

My Beloved Ones,

This coming Sunday we are blessed, not only to welcome the coming of a new Ecclesiastical Year, but to celebrate the memory of St. Simeon the Stylite, or pillar dweller.

St. Simeon felt called to the monastic life from a very young age, being moved at hearing the Beatitudes. So great was his zeal, that after he entered a monastery in Syria, he was asked to leave, for the Abbot was afraid that the Brothers would put themselves in danger by imitating Simeon's strict fasts. Not discouraged, but trusting in God, Simeon departed for a nearby mountain, where he lived inside an unused well.

However, his example became so well-known, that many people came to seek his healing touch, including his former monastic brothers. Unwilling to be tempted, the blessed Simeon climbed a pillar, praying and fasting, attending to the spiritual pilgrims (who climbed a nearby ladder to reach him), and even corresponding through letters.



He excelled in his practice, standing in prayer for over forty years, even when one of his legs became dangerously swollen, and despite the weakness his spiritual exercises caused to other parts of his body. In spite of some misgivings from those who first considered his practice one of pride, his strength eventually became known throughout the Christian world, and among those considered his faithful students were the Roman Emperor Theodosios II, and St. Genevieve of Paris. Tradition holds that thousands of Arabs were baptized into the Orthodox faith because of his teachings, and even the Queen of Persia requested blessed oil from the Saint.

Over time, the crowds became so great that taller pillars were built, until his fourth and final dwelling was near fifty feet high. After many years of teaching, preaching and praying, the blessed St. Simeon fell asleep at the age of 69, in the year 459.

My beloved ones, as we prepare to embark upon this time of rebirth, may we reflect on the person of St. Simeon, who, despite his life of struggles, demonstrated true tenderness towards his spiritual children. Though we shall not all undertake the practices of a Stylite, may we use his tenderness and strength as examples to guide our own behavior, now and always.

**+ALEXIOS**  
Metropolitan of Atlanta