



My Beloved Ones,

As we prepare to begin the period of Triodion, this week an important Feast of our Lord allows us to look back on the Nativity, and ahead to Great Lent and Holy Week, as we consider the virtue of patience, υπομονή.

This Sunday, February 2nd, 40 days after Christmas, is a commemoration of The Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple. Mary and Joseph, being devout Jews, remembered God's Law: that the first-born son should be taken to the Temple 40 days after his birth, so that the boy might be dedicated to God. According to the command, the parents were expected to make a sacrifice: if they were wealthy, they were to offer a lamb, a pigeon or a young turtledove. However, as His guardian and Mother, Joseph and Mary, were poor, they offered two turtledoves.

When Joseph and Mary brought the young Jesus, they were met by the Prophet Simeon, as well as the Prophetess Anna.

Our Church considers both Simeon and Anna the last of the Old Testament Prophets. Simeon was a man who spent many years studying of the Scriptures, and Anna the Prophetess was likely over one hundred, having lived in the Temple as a widow for eighty-four years.

Having read and considered the prophecies, Simeon prayed to God to send the Messiah so that Israel might be delivered. After many years, God declared to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen God's Christ. Therefore, when Mary and Joseph arrived, Simeon was overcome with emotion. Taking the Child in his arms, Simeon said the prayer which we recite at the end of every Vespers: *"Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel."* (Luke 2:29-32)

This feast, which in some ways finally brings Christmas to a close, does not allow us to lose sight of the purpose of the Incarnation. After his prayer of gratitude, Simeon turns to our Lord's Mother and continues to prophesy: *"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 out of many hearts may be revealed."* (Luke 2:34-35). In His divine mission to open the hearts of men, Our Lord will not be accepted by all people. He will be condemned, denied, and crucified—and as Simeon says, Mary will not be spared pain.

I pray that we can take several things as we consider the meaning of this feast. The first, is that if our Ever-Virgin Mary can accept God's own Will, with how much more patience should we greet events in our own lives? Secondly, Simeon was content to wait for years; even before God's promise to him. The Prophetess Anna had spent most of her years in the Temple, awaiting this moment to declare the fulfillment of God's salvation. They did not despair. They studied and fasted, praying and trusting that God would hear them and their deep prayers. May we all do likewise today, through the Triodion, and forever.

+ALEXIOS
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