

The Prayer of Symeon (3rd) **"A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles"**

Righteous Symeon, while holding the Infant Christ, concluded his praise to God with a prophecy: *"my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles"* (Luke 2:30-32). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Symeon prophesied, as Isaiah once did (see Isaiah 49:6), that Jesus Christ is the light and Savior of the whole world. It is this light that will shine on all the pagan nations, freeing them from the darkness of ignorance of the true God.

What is most notable, is how the Elder Symeon speaks these prophetic words without the exclusivity and fanaticism of his Jewish contemporaries. Their view of the Messiah is a narrow one, in that he would come for the salvation of Israel alone. If the Jews had heard Symeon speak of this salvation being extended to the surrounding pagans, he would be denounced as a dangerous radical, with serious consequences.

This is something that we Orthodox Christians also need to look at very closely. Because there are some people today who also have this insular thinking, limiting Christ to their own countries or communities. They are uninterested in doing mission work beyond their borders and are often hostile when asked to support any missionary endeavor. They attempt to justify their opposition by citing a "greater need" in their own nations or homes. If the early Church acted in this way, then none of us would be Christian, as our ancestors were all pagans! If the Holy Apostles, who were Israelites, had this attitude, they would not have left their homeland to preach the Gospel, and the Church would have remained confined to Palestine.

But Christ came to unite everyone in one spiritual family. As *the Light of the world*" (John 8:12), He came to dispel the darkness of pagan life, and to illuminate their world like the sun, bringing salvation to all. That is why the Lord commanded His Apostles: *"Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). They traveled in every direction, carrying this joyful message of salvation in the face of danger and even martyrdom. Our Holy Apostolic Church continues this work of evangelization to this day, with the participation of its illumined members, both clergy and laity. Each of us is called to contribute with our fervent prayers and in any other way we can, depending on our abilities. Paganism is not just something that existed in Apostolic times, but continues to this day. There are many millions who are waiting for the message of salvation. It is very moving to see the joy and gratitude that they show to the missionaries of our Church, these people who hear about Christ for the first time. They come to believe, be baptized, and worship the one and true Triune God. We can admire the longing of many who travel very long distances (some on foot) to be catechized, baptized, and attend the Divine Liturgy. This being done until it is possible to build an Orthodox church of their own.

I would like to make a necessary clarification here. Some confuse the mission of the Church with the proselytism practiced by various sects. This is something the Jews did and which the Lord condemned. That is, using sly and deceptive methods to attract them to their group. This is condemned by the Orthodox Church, which has never used such means. The Orthodox Mission is something completely different, in that it respects the freedom of every person. It preaches the truth to whoever is interested, and after catechesis (however long it takes), if they are found sincere in their belief, are baptized into the Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ calls *"whoever desires to come after me"* (Mark 8:34). Christ forces no one.

My dear brothers and sisters, after all of this, please remember that our Lord (as Righteous Symeon prophesied) is the Light that illuminates all nations, and is the Savior of all peoples. He wants to have enlightened helpers who have already received His saving message. This is not because he needs them, as He is Almighty and can do everything Himself. But He also asks us to become "*fellow workers of God*" (see 1 Corinthians 3:9), in order to honor us. Let us accept this honor, and labor to strengthen Orthodox Missions with our shining example. Let our edifying speech bear the light of faith to as many as possible, so that they too may be illuminated and saved by Christ the Savior. Amen.

Metropolitan Sotirios Trampas