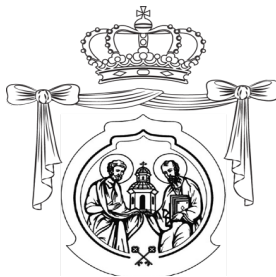


His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,
and the Mid-Atlantic

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

February 2, 2021

The Meeting of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Beloved in Christ,

I greet you on the solemn and joyous feast of the Meeting of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ!

While there is much spiritual fruit to be harvested from this feast of the Lord, I would request you pay attention to the words of the holy God receiver Saint Symeon. Upon receiving the Christ Child from the arms of the Most Holy Theotokos, Saint Symeon exclaims, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for my eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou has prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel."

Given our present situation of fear and anxiety, we would do well to pause and reflect on this holy man's joy in meeting Christ. According to Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, "In peace, according to Thy word' indicates that he is looking for his soul's departure from his body because of the prophecy which he received, and he regards it as a rest, because in peace is equivalent to 'in rest' (St. Theophylaktos)." Saint Symeon had no fear of death. On the contrary, he welcomed it because the Holy Spirit had informed him beforehand that he would not experience death until he met the Savior. When he indeed met the Savior, Symeon knew he could depart this life in peace. Nothing was more valuable to him than the Incarnation of the Savior.

Symeon is described by the Church Fathers in various ways. Some describe him as a priest, others a prophet. Regardless, he was a holy man filled with the Holy Spirit who guides his words and his actions and compelled him to visit the Temple on the day of Christ's Meeting. Only through the Holy Spirit, did Saint Symeon recognize the Christ Child and the tremendous gift offered to the human race.

Everything pales in comparison with Christ. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by what the Psalmist calls false frenzies or even the real dangers we are sure to face in this life. One thing is needful.

Seek Christ with every fiber of your being. Seek Christ with your heart. Foregoing all else, it will be worth the price of our temporary, earthly existence. May the Most Holy Theotokos protect you and the thrice holy God save you.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Thomas".

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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