

## ON THE 2ND OF THE MONTH

### The Meeting of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

#### AT SMALL VESPERS

*At, Lord, I have cried, we insert 4 Stichera, and sing the following prosomia, doubling the first.*

##### *Tone 1.*

The Word uncircumscribed, above all being, who rides in glory on the heavenly thrones, Symeon takes into his arms and cries, 'Now release me, according to your word, my Saviour, the salvation and delight of the faithful'.<sup>1</sup>

When he saw you, the Word begotten from the Father before the ages, as an infant, wondrous Symeon cried out, 'I quake and tremble to hold you in my hands, my Master. But, I beg you, now release your servant in peace, for you are compassionate'.

Now let the heavenly gate<sup>2</sup> be opened. God the Word, begotten beyond time from the Father, has been born from a Virgin, taking flesh, for as he is good he wishes to call back mortal nature and set it at the Father's right hand.

Glory. Both now. *Tone 4.*

*By Andrew of Crete*<sup>3</sup>.

Today the holy Mother, who is higher than the Holy Place, has come to the Holy Place, revealing to the world the Maker of the world and the Giver of the law. Symeon the Elder took him in his arms and cried with veneration, 'Now you release your servant. For I have seen you, the Saviour of our souls'.

*At the Aposticha. Prosomia.*

*Tone 2. O House of Ephratha.*

Today the Saviour was brought as a babe into the temple of the Lord, and the Elder receives him with aged arms.

*Verse:* Now, Master, you release your servant in peace, according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 2,29. Further references to the frequent quotations from the *Nunc Dimittis* will not be given. The Greek word means more than 'let depart', as does the Latin 'dimitto'. It means to 'release', 'loose', set free'. It may have financial, military, legal or social connotations; 'discharge a debt', 'disband or discharge troops', 'acquit' or even 'divorce', as at Matthew 1,19. It is also used in the LXX euphemistically of 'dying', e.g. Gen. 15,2; Numbers 20,29; Tobit 3,6.13. 'Dismiss' is perhaps too dismissive, so I tentatively propose 'release'.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gen. 28,17.

<sup>3</sup> † 740. Also known as Andrew of Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup> Since these verses are normally abbreviated in the books, the whole of the first part of the *Nunc Dimittis* should probably be said here

Christ, the burning coal foreseen by godly Isaias, in the hands of the Mother of God, as in a pair of tongs, is now given to the Elder.<sup>5</sup>

*Verse:* A light to bring revelation to the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.

As Symeon held the Master in his arms with fear and joy, he asked release from life, as he sang the praise of God's Mother.

Glory. Both now. *Theotokion*.

The All-Pure cried, 'Symeon, receive as a babe in your arms the Lord of glory<sup>6</sup> and the salvation of the world'.

*Apolytikion. Tone 1.*

Hail, full of grace,<sup>7</sup> Virgin Mother of God, for from you there dawned the Sun of righteousness,<sup>8</sup> Christ our God, who enlightens those in darkness.<sup>9</sup> Be glad too, righteous Elder, for you received in your embrace the Liberator of our souls, who grants us also resurrection.

## AT GREAT VESPERS

*At, Lord, I have cried, we insert 8 Stichera and sing the following Idiomels.*

*Tone 1. By Patriarch Germanos<sup>10</sup>.*

Say, Symeon, whom do you carry in your arms, as you rejoice in the temple? To whom do you cry and shout aloud, 'Now I have been set free. For I have seen my Saviour'? 'This is he who was born from a Virgin. This is the Word, God from God, incarnate for our sake and who saves mankind. Let us worship him'. *(Three times)*

Receive, Symeon, the One whom Moses in the dark cloud saw of old giving the Law on Sinai,<sup>11</sup> now become a babe and subject to the Law. This is he who spoke through the Law. This is he who was told of in the Prophets,<sup>12</sup> incarnate for our sake and who saves mankind. Let us worship him. *(Three times)*

Come, let us too, with songs inspired, go to meet Christ. Let us receive him, whose salvation Symeon saw. This is he whom David proclaimed, and who spoke through the Prophets, was incarnate for our sake and who proclaims by the Law. Let us worship him. *(Twice)*

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<sup>5</sup> Isaias 6,6.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 2,8.

<sup>7</sup> Luke 1,28.

<sup>8</sup> Malachy 4,2.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Luke 1,79.

<sup>10</sup> 645-740. Patriarch of Constantinople 715-730, deposed by Leo III, the Iconoclast.

<sup>11</sup> Exod. 20,21.

<sup>12</sup> I take the aorist participle here to be a true passive. The *Festal Menaion* takes it as active.

Glory. Both now.

*Tone 6. By Monk John.*

Let heaven's gate be opened today. For he who is without beginning, the Word of the Father, taking a beginning in time, yet not abandoning his god-head, is being willingly brought into the temple of the law as a babe of forty days by a Virgin Mother, and the Elder receives him in his arms. The servant cries to the Master, 'Release me, for my eyes have seen your salvation'. You have come into the world to save the human race. Lord, glory to you!

*Entrance, Prokeimenon and the Readings.*

The Reading is from Exodus.

[12,51- 13,16 and selection]<sup>13</sup>

The Lord spoke to Moses on the day on which he brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, saying, 'Sanctify to me every first-born, first produced that opens every womb among the children of Israel'. And Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day, on which you came out of Egypt, from the house of slavery, for the Lord has brought you out from there with a mighty hand. And keep his law. And it shall be that when the Lord God brings you into the land of the Chananites, in the way that he swore to your fathers, you shall set apart everything that opens the womb; the males to the Lord. But if after this your son asks you, saying, "What is this?", you will say to him, "God brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery, with a mighty hand. And when Pharaoh hardened his heart against sending us out, the Lord slew every first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of humans to the first-born of animals. This is why I sacrifice everything that opens the womb; the males to the Lord, and every first-born of my sons I will redeem". And it will be for a sign upon your hand, and immovable before your eyes, because thus said the Lord the Almighty, "All the first-born of your sons you will give me. [Leviticus 12] And it shall be that everyone<sup>14</sup> who gives birth to a male child shall circumcise the flesh of its foreskin on the eighth day. And for thirty three days he will not come into the sanctuary of God to the Priest, until the days of purification are completed. And after this he will offer an unblemished yearling lamb to the Lord for a holocaust, and a young pigeon or turtle dove to the Priest at the door of the Tabernacle of Witness. Or instead of these he will offer two young pigeons or two turtle doves. And the Priest will make atonement for him. [Numbers] Because these have been offered to me as an offering out of all the children of Israel. And I have taken them and sancti-

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<sup>13</sup> This reading is a selection from Exodus 12,51-13,16 together with 22,29 and passages from Leviticus 12 and Numbers 8. The reference to the purification of the mother in Leviticus is made to refer to the child. This may be influenced by Luke 2,22, which has 'their', not 'her', or, according to the Western text, 'his'. The text in *The Festal Menaion* is most misleading, being from the Hebrew, not the Greek of the Menaion, which differs noticeably from the LXX.

<sup>14</sup> This is masculine, though the LXX has 'woman'.

fied them for myself in place of the first-born of the Egyptians, on the day when I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt from human to beast of burden,” said God the Most High, the Holy One of Israel.’<sup>15</sup>

The Reading is from the Prophecy of Isaias.

[6,1-12]

In the year that King Ozias died, I saw the Lord, seated on a high and exalted throne. And the house was full of his glory. And Seraphim stood around him, the one having six wings and the other having six wings, and with two they covered their faces and with two the feet and with two they flew. And one cried to other and they said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord Sabaoth. The whole earth is full of his glory.’ The threshold was lifted up at the voice with which they cried, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, ‘Woe is me! For I am pricked to the heart, because I, a human being, and with unclean lips dwell among a people with unclean lips, and with my eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Sabaoth.’ And one of the Seraphim was sent to me, and in his hand he held a burning coal, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips and it will take away your iniquities and cleanse your sins.’ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go to this people?’ And I said, ‘See, here am I. Send me.’ And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people, “You will hear and not understand, and seeing, you will see and not perceive.” For the heart of this people has grown fat, and they have heard with heavy ears and they have shut their eyes, lest perhaps they perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn back, and I will heal them.’ And I said, ‘Until when, Lord?’ And he said, ‘Until the cities are deserted from being inhabited and the houses from there being no people, and the land will be abandoned as desert. And after this God will remove the people far away, and those who are left behind will be multiplied on the land’.

The Reading is from the Prophecy of Isaias.

[19,1.3-5.12.16.19-21]

See, the Lord will be seated on a light cloud and will come to Egypt and the idols of Egypt will be shaken at his presence and their heart will be worsted within them. ‘And their spirit will be troubled within them, and I will frustrate their counsel and hand Egypt over into the hands of harsh lords,’ says the Lord Sabaoth. And the Egyptians will drink water that is beside the sea, while the river will fail and be dried up. Thus says the Lord, ‘Where now are your wise men? And let them declare to you and let them say, “What has the

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<sup>15</sup> This last clause is not from any of the texts used in the reading. The phrase ‘God the Most High’ only occurs at Gen. 14,20 and Psalm 77,35. The second is characteristic of Isaias, and the two nearest references are 30,12 & 15. But the whole clause is probably a mere commonplace by the compiler.

Lord Sabaoth planned against Egypt?" On that day the Egyptians will be like women, in fear and trembling in the presence of the hand of the Lord Sabaoth, which he will bring against them. And there will be an Altar to the Lord in the country of the Egyptians and a pillar to Lord at its border. And it will be for a sign for ever to the Lord in the country of Egypt, because they will cry to the Lord and he will send them a man who will save them. And the Lord will be known to the Egyptians. And the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and they will offer sacrifice and gift, and they will vow vows to the Lord and pay them.<sup>16</sup>

*At the Liti, Idiomel Stichera.*

*Tone 1. By Anatolios.<sup>17</sup>*

The Ancient of Days,<sup>18</sup> who also gave the Law to Moses on Sinai, today appears as a babe. And according to the Law, as Maker of the Law, fulfilling the Law, he is brought to the temple and given to the Elder. The righteous Symeon, having received him and seen the accomplishment of the decrees completed, cried out with joy, 'My eyes have seen the Mystery hidden from eternity, made manifest in these last times:<sup>19</sup> a light that dispels the dark folly of the unbelieving nations and the glory of the newly chosen Israel. Therefore, release your servant from the bonds of this flesh for the wondrous life that is ageless and unceasing, O you who grant the world your great mercy.'

*Same Tone. By Monk John.<sup>20</sup>*

Today he who of old gave the Law to Moses on Sinai bows to the ordinances of the Law, having become for us like us in his compassion. Now God, who is pure, having opened a pure womb as a holy child, as God is being offered to himself, freeing us from the curse of the Law<sup>21</sup> and enlightening our souls.

*Tone 2. By Andrew Pyros.*

The One whom the Ministers on high entreat with trembling, now Symeon below, receiving him in arms of matter, proclaims that Godhead is united

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<sup>16</sup> Note in the Menaion. 'Instead of the above reading, the manuscripts have another from the prophecy of Ezekiel 43 & 44 [i.e. the normal one for the Mother of God]. While what seems to be the oldest of the manuscripts has neither it, nor a Liti, nor Kathismata, but only the Aposticha with one Doxastikon in the same Tone, "A light for revelation of the nations", which is to be found at Vespers on the 4th of the month.'

<sup>17</sup> Probably Anatolios the Studite, c. 770.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel 7,13 [LXX]. The Church normally uses Theodotion's version of Daniel, but some of the Greek and Syriac texts suppose the Septuagint. In this version we read, 'The Son of man was present as Ancient of Days and those who stood round were present with him', not, as in Theodotion and the Aramaic, 'And he reached the Ancient of Days and was brought before him'. These two versions explain why Christ is also given the title 'Ancient of Days, in some liturgical texts.

<sup>19</sup> Colossians 1,26.

<sup>20</sup> Possibly John of Damascus, c. 675-c. 749.

<sup>21</sup> Galatians 3,13.

with mankind. And, seeing the God of heaven as a mortal, as he withdraws from things on earth, he cries out with joy, 'To those in darkness you reveal the light that knows no evening. Lord, glory to you!'

*Same Tone. By Germanos.*

Today Symeon receives in his embrace the Lord of glory, whom Moses saw of old in darkness giving him the Tables of the Law on Sinai. This is he who speaks in the Prophets and is the Maker of the Law. This is he whom David proclaimed, he who is fearful to all, he who has great and rich mercy.

*Same Tone. By Germanos.*

*According to others, by Monk John.*

The sacred Virgin offered the Sacred One in the Sacred Place to the Sacred Minister. Clasp him in his arms, Symeon received him with joy and cried out, 'Now, Master, you release your servant, according to your word, in peace, O Lord.'

*Same Tone. By the same.*

The Creator of heaven and earth was carried today by Symeon the Elder in his arms, for in the Holy Spirit he said, 'Now I have been set free, for I have seen my Saviour.'

*Same Tone. By Anatolios.*

*According to others, Andrew of Jerusalem.*

Today Symeon the Elder enters the Temple, rejoicing in Spirit to receive in his arms the One who gave the Law to Moses and who fulfils the Law. For Moses was counted worthy to see God through darkness and a faint voice,<sup>22</sup> and with his face veiled<sup>23</sup> he rebuked the unbelieving hearts of the Hebrews. While Symeon carried the pre-eternal Word of the Father incarnate in body and he revealed the light of the Nations, the Cross and Resurrection. And Anna was shown to be a Prophetess as she proclaimed the Saviour to be the Redeemer of Israel. To him let us cry, 'Christ our God, through the Mother of God have mercy on us.'

*Tone 4. By Andrew of Crete.*

Today the holy Mother, and more exalted than the Holy Place, has come to the Holy Place, revealing to the world the Maker of the world and the Giver of the Law. The Elder Symeon received him in his arms and in worship he cried, 'Now you release your servant, because I have seen you, the Saviour of our souls.'

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<sup>22</sup> I do not know of a passage where the voice of God on Sinai is described as 'faint'.

<sup>23</sup> Exodus 34,29-33.

Glory. *Tone 5. By the same.*

Search the Scriptures,<sup>24</sup> as Christ our God said in the Gospels, for in them we find him brought to birth and wrapped in swaddling clothes, nursed and given suck, accepting circumcision and carried by Symeon, not in imagination, but in truth appearing to the world. To him let us cry, 'God before the ages, glory to you!'

*Both now. Same Tone. By Germanos.*

*According to others, Anatolios.*

The Ancient of Days, become an infant in the flesh, is being brought to the Temple by a Virgin Mother, as he fulfils the ordinance of his own Law. Symeon received him and said, 'Now you release your servant according to your word in peace. For my eyes, O Lord, have seen your salvation.'

*At the Aposticha, Idiomels.*

*Tone 7. By Monk Kosmas.<sup>25</sup>*

Adorn your bridal chamber, O Sion, and receive Christ the King. Greet Mary, the gate of heaven,<sup>26</sup> for she is shown to be the Cherubim Throne.<sup>27</sup> She carries the King of glory.<sup>28</sup> The Virgin is a cloud of light,<sup>29</sup> bearing in the flesh a Son before the Morning Star.<sup>30</sup> Symeon took him in his arms and proclaimed to peoples that he is the Master of life and death and the Saviour of the world.

*Verse:* Now, Master, you release your servant in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples.

The Mother who has not known wedlock, bearing in the Temple him who shone forth from the Father before the ages and in the last times from a virgin womb, brought the one who gave the Law on Sinai and who obeys the ordinance of the Law to the Priest<sup>31</sup> and just Elder, who had been told that he would see Christ the Lord. When Symeon received him in his arms, he re-

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<sup>24</sup> John 5,39.

<sup>25</sup> Kosmas the Melodist, c. 685-c. 750. This Idiomel is used in the Western office for the feast, but the translation is inaccurate, or based on a defective original.

<sup>26</sup> Gen. 28.17.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 79,2; Ezek. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Psa. 23. The phrase only occurs in Psalm 23.

<sup>29</sup> The image of the cloud suggests a number of biblical passages. There is the cloud in the desert and which comes down upon the Tent of Meeting, particularly in Exodus and Numbers. The Cloud reappears in connection with the consecration of the Temple in 3 Reigns 8. It also occurs in the visions of the Chariot in Ezekiel. This Cloud is always a cloud of glory. There is also the 'light cloud' in Isaia 19.1, which is used typologically of the Mother of God.

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 109,3.

<sup>31</sup> The liturgical and iconographic tradition regards Symeon as a priest. An inauthentic passage from St Athanasius makes the same identification (PG 28.64).

joiced and cried out, 'This is God, co-eternal with the Father, and the Redeemer of our souls.'<sup>32</sup>

*Verse:* Light for revelation to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.

Mary the Mother of God, carrying in her arms the one who rides on the chariots of the Cherubim<sup>33</sup> and who is praised in song by the Seraphim, gave the Giver of the Law incarnate from her without wedlock, fulfilling the order of the Law, into the hands of the Priest and Elder. As he carries Life, he asks release from life, saying, 'Master, now release me to reveal to Adam that I have seen a babe, who is without change God before the ages and the Saviour of the world.'

Glory. Both now. *Tone 8.*

*By Andrew of Crete.*

He who rides on the Cherubim and is hymned by the Seraphim is being brought today into God's Temple according to the Law and enthroned on aged arms. By Joseph he receives gifts befitting God, as a pair of turtle doves the unblemished Church and the newly chosen people of the nations; as Author of the Old and New Covenants, two young pigeons. Symeon, having received the fulfilment of the oracle concerning him, blessed Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and foretold the symbols of the Passion of the One born from her. From him he asks for his release, crying out, 'Now you release me, Master, as you promised me; for I have seen you, the eternal light, Saviour and Lord of the people that bears Christ's name.'

*Apolytikion. Tone 1.*

Hail, full of grace, Virgin Mother of God, for from you there dawned the Sun of righteousness, Christ our God, who enlightens those in darkness. Be glad too, righteous Elder, for you received in your embrace the Liberator of our souls, who grants us also resurrection.<sup>34</sup>

## AT MATINS

*After the 1st reading from the Psalter, Kathisma. Tone 1. Model Melody.*

*[By Romanos.]*<sup>35</sup>

Let the angelic choir be amazed at the wonder, and let us mortals with our voices shout aloud a hymn of praise, as we see the ineffable condescension of God; for the One at whom the powers of heaven tremble aged hands now cradle, the only Lover of mankind.

Glory. Both now. *The same again.*

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<sup>32</sup> Many of the ideas in this sticheron are also to be found in Romanos's Kontakion for the feast.

<sup>33</sup> Ezek. 1; Ecclus. 49,8.

<sup>34</sup> Luke 2,34.

<sup>35</sup> c. 540. This is one of the three *Proemia* to St Romanos's Kontakion for the feast.



*After the 2nd reading from the Psalter, Kathisma. Tone 1. Same melody.*

He who is with the Father on a holy throne, coming to earth, was born from a Virgin; and he who is uncircumscribed by time became a babe. Symeon received him in his arms and said with joy, 'Now you release me, O Compassionate, for you have made your servant glad.'

Glory. Both now. *The same again.*

*After the Polyeleos. Kathisma.*

*Tone 4. Joseph was amazed.*

The Ancient of Days becomes an infant for my sake. God, who is most pure, shares in purifications that he may confirm my flesh, which he took from a Virgin. And Symeon, initiated into the mystery, acknowledged him as God who had appeared in flesh and greeted him as Life. As an old man with joy he cried, 'Release me, for I have seen you, the Life of all.'

Glory. Both now. *The same again.*

*The 1st Antiphon of the Anavathmi in the 4th Tone.*

From my youth up many passions make war on me; but you, O Saviour, help me and save me. (x2)

You who hate Sion, may you be put to shame by the Lord; for you will be dried up as grass by fire. (x2)

Glory.

By the Holy Spirit every soul is given life, by cleansing it is exalted, it is made bright by the threefold Unity in a sacred mystery.

Both now.

By the Holy Spirit every soul is given life, by cleansing it is exalted, it is made bright by the threefold Unity in a sacred mystery.

*Prokeimenon. Tone 4. [Psalm 44]*

I will remember your name throughout all generations.

*Verse:* My heart has uttered a good Word. I tell my works to the King.

*Then,* Let everything that has breath.

*Gospel according to Luke [2,25-32].*

*Psalm 50.*

Glory.

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Merciful One, blot out the multitude of my transgressions.

Both now.

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Merciful One, blot out the multitude of my transgressions

*Verse:* Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy. According to the fullness of your compassion blot out my offences.

*Then the following Idiomel.*

*Tone 6. By Monk John.*

Let heaven's gate be opened today. For he who is without beginning, the Word of the Father, taking a beginning in time, yet not abandoning his god-head, is being willingly brought into the temple of the law as a babe of forty days by a Virgin Mother, and the Elder receives him in his arms. The servant cries to the Master, 'Release me, for my eyes have seen your salvation'. You have come into the world to save the human race. Lord, glory to you!

*The Canon, of which the Acrostic is:*

With joy an Elder holds Christ in his arms.

*The Irmi are used as Katavasias.*

*A Composition by Monk Kosmas.*

*Ode 1. Tone 3. The Irmos.*

"The sun once shone on dry land, mother of the deep.<sup>36</sup> For the water was fixed fast like a wall on either side for the people as they marched on foot<sup>37</sup> and sang a song pleasing to God, 'Let us sing to the Lord, for he has been greatly glorified'.<sup>38</sup>"

Let the clouds pour down water.<sup>39</sup> For Christ, the Sun, riding on a light cloud,<sup>40</sup> has come on unblemished arms into the temple as a babe. Therefore, believers, let us shout aloud, 'Let us sing to the Lord, for he has been greatly glorified'.

Be strong, Symeon's hands, weakened by old age.<sup>41</sup> And you, an old man's feeble legs, run straight to meet Christ. Forming a choir with the Bodiless Powers, let us sing to the Lord, for he has been greatly glorified.

You heavens, stretched out with understanding, rejoice. Earth be glad.<sup>42</sup> For Christ, the Craftsman,<sup>43</sup> who came forth from a bosom that is above all god-head,<sup>44</sup> is being brought as a babe to God the Father by a Virgin Mother, he who is before all things, for he has been greatly glorified'.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Job 38,8: 'I shut in the sea with gates, when it burst out as it came from its mother's womb'. Cf. also Gen. 7,11; Exod. 19,4.

<sup>37</sup> Exod. 14,22.

<sup>38</sup> Exod. 15,1.

<sup>39</sup> Isaias 45,8. The LXX reads, 'Let the heaven above rejoice, and let the clouds pour down justice'.

<sup>40</sup> Isaias 19,1.

<sup>41</sup> Isaias 35,3.

<sup>42</sup> Psalm 103,2; 135,5; Isaias 49,13.

<sup>43</sup> Wisdom 13,1.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. John 1,18.

*Ode 3. The Irmos.*

“O Lord, the firm foundation of those trust in you, confirm the Church,<sup>45</sup> which you purchased with your precious blood.”

The First-born of the Father before the ages<sup>46</sup> has appeared from an undefiled Maiden as a first-born babe, and he stretches out his hands to Adam.

To set right again the first formed man, who through deception had become childish in mind,<sup>47</sup> God the Word has appeared as a child.

The Creator, having become a child without change, has reshaped according to the form of his godhead our nature born of earth and destined to return to earth again.<sup>48</sup>

*Kathisma. Tone 4. Joseph was amazed.*

On Mount Sinai of old, Moses saw the back parts of God and was found worthy to hear faintly in darkness and in storm the voice of God.<sup>49</sup> Now Symeon holds in his arms God incarnate for our sake without change. And rejoicing he hastens to go from what is here to eternal life. And so he cries, ‘Now, Master, you release your servant.’

*Ode 4. The Irmos.*

“Your virtue, O Christ, covered the heavens,<sup>50</sup> for coming forth from the Ark of your Sanctification,<sup>51</sup> your undefiled Mother, you appeared in the temple of your glory<sup>52</sup> as an infant carried in her arms, and the universe was filled with your praise.”<sup>53</sup>

‘Symeon, initiate of ineffable mysteries’, cried the Mother of God, ‘Take into your arms with joy the One of whom you were told by the Holy Spirit of old, Christ the Word, become an infant, and cry out to him, “The universe has been filled with your praise.”’

‘Symeon, receive with joy an infant in age, the Consolation of the Israel of God, for whom you hoped, Christ, the Maker and Master of the Law, as he fulfils the order of the Law, and cry out to him, “The universe has been filled with your praise”’<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> The words translated ‘firm foundation’ and ‘make firm’ recall the biblical text of the third ode. ‘My heart has been made firm in the Lord’ (I Reigns 2,1).

<sup>46</sup> Col. 1,15.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 14,20.

<sup>48</sup> Gen. 3,19.

<sup>49</sup> Exodus 19,16-19.21; 33,19-23.

<sup>50</sup> Avvakoum 3,3. This chapter forms the fourth biblical ode. This verse is said by the priest at the Proskimidi, as he puts the veil over the chalice.

<sup>51</sup> Psalm 131,8.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel 3,53.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Avvakoum 3,3: ‘And the earth is full of your praise’.

<sup>54</sup> I have assumed that this Troparion is part of the Mother of God’s words to Symeon.

As Symeon watched the Word incarnate, who is without beginning, riding on the Virgin, as on the throne of the Cherubim,<sup>55</sup> him the cause of the existence of all things, as a babe, in amazement he cried out to him, 'The universe has been filled with your praise.'

*Ode 5. The Irmos.*

"When Isaias in a figure saw God on an exalted throne,<sup>56</sup> escorted by Angels of glory, 'Woe is me!' he cried, for I have seen beforehand God in a body, Lord of the light that knows no evening and Lord of peace.'"<sup>57</sup>

When the godly Elder saw the Word held in the hands of his Mother, he understood that this was the glory revealed of old to the Prophet. He cried out, 'Rejoice, holy Lady, for, like a throne, you hold God, Lord of the light that knows no evening and Lord of peace'.

The Elder, bending down and reverently touching the footprints of God's Mother, who did not know wedlock, said, 'Pure Virgin you carry fire.<sup>58</sup> I tremble to take God as a infant in my arms, Lord of the light that knows no evening and Lord of peace.'

'Isaias was cleansed when he received the coal from the Seraphim', cried the Elder to God's Mother, 'You, with your hands as with tongs, make me resplendent as you give me the one you carry, Lord of the light that knows no evening and Lord of peace.'<sup>59</sup>

*Ode 6. The Irmos.*

"The Elder having seen with his eyes, the salvation that had come to the people, cried aloud to you, 'O Christ, who come from God, 'You are my God!'"<sup>60</sup>

'You have been set up in Sion as a stumbling stone and rock of offence<sup>61</sup> for the disobedient, unbreakable salvation of believers.

'Truly bearing the imprint<sup>62</sup> of him who begot you before the ages, through compassion for mortals you have now put on their weakness.

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ezekiel 1.

<sup>56</sup> A type, or figure, of the Mother of God.

<sup>57</sup> Much of this ode is based on Isaias, from whom the fifth biblical ode (26,9-20) is taken. The Irmos refers to Isaias 6,1-7. 'Escorted' is the word used of the Angels in the Cherubic Hymn. The last two lines, which are somewhat freely translated for reasons of rhythm, may be inspired by Isaias 26,9.12. The earliest attested use of the word 'that knows no evening' is in Origen.

<sup>58</sup> This prepares for the allusion to Isaias 6,6-7 in the next Troparion.

<sup>59</sup> This typology of the burning coal is common in the texts, though more frequently it is used of the Eucharist. The word in Greek for the 'spoon' used to give Communion to the faithful really means 'a pair of tongs', with a direct allusion to the vision of Isaias. Immediately after receiving Communion the priest is directed to say Isaias 6,7.

<sup>60</sup> This Irmos paraphrases the *Nunc dimittis*. The word for 'cried aloud' is that used of Jonas (2,3), whose prayer forms the sixth biblical ode.

<sup>61</sup> Isaias 8,14; 28,16; Luke 2,24; 1 Peter 2,7.

'I have worshipped you, Son of the Most High, Son of a Virgin, God become a little child. Now release me in peace.'<sup>63</sup>

*Kontakion. Tone 1. By Romanos.*

You sanctified a virgin womb by your birth,  
And fittingly blessed Symeon's hands;  
You have come now too and saved us, O Christ God.  
But give peace to your commonwealth in times of war,  
And strengthen its Rulers, whose friend you are,  
Only Lover of mankind.

*Ikos*

Let us run to the Mother of God if we wish to see her Son  
Being brought to Symeon.  
From heaven the Bodiless Ones are amazed as they look on him and say,  
'Wondrous and marvellous'<sup>64</sup>, incomprehensible, ineffable are the things we  
now see,  
For the One who created Adam is being carried<sup>65</sup> as a babe;  
The uncontainable is contained in the arms of the elder;<sup>66</sup>  
He who is in the uncircumscribed bosom of his Father<sup>67</sup>  
Is willingly circumscribed in flesh, but not in godhead,  
The only Lover of mankind'.

*Synaxarion.*

On the 2nd of the month, the Meeting of our Lord, Jesus Christ, when the righteous Symeon received him into his arms.

*Verses.*

The hands of Symeon that carry you  
The Father's bosom typify, my Christ.  
Christ in his arms Symeon on the second received in the Temple.

Forty days having passed since the incarnation of the Lord's salvation, the nativity from the Ever-Virgin without husband, our Lord Jesus Christ was brought on this most honoured day into the temple by his all-pure Mother and the just Joseph, in accordance with the shadowy letter of the Law. When the aged Symeon, the Elder, to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ, had received him in his arms and given thanks and glory to God, he cried out, 'Now, Master, you release your servant according to your word'. And after his great joys he departed from life here, having

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<sup>62</sup> Hebrews 1,3.

<sup>63</sup> The last troparion implies that the whole Ode is spoken by Symeon.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Luke 5,26.

<sup>65</sup> In an early Syriac hymn attributed to St Ephrem we find a similar idea, 'Mary carried a child who by his wisdom begot Adam'.

<sup>66</sup> This is reminiscent of St Cyril of Jerusalem's homily. 'He who grasps the whole earth in his hand is contained in the arms of an elder. And he who bears the universe by the word of his power is being carried'. PG 33,1196.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. John 1,18.

received heavenly and unending in exchange for those of earth. This assembly is held in the revered house of our immaculate Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, which is in Vlachernae.

On the same day, Commemoration of the holy Martyr, Agathodoros.

*Verses.*

To Agathódoros, a gift [δῶρον] to God  
Through blood, I give [δωρῶ] a gift out of my words.

As a young man he was brought before the Governor of Tyana, and because of his confession of Christ, he was flogged. Then he was placed on a burning brazier. His tongue was cut out with a knife. His teeth were pulled out with forceps. The skin of his face was removed with a razor. His thighs and legs were smashed. His sides were pierced through with a pole. The membrane of his brain<sup>68</sup> received red hot skewers. And so he yielded his spirit to God.

To God the glory and the might to the ages. Amen.

*Ode 7. The Irmos.*

“God the Word, who in the fire dropped dew upon the Youths as they sang of God<sup>69</sup> and who dwelt in an undefiled Virgin, we praise you as we devoutly sing, ‘Blessed are you the God of our Fathers’<sup>70</sup>.”

‘I go to bring revelation to Adam, who sojourns in Hell, to declare to Eve the good tidings’<sup>71</sup> Symeon cried out, as with the choir of Prophets he sang, ‘Blessed are you the God of our Fathers’.

To deliver a race formed of dust<sup>72</sup> God will come to Hell and will grant forgiveness to all the prisoners, sight to the blind and so that the dumb may cry,<sup>73</sup> ‘Blessed are you the God of our Fathers’.

‘And a sword will pass through your heart, O Undefiled,’<sup>74</sup> Symeon foretold to the Mother of God, ‘When you see you Son on the Cross.’ To him we cry, ‘Blessed are you the God of our Fathers’.

*Ode 8. The Irmos.*

“United in the unquenchable fire, the Young Men, champions of piety, yet unharmed by the flame, raised their hymn to God, ‘Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord, and praise and exalt him to all the ages.’”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The meaning is unclear, since the word also means ‘the membrane of the eyes’, or ‘the ear-drums’.

<sup>69</sup> Daniel 3,49-50.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel 3,52.

<sup>71</sup> This idea is already found, in much developed form, in St Romanos’s kontakion, stanzas 14-17.

<sup>72</sup> Gen. 2,7.

<sup>73</sup> Isaias 61,1.

<sup>74</sup> Luke 2,35.

<sup>75</sup> Daniel 3,57.

People of Israel, as you see your glory,<sup>76</sup> Emmanuel, a child from a Virgin, now dance before the Ark of God<sup>77</sup> and sing, 'Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord, and praise and exalt him to all the ages.'

'See,' cried Symeon, 'he will be the sign that will be contradicted,<sup>78</sup> for he is God and a little child.' To him let us sing with faith, 'Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord, and praise and exalt him to all the ages.'

He that is life, God the Word become a babe, will be the fall of the disobedient, but resurrection for those who sing with faith,<sup>79</sup> 'Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord, and praise and exalt him to all the ages.'

*Ode 9.*

*Megalynaria sung with this Ode.*<sup>80</sup>

That which is fulfilled in you is beyond the understanding both of Angels and of mortals, O pure Virgin Mother.

Symeon the Elder embraces in his arms the Maker of the Law and Master of all.

The Creator, wishing to save Adam, took up his dwelling in your virgin womb.

The whole race of mortals calls you blessed, pure Virgin, and glorifies you with faith as Mother of God.

Come and see Christ, the Master of all, whom Symeon carries today in the temple.

You look upon the earth and make it tremble;<sup>81</sup> how then can I, aged and weary, hold you in my arms?

Symeon had lived for many years when he saw Christ, and cried aloud to him, 'Now I seek my release.'

Mary, you are the mystic tongs who conceived in your womb Christ, the burning coal.<sup>82</sup>

O God, who are before all things, of your own will you became man, and are carried in the temple as a child of forty days.

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<sup>76</sup> Luke 2,32.

<sup>77</sup> Like David (2 Kingdoms 6). The Ark is the Mother of God.

<sup>78</sup> Luke 2,34.

<sup>79</sup> Luke 2,34. The Greek word means both 'rise' and 'resurrection'

<sup>80</sup> In Greek these Megalynaria have an alphabetical acrostic from A to O, but omitting I and X. The letter Alpha begins both the first and second. This gives a total of fourteen, the normal number of Troparia in a Canon. The last two do not form part of the acrostic, and seem to be a later addition. They bring the total to the unusual number of sixteen. The Slavonic set are, for the most part, quite different. They number only fourteen.

<sup>81</sup> Psalm 103,31.

<sup>82</sup> Isaias 6,6.

Symeon the priest received the Master of all, come down from heaven.

Make bright my soul and the light of my senses, that I may see you in purity, and I will proclaim that you are God.

Pure Virgin Mother, why do you bring into the temple a new-born babe and commit him to Symeon's hands?

From you, the Creator, I now seek release, for I have seen you, O Christ, my salvation and my light.

Him whom the ministers at the liturgy on high entreat with trembling, here below Symeon now takes in his arms.

Glory.

In nature Unity, but in Persons Trinity, watch over your servants who put their faith in you.

Both now.

Mother of God, hope of all Christians, protect, watch over, guard all those who put their hope in you.

*The Irmos.*

"In the shadow and letter of the Law, Let us the faithful discern a figure. 'Every male child that opens the womb shall be holy to God.'<sup>83</sup> Therefore the Word, firstborn Son of a Father who has no beginning, the firstborn child of a Mother who had not known man, we magnify."

For those of old there was a pair of doves and two young pigeons.<sup>84</sup> In their place the godly Elder and Anna the sober prophetess, ministering to the One born from a Virgin and only offspring of the Father as he enters the temple, magnify him.

'You have granted me, O Christ, the joy of your salvation', cried Symeon, 'Take your servant, wearied by the shadow, as a new initiate and preacher of grace, as with praise he magnifies you.'

Reverently holy Anna, sober and aged, openly confessed the Master, announcing him clearly in the temple. While as she proclaimed the Mother of God to all those present, she magnified her.

*Exapostilarion. Model melody.*

Coming to the Temple by the Spirit, the Elder received in his arms the Master of the Law and cried, 'Now release me from the bond of the flesh in peace, as you said. For I have seen with my eyes the revelation of the Nations and the salvation of Israel'. [x3]

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<sup>83</sup> Exodus 13,2.

<sup>84</sup> Leviticus 12,8.



*At Lauds we insert 4 Stichera and sing three Prosomia, doubling the first.*

*Tone 4. You have given as a sign.*

Fulfilling the written Law, the Lover of mankind is now being brought into the Temple. And Symeon the Elder receives him in aged arms, crying, 'Now you release me to the blessedness of the other world, for today I have seen you, clothed in mortal flesh, the Lord of life and Master of death.'

Light for revelation to the nations, you, Lord, the Sun of justice, appeared, seated on a light cloud<sup>85</sup>, bringing to completion the shadow of the Law and making manifest the beginning of the new Grace.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, as he looked on you, Symeon cried aloud, 'Release me from corruption, for I have seen you today.'

Not parted in your Godhead from the bosom of your Begetter; incarnate, as you were well-pleased; held in the arms of the Ever-Virgin, you, who hold the universe in your hand, were given into the hands of Symeon, who received God<sup>87</sup>. And so he cried aloud with joy, 'Now you release me, your servant, in peace, for I have seen you, Master.'

*Glory. Both now. Tone 6.*

*By Germanos.*

Christ God, who today were well-pleased to be laid in aged hands, as upon the chariot of the Cherubim, calling us, who sing your praise, back from the tyranny of the passions, deliver and save our souls.

*Great Doxology and Dismissal.*

## AT THE LITURGY

*Typika and from the 3rd and 6th Odes of the Canon.*

*Entrance.*

The Lord has made known his salvation before all the nations.

Son of God, carried in the arms of righteous Symeon, save us who sing to you. Alleluia!

*At, It is truly right.*

Mother of God, hope of all Christians, protect, watch over, guard all those who put their hope in you.

In the shadow and letter of the Law, Let us the faithful discern a figure. 'Every male child that opens the womb shall be holy to God.' Therefore the Son and Word of the Father who has no beginning, the firstborn child of a Mother who had not known man, we magnify.

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<sup>85</sup> Isaias 19,1.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. John 1,17.

<sup>87</sup> In Greek Θεοδόχος.

*Communion.*

I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. Alleluia.

*Or the following Antiphons.*

*Antiphon 1.*

*Verse 1:* My heart has uttered a good Word, I tell my works to the King.

At the prayers of the Mother of God...

*Verse 2:* My tongue is the pen of ready writer.

At the prayers of the Mother of God...

*Verse 3:* Grace was poured from your lips.

At the prayers of the Mother of God...

Glory. Both now.

*Verse 4:* Therefore God has blessed you for ever.

*Antiphon 2.*

*Verse 1:* Gird your sword on your thigh, mighty warrior, in your splendour and beauty.

Son of God, carried in the arms of righteous Symeon, save us who sing to you.  
Alleluia!

*Verse 2:* Draw your bow and prosper, and reign.

Son of God, carried in the arms of righteous Symeon, save us who sing to you.  
Alleluia!

*Verse 3:* Your arrows have been sharpened, O Mighty One; peoples will fall beneath you.

Son of God, carried in the arms of righteous Symeon, save us who sing to you.  
Alleluia!

*Verse 4:* The sceptre of your Kingdom is a rod of justice.

Glory. Both now.

Only-begotten Son...

*Antiphon 3.*

*Verse 1:* Listen my daughter and see, and incline your ear.

Hail, full of grace, Virgin Mother of God...

*Verse 2:* , The richest of the people will entreat your favour.

Hail, full of grace, Virgin Mother of God...

*Verse 3:* I will remember your name throughout all generations.

Hail, full of grace, Virgin Mother of God...