

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church
Celebrating 125 years witnessing to the Apostolic Faith

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Marblehead, OH 43440

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***Holy Assumption Orthodox Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America,
Diocese of the Midwest***

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

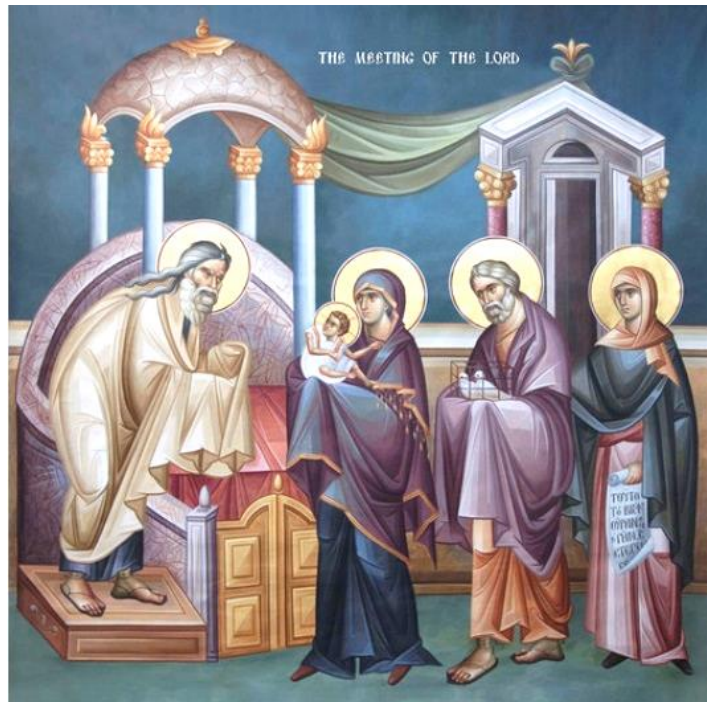
THIRTY SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Sunday of Zacchaeus

The Meeting of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Temple

EPISTLE: 1 Timothy 4:9-15

Brethren: This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end, we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.



The Meeting of our Lord in the Temple

EPISTLE: Hebrews 7:7-17

Brethren: Beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met

him. Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron. For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.

GOSPEL: Luke 19:1-10

At that time, Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

GOSPEL: Luke 2:22-40

When the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who 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 turtledoves or two young pigeons." And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting 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 would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So, he came by the Spirit 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 You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for 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 of Your people Israel." And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of

Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So, when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK

MON. Feb 3	Afterfeast of the Meeting, Holy, Righteous Simeon the God-Receiver and Anna the Prophetess; 1 Peter 2:21-3:9, Mk 12:13-17
TUE. Feb 4	Afterfeast of the Meeting, Venerable Isidore of Pelusium; 1 Peter 3:10-22, Mk 12:18-27
WED. Feb 5	Afterfeast of the Meeting, Martyr Agatha of Palermo in Sicily; 1 Peter 4:1-11, Mk 12:28-37
THU. Feb 6	Afterfeast of the Meeting, Saint Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna; 1 Peter 4:12-5:5, Mk 12:38-44
FRI. Feb 7	Afterfeast of the Meeting, Saint Parthenios, Bishop of Lampsakos; 2 Peter 1:1-10, Mk 13:1-8
SAT. Feb 8	Afterfeast of the Meeting, Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates; 2 Tim:2-11-19, Lk 18:2-8
	4:00 PM VESPERS
SUN. Feb 9	33rd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, <i>Leavetaking of the Meeting, Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee - Tone 8</i>
	9:10 AM HOURS
	9:30 AM DIVINE LITURGY Followed by Coffee Hour



FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Patti Owens, 311 Woodbridge Road, Vermilion, OH 44089; **Basil Glovinsky**, 1007 Glendale Drive, Port Clinton, OH 43452; **Subdeacon Roger Pinta**, P.O. Box 39, Middle Bass, OH 43446; **Ed & Irene Vangeloff**, 454 Strouse Lane, Sandusky, OH 44870



FEBRUARY REPOSED

Helen Hritsko (1908) No date provided; Alexandra Brendza (1909) No date provided; Steve Danchisen (1909) No date provided; **2-** Nancy Pipenur (2018); **5-** Peter Kowal (2004); **6-** Steve Michael Mazur (1970); **6-** Elizabeth Kravetz Mc Mahon (1984); **12-** Glenn Schoonmaker (2002); **12-** Lawrence Beck (2018); **14-** Rose Polosky (1953); **17-** Stanley Guzy (1986); **20-** Linda Sue Alber & infant (1969); **20-** Dc. Mike Cinalli (2020); **21-** Mary Tomka Matso (1956); **21-** John Richard Elchisco (2021); **22-** Metro Mazur (1973); **22-** Marguerite Bird (2022); **23-** George Elchisco Sr. (1961); **23-** Tom Twarek (2024); **26-** Elizabeth Millie (1998); **29-** Mary Uka Kostearly (1996)

PRAYER LIST

Parishioners & Family: Tina Rindfleisch / Norb / Heidi Golob / Ron & Bobbie Royhab / Rodney Clevenger / Jennifer Heffernan / Tom Hileman / Pam / Jim Twarek / Ed Garrity / Patti Owens / Barbara Wroblewski / Michal Tomáš / Helena Tomášová / Ruth Sheller / Basil Glovinsky / Dale / Sophie / Carol / David Martin / Fred Soski / Chris Hannon / Subdeacon Roger Pinta / Ed Vangeloff / Irene Vangeloff / Sonja Rose / Ron Royhab / James Bargdill / John Beadle / Carole Conaway / Gary Conaway / Sharon Dietrich / Michael Glovinsky / Shirley Gresh / Joseph Habegger / Betty Kovach / Child Stella Miller / William Pipenur / Earl Rindfleisch / Helen Jean Rofkar / George Royhab / Marianne Royhab / Kathy Jacob / the child Bodhi Cassell / Gleice, Sophie & Chloe / Carol / Nora.

Other Requests: Tom Osborne / Sarah King / Catechumen Blake Shoemaker / Catechumen Nickolas Dawenport / Catechumen Joshua Paull / Catechumen Danielle Paull / Catechumen Wrenley Paull / Catechumen Joshua Schulden / Catechumen Ryan Stamp / Matushka Melania / Sharyn Osborne / Christine Zahm / Amy / Bill Byrnes / Michael Heffernan / Susanne / Barbara Heffernan / Charles Schlett / Kathy Debevits / Maxwell Chaney / Sidharth Bijilani – friend of Subdeacon Roger and Debbie Pinta / Anthony / Archpriest Ján Čižmár / Archpriest David Lis / Archpriest Emilian & Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan / Donald Gresh / Mark Ludvik / Robert Piznar / Mark Masica / Valerie Ritzenthaler / William / Rick Rowe / Chris.

Military: Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military



VIGILS FOR JANUARY 26

Susan Guzy 1 Safe travel for Matushka Michelle, Memory Eternal for Anthony C. Muratori

Laura Kovach 3 For health and/or healing of Matushka Melania, Ron R., Betty K., Margaret M., David M., Hannah S., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Kathie J., Jerry P., Ed & Irene V, Heidi & Wayne G., Greg T., Sarah K. and Brett D.

Special Intentions

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Sandy Martin 2 God's blessings and peace for Barb, special intentions

Darlene Mazurik 1 Prayers for thanksgiving, health, and guidance

Natalie Twarek 8 Safe travel for Missy and Andy, Safe travel for Matushka Michelle, For the health & recovery of Matushka Melania, For the health and recovery of Kristi's dad, For the health and recovery on Basil, Ron, Rodney, Betty, Carol, Kayla, Pam, Jim, Heidi, Father Emilian, Barbara Heffernan, Health and healing for Father's parents Michal & Helena and Matushka's mom Barbara, and Walter, For the health of Jen, Tony, Bev, Ed, Irene, Father David, Judy, Tina, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Tina's dad, Earl, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Bodhi, Stella, Jake, Pat, Special intentions



FEBRUARY CANDLE SPONSORS

Altar Candles: Fr. Peter and Mat. Michelle, For Health and God's Blessings for Barbara Wroblewski, and Michal & Helena Tomáš (\$50); **Chandelier:** Available (\$50); **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** Available (\$25); **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, In memory of my dad Steven and birthday memory of my mom Margaret (\$20); **Candles at St. Tikhon Icon:** Available (\$20)



READERS LIST

Sunday Feb 2 – Jake
Sunday Feb 9 – Tim
Sunday Feb 16 – Jake



ATTENDANCE

01/25 Vespers, **6** attending; **01/26** Divine Liturgy, **25** attending (3 guests)

UP-COMING EVENTS IN OUR PARISH – MARK YOUR CALENDAR



Feb 20th Monthly social 3rd Thursday 6:00 pm at local restaurant

Feb 22nd Memorial Saturday (*Saturday*)

Mar 3rd Beginning of the Great Fast (*Monday*)

Apr 13th Palm Sunday (*Sunday*)

Apr 20th HOLY PASCHA (*Sunday*)



SUNDAY OFFERING

Sunday, January 26, 2025

Tithe	\$2,165.00
Donations	\$ 6.00
Candles	\$ 91.00
Vigils	\$ 95.00
Building restoration	\$ 100.00
Bookstore	\$ 54.00
Total:	\$2,511.00

May the Lord reward you for your financial and spiritual support!



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

4 – Patti Owens; **5** – Christi Soski; **14** – Sandy Martin; **16** – David Mazurik; **22** – Wayne Golob; **24** – Sonya Rose; **25** – Fellar (Michael) Fay; **25** – Heidi Golob *; **26** – Basil Glovinsky



CHARITY OF THE MONTH

“St. Vladimir's Seminary” is the charity we donate to for the month of February.



BLESSED CANDLES

The annual blessing of candles takes place today after the Divine Liturgy. We invite you to take home a candle from the tetrapod. These 100% beeswax candles are sponsored by the Parish for your private use.



MIDWINTER FEAST

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church is inviting you to their Midwinter Feast which will take place on Saturday February 22nd, 6:00 PM-9:00 PM at Saint Mary Byzantine Church Hall, 506 East Main Street, Marblehead, Ohio.

Dinner with Music. Menu: Cheese and Charcuterie. Garden Salad. Rolls and Butter. Shrimp/Pork Loin with Asparagus/Hollandaise Sauce. Rice/Grains. \$50.00 per person.

BYOB. Silent Auction. Fundraiser for replacement of roofs of parish buildings. Please call 419-626-0375 by February 17th. No tickets at door.

MATUSHKA'S CORNER

Recently, I was fortunate enough to receive, as a gift, a book titled, "The Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God", by St. John Maximovitch, Archbishop and Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco, translated by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose of Platina. It is a beautiful translation and explanation of how and why we, as Orthodox Christians, venerate the beloved Theotokos.

Here is an excerpt that I found powerful and compelling, as it talks about why we preserve sacred tradition, especially concerning the most holy Theotokos and her holy Dormition: *"We must accept entirely and wholeheartedly what the Church hands down to us, taking such pains to preserve sacred tradition all these centuries - and not to choose for oneself what is "important " and what is "dispensable"; for by thinking in self, wiser than sacred tradition, one may end by losing the tradition. Thus, when the Church tells us in her hymns and icons that the Apostles were miraculously gathered from the ends of the earth in order to be present at the repose and burial of the Mother of God, we as Orthodox Christians are not free to deny this or reinterpret it, but must believe as the Church hands it down to us, with simplicity of heart."*

I pray that our holy Mother of God intercedes with boldness before the throne of her Divine Son for all of you, and may she be a source of heavenly joy to all who bear their crosses in this vale of tears, on the path to eternal rejoicing in Christ's Kingdom.

My sincerest thanks to Angela for this book. With love, Matushka Michelle



CLEANING SCHEDULE

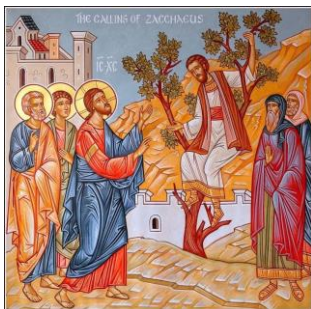
Feb 3, Sandy
Feb 10, Greg
Feb 17, Roddie & David
Feb 24, Bobbie



COFFEE HOUR SPONSOR LIST

Feb 2 – Danielle & Josh
Feb 9 – Available
Feb 16– Available
Feb 23– Parish Potluck Lunch for the Meetfare Sunday

Please sign up to host coffee hour. Signup sheet is located in the Social Hall



Sunday of Zacchaeus

Commemorated on February 2

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is also preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man, and how his life was changed simply because he "sought to see who Jesus was" (Luke 19:3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Pascha. It is the first movement of salvation.

Our lenten journey begins with a recognition of our own sinfulness, just as Zacchaeus recognized his. He promised to make restitution by giving half of his wealth to the poor, and by paying to those he had falsely accused four times as much as they had lost. In this, he went beyond the requirements of the Law (Ex. 22:3-12).

The example of Zacchaeus teaches us that we should turn away from our sins, and atone for them. The real proof of our sorrow and repentance is not just a verbal apology, but when we correct ourselves and try to make amends for the consequences of our evil actions.

We are also assured of God's mercy and compassion by Christ's words to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). After the Great Doxology and Trisagion at Sunday Matins (when the Tone of the week is in Tone 1, 3, 5, or 7) we sing the Troparion of the Resurrection: "Today salvation is come to the world, let us sing praises to Him Who arose from the tomb, and is the Author of our life. For having destroyed death by death, He has given us the victory and great mercy."

Zacchaeus was short, so he climbed a tree in order to see the Lord. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We are also short in our spiritual stature, therefore we must climb the ladder of the virtues. In other words, we must prepare for spiritual effort and growth. Saint Zacchaeus is also commemorated on April 20.



The Meeting of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Temple

Commemorated on February 2

The Meeting of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is described in the third Gospel (Luke 2:22-40). Forty days after His birth the Divine Child was brought to the Temple at Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord. According to the Law of Moses (Lev. 12:2-8), a woman who gave birth to a male child was forbidden to enter the Temple for forty days. At the end of the time of her purification, the mother went to the Temple with the child, to offer a young lamb, two turtledoves, or pigeons to the Lord as a sacrifice. The Most Holy Virgin had no need of purification, since she had given birth to the Source of purity and sanctity. Out of humility, however, she fulfilled the requirements of the Law.

At this time the righteous Elder Simeon (February 3) was living in Jerusalem. It had been revealed to him that he would not die until he beheld the promised Messiah. By divine inspiration, Saint Simeon went to the Temple at the very moment when the Most Holy Theotokos and Saint Joseph had brought the Child Jesus to fulfill the Law.

Saint Simeon received the divine Child in his arms,¹ and giving thanks to God, he spoke the words repeated by the Church each evening at Vespers: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32). Saint Simeon said to the Most Holy Virgin: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

At the Temple was an 84-year-old widow, Saint Anna the Prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel (February 3), "who did not leave the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day." She arrived just when Saint Simeon met the Divine Child. She also gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who were looking for redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). In the icon of the Feast she holds a scroll which reads: "This Child has established Heaven and earth."

Before Christ was born, the righteous men and women lived by faith in the promised Messiah, and awaited His coming. The Righteous Simeon and the Prophetess Anna, the last righteous persons of the Old Testament, were deemed worthy to meet Him in the Temple.

The Feast of the Meeting of the Lord is among the most ancient feasts of the Christian Church. We have sermons by the holy bishops Methodios of Patara (+ 312), Cyril of Jerusalem (+ 360), Gregory the

Theologian (+ 389), Amphilokhios of Iconium (+ 394), Gregory of Nyssa (+ 400), and John Chrysostom (+ 407). Despite its early origin, this Feast was not celebrated so splendidly until the VI century.

In 528, during the reign of Justinian, an earthquake killed many people in Antioch. Other misfortunes followed this one. In 541 a terrible plague broke out in Constantinople, carrying off several thousand people each day. During this time of widespread suffering, a solemn prayer service (Litia) for deliverance from evils was celebrated on the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, and the plague ceased. Giving thanks to God, the Church established a more solemn celebration of this Feast.

Church hymnographers have adorned this Feast with their hymns: Saint Andrew of Crete in the VII century; Saint Cosmas Bishop of Maium, Saint John of Damascus, and Saint Germanus Patriarch of Constantinople in the VIII century; and Saint Joseph, Archbishop of Thessaloniki in the IX century.

Today we also commemorate the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos known as “the Softening of Evil Hearts” or “Simeon’s Prophecy.” The Mother of God is depicted without her Child, and seven swords piercing her breast: three from the left side, three from the right, and one from below.

A similar Icon, “Of the Seven Swords” (August 13) shows three swords on the left side and four from the right. The “Softening of Evil Hearts” Is also commemorated on August 13.

The Icon “Simeon’s Prophecy” symbolizes the fulfillment of the prophecy of the righteous Elder Simeon: “a sword shall pierce through your own soul” (Luke 2:35).

In Constantinople, the Emperors would celebrate the Feast Day at the Blakhernae church during the All-Night Vigil. This custom continued until the Fall of the Byzantine Empire.

1 For this reason, he is known as the God-Receiver (Θεοδόχος).



The Gates of Death *by Hieromonk Gabriel*

Today’s feast has many meanings, many aspects, and even many names. It is sometimes called the Meeting of the Lord, sometimes the Purification of the Virgin, sometimes the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and finally, especially in the West, it is known as Candlemas – the Feast of the Light that shown upon St. Symeon and which we remember by blessing candles on this day. This multiplicity of names and meanings is an indication that today’s feast is situated

at a crossroads: between the Law and the Prophets, between the infancy and the adulthood of Christ, between the Old and the New Covenant. Today, for the first time in history, God Himself enters bodily into the Temple which was made for Him, carried in the arms of Her who is Herself the true Holy of Holies, the Tabernacle more spacious than the heavens. He enters not in a cloud of glory, but in humble poverty, in meekness fulfilling the Law which He Himself gave. And She enters to be purified, she who alone is spotless and undefiled. Here the Righteous Symeon prophecies over Him who is the fulfillment of all the Prophets.

It is no accident that the Holy Church has ordained that this feast be celebrated very near to the beginning of Great Lent, because this feast is also the first feast of the Resurrection. In this feast we are given a foretaste of the Lord’s Pascha, seeing for the very first-time death, no longer as an enemy to be feared, but rather as a doorway which opens unto the salvation of God, which was “prepared before the face of all people.” In this feast, the death of St. Symeon the God-Receiver has begun to be touched by the life of Christ. He lived on this earth for 360 years, preserved by the grace of God in order to behold the coming of the Anointed One; and though he yet descended into Sheol, the hymns of the Holy Church

tell us that he preceded St. John the Forerunner in preaching the coming of eternal life to the souls imprisoned there.

This feast is also one that is especially monastic in its character. It is a Feast of the Lord, the one Whose life and words all monastics strive to imitate so far as is possible. It is a Feast of the Mother of God, the Heavenly Mother and Protector of all monks and nuns. And it is a feast of the holy Elder Symeon and the Prophetess Anna, two saints who lived a life dedicated to prayer and fasting, abiding in the Temple while awaiting the coming of their Lord. But above all, for monastics this feast is the feast of the remembrance of death.

The remembrance of death, though it may seem dour, morbid and joyless to those who love only the fleeting pleasures of this dying life, is today shown to be the only source of true joy, life, and happiness. The life of St. Symeon reveals with remarkable clarity and power the truth that is so cleverly hidden from those who try to hide and cover over by every possible means the looming reality of death. Such unfortunate ones imagine that long life is the highest possible good. Our world today is absolutely obsessed with this delusion, very often seeking to prolong life at any cost, employing various grotesque and humiliating medical techniques to add even a few days or weeks to a person's life, days and weeks which are usually filled only with suffering and pain, numbed into oblivion by powerful narcotics.

St. Symeon lived on this earth for 360 years. By the reasoning of our contemporaries, such a lifespan is to be greatly envied. Yet what must it have actually been like for him? One by one, to see his family, his friends and his relatives grow old and die? To see his nation enslaved, his people humiliated; to see the slow decay of all those places which he had known and loved as a young boy? To endure while his body grew ever more weak and feeble with each passing year? Truly, this vain and corruptible world holds no lasting happiness or pleasure. Man was indeed made for eternal life, but clearly, he was not made for eternal life in this world.

Yet to recognize the vanity of this world and its pleasures is not enough. This knowledge is shared by the Hindus and Buddhists, even by our modern existentialists and nihilists. St. Symeon's remembrance of and desire for death went far beyond the desire of Eastern mysticism and modern philosophy to escape into oblivion, into a nothingness beyond the reach of the suffering of life. Far from it. The essence of St. Symeon's remembrance of death was nothing other than an eager and joyful anticipation of the apocalypse, that is to say the unveiling of Christ in His gladsome and glorious light.

For St. Symeon, for monastics, and for every Christian, the miracle of Christ's Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection lies precisely in that Christ filled all things, even and especially death, with Himself. In the words of the Psalmist: "If I go up into heaven, Thou art there: if I descend into Hades, Thou art present there, if I take up my wings toward the dawn and make mine abode in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand guide me and Thy right hand shall hold me." The prophecy that St. Symeon should not taste death until he had seen the Lord's Christ was in fact a double prophecy. It was a prophecy also for the life of every Christian and for every human being: to taste death and to behold Christ are now one and the same.

But though this prophecy caused St. Symeon to depart this life in peace and gladsome joy, this was so only because he had lived all his life in the remembrance of this prophecy, and had shaped his entire life around it. He had died already to everything transient, to everything sinful, and it was this that allowed his death to become an entrance into life. As it is written above the gates of one holy monastery: "If you die before you die, when you die, you shall not die."

For although to taste death and to behold Christ have now become one, this truth is joyful only to those who love Christ; it is exceedingly bitter to those who do not. Resurrection will come at the last day to all men, but the Scriptures warn that only for some will it be a resurrection unto life while for others, a resurrection unto damnation. And so, we see once more why the Holy Church has placed this feast near to the beginning of the Great Fast. It is a feast of joy, life, light, and resurrection... but it is a feast that can only be entered into through the gates of suffering, repentance, bright sorrow, and ultimately, death.

We all have a choice before us: will we willingly accept suffering and death for the sake of the love of God, and behold these very things being transformed into the source of our joy and eternal life and blessedness? Or will we run and hide from suffering and death, only to find at the end of all things that we cannot run and hide any longer, and that having refused to meet Christ in them, we are left with suffering and death only, stripped of Christ and of all meaning forever? To suffer and to die are inevitable. Our only choice is for whom we will suffer, and to what we will die. Through the prayers of the Holy Righteous Symeon the God-Receiver and the Holy Prophetess Anna, through the intercessions of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and through the grace and mercy of the only Lover of Mankind, may we be enlightened by the Gladsome Light of this holy feast-day, so that we may make our choice wisely. Amen.

