

From the Divine Office for the Feast of the Encounter (Feb. 20)

He whom the angels serve in Heaven, entreating Him with trembling, is now received here below in the earthly arms of Simeon, who announces that God has united Himself to mankind. Seeing the heavenly God as a mortal man, he prepares to leave the earth, and he cries with joy, "Glory to You, O Lord, who have received to those in darkness the Light that knows no setting!" (Lete)

Let us run to the Theotokos, in order to see her Son being presented to Simeon. The bodiless Angels, seeing Him from on high, were amazed and they said, "Now we behold wondrous and most marvelous things, past understanding and beyond telling! He who once created Adam is now carried as a baby! He who cannot be contained is now contained in the arms of the Elder! He who is unlimited in His Divinity in the bosom of the Father is now limited by the flesh, for He alone is the Lover of Mankind!" (Ikos)



FEAST OF THE ENCOUNTER FEBRUARY 2, 2025



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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Feast)

1- Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One!

O Son of God who were carried in the arms of Simeon the Just, save us who sing to You:

Alleluia

2- In Your splendor and majesty, ride triumphant in the cause of truth and for the sake of justice.

O Son of God who were carried in the arms of Simeon the Just, save us who sing to You:

Alleluia

3- Your arrows are sharp; peoples are subject to You; the king's enemies lose heart. A tempered rod is your royal scepter.

O Son of God who were carried in the arms of Simeon the Just, save us who sing to You:

Alleluia

Entrance Hymn

P: The Lord has made his Salvation known; He has revealed his justice to all nations.

All: *O Son of God, Who were carried in the arms of Simeon the Just, save us who sing to You: Alleluia*

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 4) Pg.40

The women disciples of the Lord, having learned from the angel the joyful announcement of the resurrection, and having rejected the ancestral sentence, proudly told the apostles: Death is despoiled. Christ God is risen, bestowing to the world great mercy."

Troparion of the Feast (2 times), (1st. Tone)

Hail, O Full of grace, Virgin and Mother of God: for from you has arisen the Sun of Justice, Christ our God, enlightening those who stand in darkness. You too, O just Elder Simeon, rejoice, for you carried in your arms the Redeemer of our souls, our Resurrection.

Kontakion of the Presentation of our Lord (Tone 1)

O Christ our God, who through your birth have sanctified the virginal womb, and have blessed the arms of Simon, You have come today to save us. When wars prevail, keep your people in peace, and strengthen our public authorities in every good deed, for You alone are the lover of Mankind.

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.

St Sophronios of Jerusalem (c. 636 ad)

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.



DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Dan Rahall (40 day). Requested by Susan Rahall & family
 +Jeanette Halal
Next Sunday +Richard (Tubby) Nejaimey. Requested by the Family

This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by the Rahall Family
Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by the Richard Nejaimey Family

Please remember in your prayers: Mark Bashour, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Thomas Houde, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Jeannine McNeil, Linda Gartner, Billy Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, Thomas Houde, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in Ukraine & the Middle East. Let us also pray for the repose of the souls of Zakeya Assaf, Genvieve Hatem, Hanna Francis, Saddalh Alkateb.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.

Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.



HOUSE BLESSINGS

If you would like me to bless your home, please email me at fr.bryan.mcneil@melkite.org or call the office (508) 752-4174.

KIBBEH DINNER

The newly re-established ladies' society, called the Ladies' Sodality of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, will have a Kibbeh Dinner on *Sunday February 16* after the Divine Liturgy. The cost is \$10 per person. Children under 12 are *free*. Please support the ladies as they begin a new chapter for the group. God bless them in their endeavors!



Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$1,053
Candles	\$ 34
Coffee Hr.	\$ 52
Hall Rental	\$ 300
Stole	\$ 400
Memorial	\$ 50
Event Ins.	\$ 200
TOTAL	\$2,089

Let us pray for increased generosity to our parish!

FINANCIALS

<u>12.2024</u>		<u>YTD (10.2024-12.2024)</u>	
Income	18,697.42	Income	32,294.75
Expenses	-4,032.20	Expenses	-21,104.90
Net	14,665.22	Net	11,189.85

FEAST OF THE ENCOUNTER (FEBRUARY 2)

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 (Genesis 7). Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights when he received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 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 (Numbers 13). Goliath taunted Saul's army for 40 days before David arrived to slay him (1 Samuel 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 (Matthew 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*" (Luke 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*" (Leviticus 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*" (Exodus 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*" (Luke 2:26). He takes the Christ child in his arms and prays what we call the Cantic 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*" (Luke 2:29-32). We repeat this cantic 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*" (Luke 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.

Prokimenon

Reader: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

People: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Reader: Because He has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid, for, behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

People: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Reader: My soul magnifies the Lord

People: And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Epistle: **Heb 7: 7-17**

Alleluia

Now you shall dismiss your servant, O Lord, according to your word in peace; because my eyes have seen your salvation.

Verse: A light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people, Israel

Gospel: **Lk 2:22-40**

Hirmos (3rd Tone)

O Mother of God, hope of all Christians, watch over those who have placed their hope in you. Let us, O faithful, glorify the First-born, the Eternal Word of God, born of a Virgin all-pure, for we have seen, beyond the shadow and letter of the Law, a sign of Christ in the words: "Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord."

Kinonikon: I will take the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Alleluia

