

Let us offer our children to God

In the service of the 40 day blessing of our Church, the mother offers a child to God through the Priest, and he after the “Now let thy servant depart...” and the dismissal he returns him to the parents to raise him as God wants. We don’t know if the parents have realized their truly great responsibility. We often see children wanting to struggle spiritually, wanting to live as the Church wants us, possibly thinking of monasticism and the priesthood, and facing unsurpassable obstacles from home, a fierce demonic battle from those in their home and relatives who forget the responsibility which they undertook. Thus is verified the gospel phrase “enemies of the man will be those of his home” (Mat. 10:36), from the lips of Christ Himself. Thus His saying, a sharp double-edged sword, reaches up to the most narrow human relationships as that of the parent and of the child, of the parents with each other, of relatives with each other etc..

Many have experienced the battle which literally merely the name of Christ “raises up” in other people, even in the person himself, many times causing disturbance to his old self. However, beloved brethren, let the name of Christ always inspire us, that the world on the one hand lies in wickedness but we should be courageous because He has defeated the world and its wickedness.

Archim. E. T.

SUNDAY February 2, 2014 The Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple, Gabriel the New Martyr of Constantinople, Jordan the New Martyr, Agathodoros the Martyr of Cappadocia

Tone Grave, Eothinon Festal, - Epistle St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy 4:9-15, Gospel Luke 19:1-10

NEXT SUNDAY Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: Triodion Begins Today, Leavetaking of the Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple, Markellos, Philagrios, & Pankratios the Hieromartyrs
Epistle St. Paul's Letter to Timothy 3:10-15, Gospel Luke 18:10-14



62nd Year

February 2, 2014

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WELCOMING CHRIST IN THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE BODY

The Presentation (welcoming) of Christ is one of the most important feasts of our Church, full of meanings and symbolisms. According to the Mosaic law, if the first child which a woman would bring in the world were a boy, it had to be considered dedicated to the Lord and the parents would offer a sacrifice of five golden drachmas and a one year old lamb or a pair of turtle doves or two little pigeons if they were poor. The firstborn male children had been preserved in Egypt, when the angel of the Lord murdered the firstborn of the Egyptians. Consequently they “owed them” to God.

The righteous Symeon

The righteous Symeon was faithful and pious, he loved God very much so for this reason also God had promised him that before he would die, he would see the Messiah.

The Holy Spirit indicated to Symeon to go to the Temple of Jerusalem on the day when Joseph and Mary would take the 40 day old infant there. In his person he recognized the Savior of the world. According to Saint Gregory Palamas, his elderly hands received special grace from God because they lifted up the Divine Infant.

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR IN THE TEMPLE

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 2:22-40

At that time, the parents brought the child Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Symeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Symeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord,

they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Symeon glorified God, since he was granted to hold in his hands the Christ now he is asking for the loosening of the soul from his body. He does not fear death, he awaits it as a comfort. On the contrary he seeks it, to become, according to Athanasios the Great, the first preacher of Christ in Hades, even before the infants who will be slaughtered a little later during the reign of Herod manage to preach Christ.

A disputed sign a crucified God

Symeon informs the Virgin Mary that Christ would be a disputed sign, he would be the cause of the falling and saving of many. Truly the person of Christ divides History and the human multitudes. History in the age before and after Christ and people in those who will believe Him and in those who will reject Him. The presence of Christ alone comprises a judgement for all of us. Our attitude towards Him comprises our salvation or our condemnation.

Addressing the Virgin Mary he gives her a particular notification, in other words, that a sword will pierce her heart, obviously meaning the pain which she will experience when she will see her only begotten son lifted up onto the wood of the Cross.

Aside from Symeon there also was in the Temple a woman prophetess, a virtuous widow, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She also did not cease worshiping God day and night in the services, fasting and keeping vigil. She also glorified God, and was speaking about the child. Old age honored by God, models worthy of imitation for all elderly men and women of today's age!