

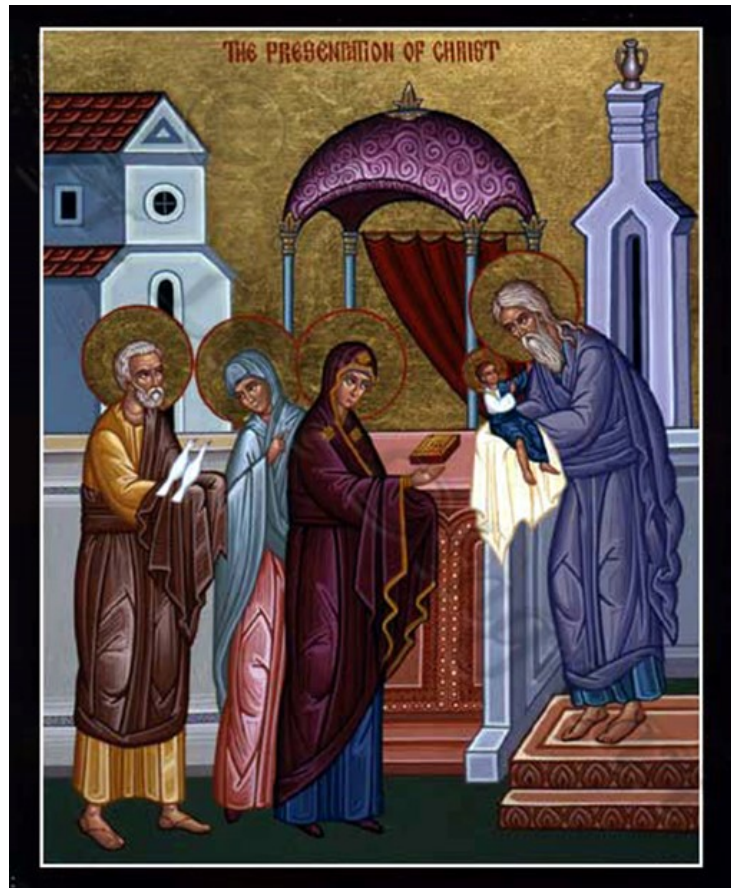
St. Sophronios of Jerusalem (c. 636 AD) on the Feast of the Encounter

In honor of the divine mystery that we celebrate today, let us all hasten to meet Christ. Everyone should be eager to join the procession and to carry a light. Our lighted candles are a sign of the divine splendor of the One who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of His eternal light. Our candles also show how bright our souls should be when we go to meet Christ.

The most-pure Virgin Theotokos carried the True Light in her arms and brought Him to those who lay in darkness. We too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the True Light as we hasten to meet Him.

The Light has come and has shone upon a world enveloped in shadows; the Dayspring from on high has visited us and given light to those who lived in darkness. This, then, is our feast, and we join in procession with lighted candles to reveal the Light that has shone upon us and the glory that is yet to come to us through Him. So let us hasten all together to meet our God.

Let all of us, my brethren, be enlightened and made radiant by this Light. Let all of us share in its splendor, and be so filled with it that no one remains in the darkness.



SUNDAY OF MEATFARE FEBRUARY 7, 2021



THE LAST JUDGEMENT

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Email: Brymc56@comcast.net Cell: (978) 314-1962
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (1st)

1: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth, sing praise to His name.

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

2: Say to God: How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cringe before You.

Be shafa'ati Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhallisu, khallisna.

3: Let all the earth worship You and sing praises to You; let it sing praises to Your name, O Most High!

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ.

People: O Son of God, Who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to you Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 3, pg. 39)

Let all in heaven rejoice, and all on earth be glad, for the Lord has exerted power with His arm. By death He has trampled upon Death, and has become the firstborn from the dead. He has delivered us from the bosom of Hades, and has granted to the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Dormition (Tone 1, Pg 15)

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep, you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life, being the Mother of Life. Through your intercessions, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of Meat Fare (Tone 1)

O God, when You shall come down upon earth in Your glory, every creature shall tremble before You. A river of fire shall flow before Your judgment-seat, the books shall be opened, and all secrets revealed. On that day, O Just Judge, deliver me from eternal fire and make me worthy to stand at Your right!

He takes the Christ child in his arms and prays what we call the Canticle of Simeon: “*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 peoples: a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel*” (Lk 2:29-32). We repeat this canticle at the end of every day (vespers) and on completing the Divine Liturgy as well as when any child is presented in church 40 days after its birth.

Simeon is then joined by Anna who thanks God that she has seen this moment “*and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem*” (Lk 2:38).

This Encounter celebrated the coming of the One for whom the Jews longed, the Messiah, and recognized that the Gentiles too would be enlightened through Him.

Our Celebration of This Feast

As might be expected, this feast originated in Jerusalem where the event it remembers took place. It likely began in the era of St Constantine the Great who sponsored the development of Jerusalem as a Christian site. Sermons on this Feast by the bishops Methodius of Patara (+ 312), Cyril of Jerusalem (+ 360), Gregory the Theologian (+ 389), Amphilokios of Iconium (+ 394), Gregory of Nyssa (+ 400), and John Chrysostom (+ 407) have come down to us.

Egeria, a Spanish nun who visited the Holy Land in 381-384, described what she saw: “The fortieth day after the Epiphany is undoubtedly celebrated here with the very highest honor, for on that day there is a procession, in which all take part, in the Anastasis, and all things are done in their order with the greatest joy, just as at Easter. All the priests, and after them the bishop, preach, always taking for their subject that part of the Gospel where Joseph and Mary brought the Lord into the Temple on the fortieth day, and Symeon and Anna the prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, saw him, treating of the words which they spoke when they saw the Lord, and of that offering which his parents made. When everything that is customary has been done in order, the sacrament is celebrated, and the dismissal takes place.”

The feast soon spread to Antioch and then, to Constantinople and the whole empire. It became particularly important in the capital during the sixth century when a plague threatened the city. After a solemn procession on this feast, the plague ceased.

When this feast was instituted, the birth of Christ and His baptism at the Jordan were observed on the same day, January 6. The Hypapante was kept 40 days later, on February 14. When a separate feast of the Nativity on December 25 became common, the Hypapante was moved accordingly.

Light to the Gentiles

In the Western Church candles are blessed on this feast and a candlelight procession held in honor of the “Light to enlighten the Gentiles.” This practice actually began in Jerusalem, as Egeria attests. When the feast was instituted in Constantinople, the procession was introduced there as well. Today some Slavic Churches bless candles on this day, but the procession has disappeared from the Byzantine feast.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today **Health and Salvation of Dick Abraham.** Requested by Ron Abraham.
+**Patricia Cronican.** Requested by Antonio & Karen Solitro and Michael & Virginia Mischitelli.
+**Philip Jordan.** Requested by Ron & Dick Abraham

Feb 14 +**Nan Nejaimey (1yr.), Charles & Lena (Esper) Nejaimey, Thomas & Irene (Ryan) Kelly, Katherine (Nejaimey) Kleimer.** Requested by James Nejaimey & family

Feb 21 +**Fr. Calvin Goodwin, FSSP.** Requested by Tom Syseskey
+**Philip, Eva & George Jordan.** Requested by Lorna Abdow Malooley

Liturgical Schedule

Great Lent begins Monday, February 15. We will pray Great Compline on Mondays, Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesdays, and the Akathist Hymn on Fridays. All services will be at 6PM, unless otherwise announced.

GOD WITH US ONLINE SERIES

DYING TO SIN

The First Steps in Askesis

Mondays, February 22, March 1 & 8 @ 8 - 9 p.m. ET
Register at godwithusonline.org

Instructor - Rev. Deacon Thomas Moses

Rev. Deacon Thomas Moses serves as a deacon at Our Lady of the Cedars Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Manchester, NH, where he lives with his wife and daughter. He is a graduate of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary and now works as a full time high school theology teacher at Bishop Guertin High School and a per diem chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital, both in nearby Nashua, NH. Some of his written work can be found on Catholic Exchange.



Last Week's Collection

Regular	\$ 577
Stole	\$ 50
Candles	\$ 16
Total	\$ 643



FINANCIALS

January 2021

Income \$7,262
Expenses (\$4,990)
Net \$2,270

YTD (10.2020-1.2021)

Income \$26,240
Expenses (\$21,665)
Net \$4,584

As you see above, we are running a small surplus for the month and year to date. This is primarily due to several generous donations. We have some large expenditures coming up , especially the repairs to the furnace and exterior doors. This may necessitate dipping into our savings. Thanks to all who have continued to contribute to the church during the pandemic, whether in person or by mail. It costs approximately \$8,000 per month for us to cover our financial obligations. Our contributions are not dues but rather an expression of thanks for all the blessings God has bestowed on us!



Come to Expel the Darkness

EASTERN CHRISTIANS LOVE TO THINK in terms of forty days. The Great Fast and its echo, the forty days between the feasts of the Transfiguration and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the churching of an infant forty days after birth and the memorial service forty-days after death are the most obvious examples. This pattern is ultimately drawn from the Scriptures where significant events are regularly placed in this time frame. In the Old Testament, the great flood lasted for 40 days and 40 nights (Gen 7). Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights when he received the Ten Commandments (Ex 24). In Deuteronomy 9 we read that Moses interceded on Israel's behalf for 40 days and 40 nights. The Israelite spies took 40 days to spy out Canaan (Num 13). Goliath taunted Saul's army for 40 days before David arrived to slay him (1 Sam 17). When Elijah fled from Jezebel, he traveled 40 days and 40 nights to Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19). It was after a 40-day fast that the Tempter came to test Jesus (Mt 4: 1-11).

There is another 40-day period mentioned in the New Testament, and also observed in the life of our Church: the 40 days between Christ's nativity and the day when His parents brought Him to the temple, "*to do for Him according to the custom of the Law*" (Lk 2:27). While there the Lord encountered the elderly Simeon and Anna, who recognized God's decisive presence in this Child. Through them Christ encounters for the first time those who were awaiting the Messiah's coming. We celebrate this event on February 2 (the 40th day after Christmas) as the Hypapante, or Encounter, of the Messiah with His people, personified by Simeon and Anna.

What Did the Law Prescribe?

Jewish custom at the birth of a child was that **a mother must be purified** after 40 days. "*She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over*" (Lev 12:4).

In Jewish law any participation in the intimate experiences of life and death, including the spilling of blood – the carrier of life – makes a person ritually unclean, that is, incapable of performing ceremonial act such as temple worship. Ceremonial uncleanness is not a question of moral impurity but a recognition that the worship of God transcends the earth and its ways. Someone touched by childbirth or death required purification in specified ways.

There was an additional prescription according to the Torah: **the redemption of the firstborn son**. "*Every firstborn of man among your sons, you shall redeem*" (Ex 13:13). The first of everything (crops, animals, etc.) was to be offered to God in sacrifice: an acknowledgement that everything comes from Him and is His. Children could be "redeemed" by offering a gift to the temple in exchange for the child. Orthodox Jews still observe this rite today, exchanging five silver shekels (or their equivalent in local currency) for the child.

The encounter with Simeon and Anna takes us beyond the practices of the Torah to the mystery of God's saving plan. As St. Luke tells it, "*it had been revealed to him [Simeon] by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ*" (Lk 2:26).

Prokimenon

Reader: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior

People: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior

Verse: The Lord has chastised me through His teaching, yet He has not delivered me to death.

People: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior

Reader: My strength and my courage is the Lord,

People: And He has been my Savior

Epistle: 1 Cor. 8:8-13; 9:1-2

Alleluia Verses

The Lord shall hear you on the day of distress; the name of the God of Jacob shall defend you.

Verse: O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance.

Gospel: Mt. 25:31-46, Sunday of Meat-Fare

Special Petitions for the Ecumenic Prayer (Inserted after the third petition)

- For all your people who have proven positive with the coronavirus, that they may be restored to full health and offer you their praise and thanksgiving, we pray to you, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all those who have died as a result of the coronavirus that they may be granted rest with the Saints and the mercy of God in the Heavenly Kingdom, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For doctors, nurses, and all in health care, risking their lives to minister to those afflicted with the coronavirus, that they remain safe, and in good health as they serve others, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all your people in Lebanon who were hurt during the disastrous explosion, that they may be restored to full health, and for those who died that they may be granted rest among the Saints, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For peace throughout the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.