

## February 2, Feast of the Presentation of Christ to the Temple



On February 2, the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of Christ to the Temple. The Church also refers to this Feast as the Synaxis (or meeting) of our Lord in the temple.

The fortieth day after His birth, the All-holy Virgin brought her divine Son into the Temple of Jerusalem, to dedicate Him to God and to purify herself.

In accordance with the Mosaic law, 40 days after the birth of a child the mother is required to present the child in the tabernacle and offer as a sacrifice either a lamb or a pair of doves or pigeons for her purification.

The presentation of a first-born son also signified redemption or buying back, for all first-born creatures (both humans and animals) were considered to belong to God.

Virgin Mary and Joseph obeyed this precept of the law. They brought Jesus to the Temple where he was met and blessed by a very old Holy man.

On that day in the Temple, both Simeon and a woman by the name of Anna, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recognised the infant Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

Simeon had been promised by God that he would live to witness the coming of the Messiah to the world. These events are the subject of today's Gospel reading. (Luke 2:22-40)

Imagine this blessed scene, of an old man – barely able to hold himself upright due to his advanced years- fully attired in the Traditional clothing of the High Priest of the Temple, cradling the infant Jesus in his arms. It is the meeting of the Old Testament Priesthood in the Temple with the New Testament Priesthood in Christ. And hence the naming of this Feast day as the “Synaxis” or Meeting of our Lord in the Temple.

The Church today calls each one of us to make our Soul a Temple of God, where the Holy Virgin can bring her Divine Child. And each one of us should, like Simeon, take the Child in our arms and say to the Father:

“My eyes have seen your salvation, now let your servant depart in peace”.

This Prayer of Simeon is used every day in the Vespers services of the Orthodox Church. But this prayer should be more to us than a description of someone who has been allowed to see and hold the Christ child requesting a peaceful departure.

It should also mean for us, in particular, that having seen and touched the Saviour, we are released from the hold that sin has on us, and in peace, we can leave the realm of evil.

Today is also the name day of Ypapanti, Ypakoi.

Xronia Polla!



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