

February 2

A. 

The Meeting of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ



This feast commemorates the bringing of Jesus Christ to the temple by the Most Holy Mary, after the fulfillment of the days of purification (Lk. 2:22-39), established in the law of Moses (Lev. 12:2-8; Ex. 13:2, 13; Num. 3:13, 8:16-18) with an offering for redemption consisting of 5 shekels (1 rubles 70 kopeks to 2 rubles (881.45 grains US Avoirdupois)). Although the Immaculate Virgin had no need of purification, she nonetheless came to the temple to fulfill the law. In the temple the Child was met by the righteous Simeon (see Feb. 3). In sacred joy the holy elder sings praise and thanksgiving to God, having fulfilled the expectation of his heart, and, inspired with the feeling of unearthly blessing, takes the Child in his embrace and in the decline of his days utters the wonderful words, which the Holy Church repeats daily in the Vespers hymn at sunset: *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel (Lk. 2:29-32)*. Hearing these words, Joseph and Mary marveled at them for these words clearly witnessed that the mystery of God was already revealed to the righteous Simeon. Continuing then his divinely inspired prophesy, the righteous elder turned to Mary and pointing to the Child, said: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through Thine own soul also), that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed (Lk. 2:34-35) _).

While the holy elder uttered his prophetic speech about the Divine Child, the Righteous Anna was in the temple (see Feb. 3). She also added her inspired voice to the voice of Simeon, giving glory to God and, as a prophetess, probably, prophesying about the Child in a prophetic sense. Having fulfilled in the temple all that was required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth with the Divine Child.

From the event of the meeting of the Divine Child by the righteous Simeon the feast received its name in the Orthodox Church. The Event of the Meeting is celebrated on February 2 because this day is 40 days after December 25. The origin of the feast goes back to deep antiquity. Undoubtedly, this feast was known in the 4th Century in the Church of Jerusalem _); from Jerusalem it passed to other churches in the 5th - 6th centuries. Actually the solemn commemoration in the Western Church and in the East did not begin at one and the same time. Western writers attribute the establishment of the solemn commemoration of this feast (actually the Litya) to one Pope Gelasius (in the year 496), and others to St. Gregory the Great (in the year 600), and they believe, that in this way the named Popes meant to destroy the pagan feast of Lupercalia which fell in February and during that period was still strong among the Romans. The solemn

commemoration of the Meeting began in the Eastern Church in the time of Justinian (to 541-542). At the end of 541 in Constantinople and its surroundings appeared a strong plague continuing for 3 months and by the end of each day from 5 up to 10 thousand people died. This affliction was soon joined by a new one - an earthquake in Antioch that destroyed many buildings and destroyed a lot of people. During these afflictions on the feast of the Meeting in Constantinople an all national solemn prayer, or Litya, was done for deliverance from evil, and the afflictions stopped. In grateful commemoration of the deliverance from afflictions the church prescribed the Litya on this feast before the liturgy in the monasteries (outside the dwellings) _). Celebrating the Meeting of the Lord, the Holy Church, confessing and asserting that "Christ revealed Himself to the world not as an opinion, a phantom, but in truth", accuses those ancient false teachers who rejected the human nature in Jesus Christ, considering this to be unworthy and untrue of God. Together with this example of the Savior and His Immaculate Mother, who all that was required by the law, inspires us to fulfill the rules and rites of the Holy Church and reminds us of our churching in the Church of Christ, about our consecration to God, to Whom we also should bring our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice, pure and full of grace. Besides this the Holy Church, singing of Sts. Simeon and Anna on this feast, inspires us to find according to the example of the Righteous Simeon, graceful comfort and salvation in Christ, entrusting to Him a beneficial meditation on his life and death, and by the example of the Prophetess Anna, as often as possible, to visit the temple of God and thank the Lord with prayers and fasting. Finally, the feast of the Meeting teaches us, in the afflictions that overtake us, to turn to the Lord God, the ever quick Helper and Protector of all who call on Him with faith and true repentance.

Troparion, tone 1

**Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace.
From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,
Enlightening those who sat in darkness.
Rejoice and be glad, O righteous Elder;
You accepted in your arms the Redeemer of our souls,
Who grants us the Resurrection.**

Kontakion, tone 1

**By Thy Nativity, Thou didst sanctify the Virgin's womb.
And didst bless Simeon's hands, O Christ God.
Now Thou hast come and saved us through love.
And strengthen the rulers beloved of Thee,
Grant peace to Thy community in battle,
And strengthen the rulers beloved of Thee,
O only Lover of Man.**

Magnification

We magnify Thee, O Christ the Giver of Life, and we honor Thy most pure Mother, who this day according to the Law, has brought Thee into the temple of the Lord.

Paramoeas. 1) Ex. 12:51; 13:1-3, 10-12, 14-16; 22:29. Lev.12:1-4, 6-8. Num. 8:17. 2) Is. 6:1-12. 3) Is. 19:1-5, 12, 16, 19-21. **Matins Gospel.** Lk. 2:25-32; sel. 8. **Epistle.** Heb. 17:7-17; sel. 316. **Gospel.** Lk. 2:22-40; sel. 7.

The feast of the Meeting according to the Typicon (Ustav) relates to the Theotokos, so that if it falls on a Sunday, then the service for the Sunday is not dropped (as happens with the twelve Theotokos feasts. Whereas on the Lord's feasts, which fall on a Sunday, the Sunday service is dropped). Sometimes the feast is even called the Meeting of the Most Holy Virgin (Typicon, concerning the temple, chapter 8). Belonging to the Theotokos feasts, the feast of the Meeting when it falls only on the feast of the Lord, usually has an "introit" at the liturgy, after which is sung the troparion and kontakion of the feast. However there are no festal antiphons, but the Beatitudes are sung. At the end of the services is a special Dismissal. Including the Forefeast and Afterfeast this feast is celebrated for 9 days (Feb. 1-9), if it isn't shortened by Lent. In the latter case it is celebrated for as many days as remain up to Lent.

Refer to the Chapter in the Typicon (Ustav) and the Menaion. If the feast of the Meeting falls: 1) on a Sunday, before the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee; on the Sundays of the: 2) Publican and the Pharisee; 3) Prodigal Son; 4) Meatfare; 5) Cheesefare; 6) Cheesefare Saturday (the service for the Meeting is sung; the services for the departed, Vespers and Matins, on the Saturday is passed over or served on Meatfare Thursday; 7) on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday of Meatfare Week (all the services for the feast is by all means done, "because the Triodion is not sung with the feast, it does not fall on those days during Cheesefare week, except for Saturday and Sunday, unless in the ideomelon stichera for the day" in Small Vespers); 8) on Wednesday and Friday of Cheesefare (on the eve there is no Great Compline, but there is Small Vespers, then the usual All Night Vigil - from Great Vespers, Matins and the First Hour; only at the end of Vespers, Matins and each Hour three great prostrations are done, and at the Sixth Hour the Paramoea is read; the liturgy is that of John Chrysostom; in the evening at Vespers there are Paramoeas); 9) on Cheesefare Saturday (together with the hymns for the feast sing also the hymns from the Triodion and then at Small Vespers read the Paramoea for the day, but at Great Vespers the Paramoea for the feast); 10) on Monday of the First Week of Great Lent (the service for the feast is transferred to Cheesefare Sunday). See Feb. 9 for the Leavetaking of the Meeting.

Martyr Jordan of Trebizond was beheaded by the Turks in 1650, for the accusation of Mohammedism and nonacceptance of Islam, in the Galata District of Constantinople.

Venerable Martyr Gabriel, after being tortured, was beheaded by the Turks in Constantinople on February 2, 1672.

_) These prophetic words of the Righteous Simeon predicted the universal fierce struggle between belief and unbelief in which it will be necessary to take part, following which the appearance and reality of the Savior served for the discovery of that which was kept in the depths of the heart of each Israelite as the deposit of belief and unbelief, and that with its external disposition to the people of God, remained concealed, unnoticed even for his own consciousness. The latter words of the God-bearer show that salvation is through Christ and the guilt of the spiritual qualities belonging to every man is destroyed (compare John 3:19, 9:39, 41; Mt. 21:42-44). Concerning the prophetic announcement of the God-bearer to the Most Holy Virgin, even though during the mortal life of the Savior She was repeatedly wounded in the heart in view of His travails, but the prophecy of Simeon was finally fulfilled when She stood at the cross of Christ (John 19:25). "Crowned with the thorns of Jesus, nailed with His crucifixion, pierced with His spear, His wound, His painful wail, His dying gaze, these", according to the expression of Metropolitan Philaret, "are those weapons with which Her maternal heart was pierced so immeasurably deep, so perfect and immeasurably pure was Her love."

_) This is evident from the description of the Peregrinatio (Travels) of Silvia (4th century), who lived in Jerusalem for 3 years and visited all the holy places. According to this description, the day of the Meeting which the traveler calls "Quadragesimae de Epiphania (Fortieth day after Epiphany)" as it was then celebrated in Jerusalem. This is the most ancient witness to the feast of the Meeting. Concerning such witnesses to this feast, as, for example, that of Methodius of Patara (3rd century), Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century) and John Chrysostom (4th century) relating to this subject the conversations of first two are incorrectly attributed to these persons. In his sermon, John Chrysostom spoke about the evangelical event of the Meeting, and not about the feast, which the very title of the sermon admits is not original. (See details in N. Pokrovsky, *The Gospels in Commemorative Iconography*. St. Petersburg, 1892, page 102).

_) In the Southwest on the day of the Meeting it is accepted to sanctify water according to the Rite of the Lesser Sanctification of Water. In Kiev this sanctification of water occurs before the liturgy in the churches or on the church grounds. In the villages, in many places, a cross procession follows Matins or Liturgy for this sanctification of water "to the well" or to the river. In other places

(for example, Volhynia and Podolia Provinces) the Meeting sanctification of waters is done up to the morning dawn or at dawn for which Matins is prescribed "for early morning". In the opinion of some, the custom of sanctifying water on the day of the Meeting comes to us from the example of the Greek Church, through the spiritual hierarchs from the Greek clergy since the beginning of Christianity in Russia. In the opinion of others, the Meeting sanctification of water appeared among us during the time of two faiths, for the healing of the pagan illness of vain belief in "pristrita", i.e. the bad meeting with a person able to harm those who meet him with his eyes. Every illness of men and animals, inexplicable and not understood by the commoner, is connected by him to the power of the "pristrita" and is treated by the sprinkling of the Meeting water and the sprinkling of salt. Because of this they will sprinkle water during the birth of children and animals to warn them of the "pristrita". The existence of this superstition from antiquity is indicated by the Nomocanon (canon 23), which condemns "those who give heed to the meeting", and undoubtedly, this superstition is a legacy of ancient pagan times when our ancestors believed in various magicians who were familiar with impure power and with its help were able to cause every kind of evil to the people. So the superstitions about water were considered one of the main remedies and the best counteraction to "the evil eye" that our pastors, for the easing of the sickly conscience of Christian superstitions and for the driving away of the imaginary and actual works of the devil and his angels in spirit and flesh, also selected water which was sanctified according to the church rites. On adapting this sanctification of water on the day of the Meeting the analogy between the name of this feast and the name of the superstition about the meeting or "meeting" (Meeting, i.e. a meeting, from where "pristrita") had influence. Comparing these two strands of opinion on the origin of this custom of sanctifying water on the Meeting, some people prefer the first. The belief in "meeting" and in an evil eye is spread everywhere, but while this custom remained among us only in the southwest. In the southwest as the oldest and the closest to the Greek Church, it may be better that the memory of this custom be kept. Besides this in the southwest this custom may be a parallel and a counterbalance to the neighboring Catholic Church, where on the day of the Meeting a solemn cross procession is done around the churches with the sprinkling of all the people with the Meeting holy water, involuntarily involving "immediately to itself" the purview even of the Orthodox population. Concerning the Meeting sanctification of water it is necessary to note that the belief in the "pristrita" is superstition, and the sanctification of water because of this "pristrita" is support for this superstition. But, on the other hand, don't forget that the Meeting sanctification of water was done from the beginning in antiquity, and the ancient church customs and rites should not be forgotten, but to renew the life and action on the hearts and minds of believing Orthodox Christians (Tserkovniya Vedomosti (Church News) 1890, 5). But understand this, that in these cases pastors should be led by the instructions of the highest church authority and, according to the obligation of his ministry to try to eradicate superstitions in the environment of feeding his flock, with the simplicity of heart those accepting

as their faith that, which should not be believed, explaining to them the true meaning of the church rituals and the perniciousness of superstitions that may subject them to special forebodings and punishments, according to the rules of the Councils and the Holy Fathers.

On our western borders the feast of the Meeting is known under the name "gromnitz (thunderer)", from the custom to consecrate candles called thunderers (gromnitzi) on this day in church, which have power against thunder, lightning, torrential rain and hailstones, debased magicians and enchantresses. These candles also grant to the dying the defeat and the driving away of Satan. Commoners on the day of the Meeting burn each other's hair crosswisely with these candles for the prevention and treatment of a headache. All these views on the meaning of the Meeting candles sufficiently speak against the custom of their consecration in church. The appearance of this custom in the practice of our western borders go back to the time of the Unia and explain the influence of Catholic Church where it is done annually on this day. On "The Purification of the Most Holy Virgin Mary" (as the Catholics call the feast of the Meeting) they consecrate candles during the liturgy.

In the language of the people there are expressions: "if on the Meeting the sun shines on the frost there be winter for a year"; "on the Meeting winter meets summer", show that for the common people the day of the Meeting serves as a border between winter and spring. These expressions explain how some of the simple people understand the name of the feast and are why it is necessary to pay special attention to acquaint them with the history of the Meeting of the Lord.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed. 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 61-64
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