

The Father so loved us that He gave us His Son; but such was the will of the Son too, and He became incarnate and lived with us on earth.

And the holy Apostles and a multitude of people beheld the Lord in the flesh, but not all knew Him as the Lord;

Yet it has been given to me, a poor sinner, through the Holy Spirit to know that Jesus Christ is God.

The Lord loves man and reveals Himself to man.

And when the soul beholds the Lord she humbly rejoices in the Master's compassion, and from that hour her love for her Creator is greater than her any other love:

Though she may see all things and love all men, yet will she love the Lord above all.

The soul suddenly sees the Lord and knows that it is He. Who shall describe this joy, this gladness?

The Lord is made known in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit pervades the entire man – soul, mind and body. After this wise is God known in heaven and on earth.

Saint Silouan the Athonite

**Sunday 2 February 2014 is the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord and Saviour in the Temple**

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 2:25-32

**Epistle:** Hebrews 7:7-17

**Gospel:** Luke 2:22-40

**Apolytikion for the Meeting of the Lord:**

Hail, full of grace, Virgin Mother of God, for from you there dawned the Sun of righteousness, Christ our God, who enlightens those in darkness. Be glad too, righteous Elder, for you received in your embrace the Liberator of our souls, who grants us also resurrection.

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### ***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday:** Hebrews 9:11-14; Luke 2:25-38  
Symeon & Anna; New Martyrs John, Nicholas and Stamatios

**Tuesday:** Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:1-7; Mark 6:1-7  
Isidore of Pelusium; Nicholas the Confessor

**Wednesday:** Ephesians 3:8-21; Mark 6:7-13  
Martyr Agatha; Polyectus, Pat. Of Constantinople

**Thursday:** John 10:1-9; Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2; John 10:9-16  
Photius, Pat. Of Constantinople; Bucolus, Bp. Of Smyrna

**Friday:** Ephesians 4:17-25; Mark 6:45-53  
Parthenius, Bishop of Lampsacus; Luke the Righteous

**Saturday:** Ephesians 2:4-10; Matthew 10:16-22  
Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates; Prophet Zacharias



## ***Evangelion***

***A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith***

2 February 2014

**Archbishopric of Good Hope  
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa**

## **The Longing of our Hearts**

Today, on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the temple, we hear Saint Luke's description of how, when the Infant Jesus was taken up to the temple, he was greeted by the elderly Symeon who, together with the prophetess Anna, had been waiting many years for the coming of Christ. We are told that he was "righteous and devout," that he looked for "the consolation of Israel" and that "the Holy Spirit was upon him." The Holy Spirit had promised Symeon that he would see the coming of Christ before he died.

Symeon represents the longing for God of the people of Israel, but he also represents the longing of our own hearts. Saint Luke presents him to us as someone who was aware his own desire for God. Indeed, his whole life was orientated towards the coming of Christ. He awaited Him in eager anticipation, and, because of this, he was able to recognise Him and to welcome Christ when He came. Having seen the Infant Christ, Symeon knew that his life's work was over and that he could depart in peace.



We all have a longing for God within our hearts, whether we are aware of it or not. It is usually not as clearly defined as Symeon's longing was, and we are not all called to express it in the same way. Nevertheless, it is important for us to acknowledge this longing which may lie hidden very deep in our own hearts and may be covered over by many distractions. Christian faith is not simply about obeying rules or accepting beliefs, necessary though these may be. Rather, it is about an encounter with the Person of Christ who alone can satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts. We need to be in touch with our own hearts, clarifying and purifying our own desires, so that, like Symeon, we will be able to recognise and welcome Jesus Christ.

Enter eagerly into the treasure house that lies within you, and so you will see the treasure house of heaven. The ladder that leads to the Kingdom is hidden within you, and is found in your soul. Dive into yourself, and in your soul you will discover the rungs by which you are to ascend.

Saint Macarius the Great

# A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

Having confessed our faith in God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we then proceed to profess that "I believe"

*In one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church*

## The Church

The Church is an absolutely fundamental reality for Orthodox Christians. Often in our society the word "church" is used to refer to very different things. Some see "the church" as just another institution, while others see it as an invisible reality that many different organisations (that are commonly called "churches") claim to represent. But such views are very different from the Orthodox understanding of the Church.



For Orthodox Christians, the Church is a visible, tangible reality with a concrete history that can be traced back to the Apostles. But the Church is not simply an institution, but is rather a living, organic reality. The Church is the Kingdom of God on earth; it is the visible presence of Christ's Body here on earth.

There is a saying that when we fall we fall alone, but when we are saved we always saved as members of the Church. We cannot go to God alone, for we need the support of other Christians, we need the sacraments of the Church, and we need the prayers and help of the saints. We cannot have Jesus Christ without His Body which is the Church.

In the Creed we confess that:

### The Church is One

There is only one Church, for there is only one Christ and He has one Body. We believe that this Church is identified with the Orthodox Church which is united by a shared faith and a common Communion. Wherever we may be in the world and whatever languages we may speak, we are united to all other Orthodox Christians.

### The Church is Holy

The Church is holy because Christ is holy and the Church shares in His holiness. Individual members of the Church may sin, although we are all called to holiness. But such human sinfulness does not undermine the holiness of the Church itself, for this holiness comes from God.

### The Church is Catholic

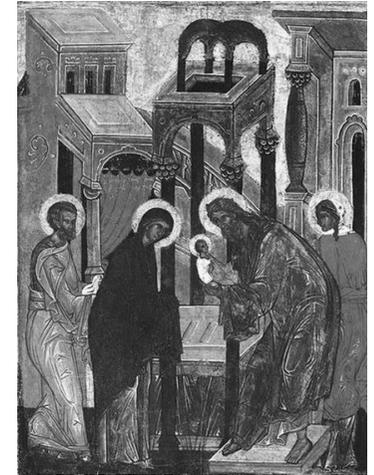
The word "catholic" means both universal and complete. When we confess that the Church is catholic, we are saying that it is for all people and all places. But we are also saying that the Church possesses the fullness of the faith, that faith that has remained the same throughout history and is still confessed throughout the world today.

### The Church is Apostolic

To confess that the Church is apostolic is to confess that it is founded on the work and the teaching of the Apostles. The Apostles appointed others to continue their work and we are joined to them through an unbroken succession of bishops, which we can trace through history. This apostolic identity of the Church is found today in the person of the bishop who is the focus of unity in the local Church.

# The Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

Today we celebrate the Great Feast of the Meeting, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. This feast comes forty days after the birth of the Saviour, for Saint Luke tells us (2:22ff), that the infant Christ was taken to Jerusalem to be presented in the temple in keeping with the law of Moses. The Church understands that Christ had to fulfil all the requirements of the law of Moses, in order to complete them and to bring the law to its fulfilment in Him.



This feast is called the Meeting, for it is the meeting of the Old and the New Testaments. In the Gospel for the feast we encounter the devout Symeon who had been waiting for the coming of the Messiah and the prophetess Anna who spoke of the Child to all who had been looking forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. They represent the longing of the people of Israel which they now see fulfilled in the Child whom Symeon takes in his arms as he prays:

*Lord, now let 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 people; A light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.*

This meeting of the old and the new covenants is very significant for us. It tells us that God's long work of preparation in the history of Israel is now complete. Israel has accomplished its God-given task and has given us the Messiah. The promises made to Abraham have now been fulfilled and Israel's glory has dawned in the Person of Christ who is now presented as a "light to enlighten the Gentiles." In Him the whole world is illumined and saved.

The elderly Symeon and Anna represent the old rituals and customs which are passing away because that which they prepared for has now arrived. For, as the Apostle Paul says, the ancient laws were "only a shadow of what was coming: the reality is the Body of Christ." (Colossians 2:17)

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The Creator, have become a young child without undergoing change, has reshaped according to the form of His divinity our nature, taken from the earth and destined to return to earth once more.

From Matins of the Feast of the Meeting