does not want it, or is not too zealous in his prayer.

St. Simeon also taught that the main means for unity with God is the Divine Eucharist and partaking of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. He celebrated Divine Liturgy and received communion every day. In his "Hymns of Divine Love" he described how he came to his cell after the liturgy and felt his body deified and pierced with the Divine Light.

"St. Simeon was a great teacher of deification. He said that every man was destined to the unity with God in spirit and body that should come not in the future life after death, but during the earthly life. The earthly life is given to us for our unity with God here, for our doing away with our human will and

replacing it with the divine will so the presence of God could penetrate all our actions and thoughts.

"Man does not see God because he resists God. Sometime man does not feel the presence of God not because God is far away, but because man is far away from God. God is always close to man, but man is often far away from God. God always shines His Divine Light on man, but man could be spiritually blind and cannot see this Light. God always wants man to live according to His will, but man often wants to live according to his will and shuts his heart from God's presence, while having sinful thoughts. St. Simeon, like other fathers of the Eastern Church, teaches that there is no limit to human perfection. Deification is the limit, but as God has no limits, man becomes incorruptible and immortal in his unity with God. This happens in the earthly life.

"We know many other saints, including the Athonite saints, who have shown forth with the same virtues as St. Simeon, have seen the Divine Light and have been deified. They have shown by their own life that it was possible to become a saint in any epoch. They taught us that inspiration is the main thing in spiritual life. You should never allow monastic life, with all its outer monotony, to become a routine. You should never allow the everyday divine services to become a dull and stale duty. The Divine Liturgy and other church services should be the everyday source of inspiration and renewal of spiritual strength.

"We derive our spiritual strength from this Divine source so that we could give this strength to the service to God and man during this day and during our life. Any time we lack inner strength and inspiration runs out, when our life seems to become a routine, let us open and read the books written by the Holy Fathers, let us open and read the Hymns of Divine Life by St. Simeon the New Theologian, and the Lord, by the prayers of the saints, will give us inspiration to continue our monastic deeds.

"Dear fathers and brothers, I congratulate you on the commemoration day of St. Simeon. May the Lord, by his prayers, grant us true monastic life and vouchsafe us with seeing His Divine Light and living in this Light.

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