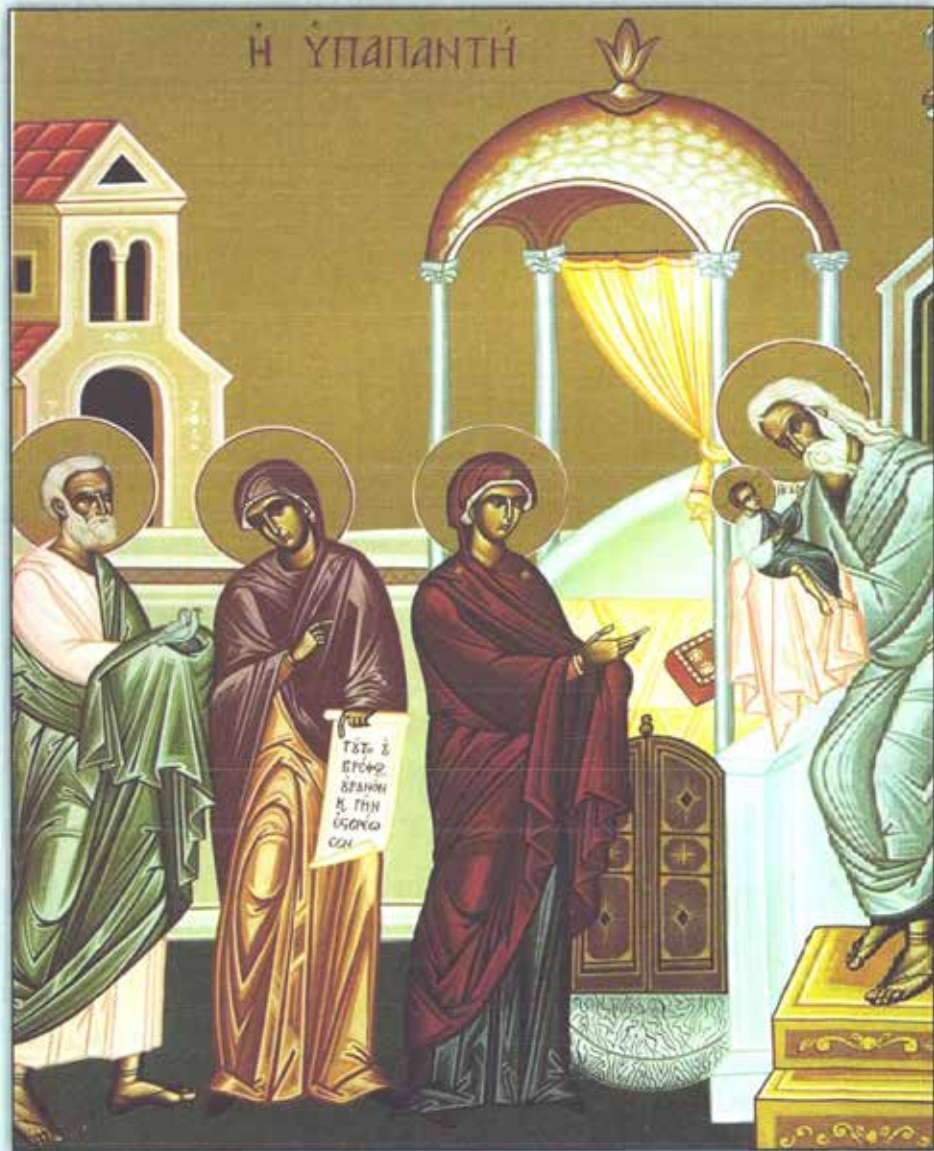


## PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE



*Icon of the Presentation of Our Lord -- February 2nd*



*...the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news of the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not scandalized at me. (Luke 7:22-23; cf. Isaiah 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 61:1; Matthew 4:23-24, 11:4-6)*

When one is delivered from sin and evil, one is also freed from sickness and death. In the Kingdom of God there will be “no sickness or sorrow or sighing, but life everlasting.” (*Requiem Kontakion of the Church*)

When one is visited by sickness in this world, whether bodily or mental, he is a victim of the devil and the **“sin of the world.”** (*John 1:29*) This does not mean that people are necessarily being personally punished with their diseases. It means rather, as in the case of those born with infirmities and children who are ill, that where sin abounds, sickness and disease are also rampant. It is the teaching of the Church that those who are innocently victimized by sickness, such as small children and retarded people, are certain to be saved in the Kingdom of God.

This is the teaching of the book of **Genesis**. God did not say to man, “Sin and I will kill you.” He said, if and when you sin, **“you will die.”** (*Genesis 2:17, 3:3*) Thus when man sins and ruins himself by evil, he brings the curse of sickness and suffering to the world for himself and his children; and his life becomes toil until he returns to the dust out of which he is made - and which he is by nature without the grace of God in his life. (*cf. Genesis 3:17-19*) It is in this sense that the **“prince of this world”** is the devil. (*John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11*)

Given the sinfulness of the world, its bondage to the devil, its **“groaning in travail”** (*cf. Romans 8:19-23*) until its salvation in Christ, God Himself uses sickness and death for His own providential purposes as the means for man’s salvation. God is not the cause of sickness, suffering and death; but given their existence because of the devil’s deceit and man’s wickedness and sin, God employs them that man might be healed and saved in the forgiveness of sins. In this sense, and this sense only, can it be

said that “God sends sickness to man.”

When a spiritual person is sick he recognizes that his illness is caused by sin, his own and the sins of the world. He does not blame God for it, for he knows that God has not caused it and does not wish it for His servants. He knows as well, through the providential plan of God and the salvation of Christ, that his sickness will be healed. He knows also that if God so wills, he can be healed of his sickness in this life in order to have more time to serve God and man on earth, and to accomplish what he must according to God’s plan. He also knows as well that the very sickness itself can be the means for serving God, and he accepts it in this way, offering it in faith and love for his own salvation and for the salvation of others.

There is no greater witness to the love of God and faith in Christ than sickness endured with faith and love. The one who bears his infirmities with virtue, with courage and patience, with faith and hope, with gladness and joy, is the greatest witness to divine salvation that can possibly be. Nothing can compare to such a person, for God’s praise in distress and affliction is the greatest possible offering that man can make of his life on earth.

Every saint who ever lived suffered bodily infirmities. And all of them, virtually without exception - even when healing others by their prayers - did not ask for or receive deliverance for themselves. This is the case most evidently of Jesus Himself, the suffering servant of God.

*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; as one from whom men hide their faces...*

*Surely He has borne our grieves, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, upon Him was the chastisement that healed us, and with His wounds we are healed... the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

*And they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man (i.e. Joseph of Arimathea, Matthew 27:57) in His death...when He makes*

*Himself an offering for sin..(Isaiah 53, cf. Psalms 22, 38, 41)*

Christ “**poured out His soul to death**” (Isaiah 53:12) when He was only in the third decade of His life. Many of the saints hardly lived longer, and virtually all suffered, as did St. Paul, from some “thorn in the flesh,” normally understood as some bodily affliction.

*...a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about*

*this, that it should leave me; but He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness,” that the power of Christ may rest upon me...for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)*

All spiritual persons follow the example of Christ and Saint Paul and all of the saints in their appreciation of sickness. They say to the Father, “Thy will be done,” and transform their weakness, by the grace of God, into the means of salvation for themselves and others.

.....  
**Pope’s Mass: It’s absurd to say you follow Christ, but reject the Church**

*from romereports.com 2014-01-30*

In his Thursday morning Mass, the **Pope talked about** what it really means to **belong to the Church**. He said being a Christian isn’t just about **being Baptized** and then going about life on your own. Instead, he said, it’s about being part of God’s community and being part of the Church.

**POPE FRANCIS**

“Being Christian without the Church doesn’t make sense. That’s why the great Paul VI, said that the most absurd dichotomy is loving Christ without the Church. To listen to Christ, but not the Church. To be with Christ, but stay at the margins of the Church. It’s not possible. It’s an absurd dichotomy.”

Reflecting on today’s readings, the Pope recommended following the example of King David, who accepted God’s will even when he disagreed. For that to happen, explained the Pope, the humility is key.

**SUMMARY OF POPE’S MASS**

*(Source: Vatican Radio)*

"Humility, faithfulness and prayer are the three signs of a Christian who belongs to the Church. That was the theme that Pope Francis chose for his homily at morning Mass in the Casa Santa Marta on Thursday, urging his listeners to really "feel with the Church".

"The Pope said the first fruit of our Baptism is to make us a part of the Church, a member of the people of God. Recalling the words of Pope

Paul VI, he said it’s absurd to claim that we love Christ without the Church, that we listen to Christ but not the Church, that we are with Christ but on the margins of the Church. The Gospel message, Pope Francis said, comes to us through the Church and our path to holiness must be found within the Church."

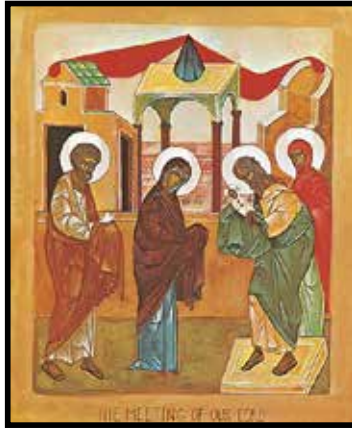
"Speaking of the three pillars which underpin our sense of belonging to the Church, the Pope said the first is humility and the realization that the story of salvation does not start or end with us. A person who is not humble, he said, cannot feel with the Church but only feels what he or she desires. Instead, humility helps us understand that we are just a small part of the great people of God, that is following the way of the Lord."

"The second pillar, Pope Francis said, is faithfulness to the teachings and doctrine of the Church. Quoting again from his predecessor Paul VI, he said we receive the Gospel as a gift and we must pass that gift on to others in faithfulness, rather than seeing it as something that belongs to us."

"Thirdly, the Pope said, we must remember to pray with and for the Church in all parts of the world. Do we really pray for the Church, he asked, not just at daily Mass but also when we are at home? May the Lord help us, he concluded, to follow this path, to deepen our sense of belonging and feeling with the Church.

## The Encounter of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ

The fortieth day after His birth, the All-Holy Virgin brought her Divine Son into the Temple of Jerusalem, in accordance with the Law, to dedicate Him to God and to purify herself. “Consecrate to me every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites both of man and beast, for it belongs to me” (Exodus 13:2). “Tell the Israelites: when a woman has conceived and gives birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness as at her menstrual period. On the eighth day, the flesh of the boy’s foreskin shall be circumcised, and then she shall spend thirty-three days more in becoming purified of her blood; she shall not touch anything sacred nor enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled. If she gives birth to a girl, for fourteen days she shall be as unclean as at her menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty-six days in becoming purified of her blood. When the days of her purification for a son or for a daughter are fulfilled, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent a yearling lamb for a holocaust and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. The priest shall offer them up before the Lord to make atonement for her, and thus she will be clean again after her flow of blood. Such is the law for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl child” (Leviticus 12:2-7). Even though neither the one nor the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver did not, in anyway, want to transgress His own Law whom He had given through Moses, His servant and prophet. At that time, the high-priest Zaccharias, the



father of John the Forerunner [Precursor], was on duty in the Temple["serving as a priest before God in the order of his division" St. Luke 1:8]. Zaccharias placed the Virgin, not in the temple area reserved for women but rather in the area reserved for virgins. On this occasion, two unusual persons appeared in the Temple: the Elder Simeon and Anna, the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous Simeon took the Messiah in his arms and said: “Now, Master, You may let Your servant go in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation” (St. Luke 2: 29-30). Simeon also spoke the following words about the Christ-child: “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel” (St. Luke 2:34). Then Anna, who from her youth served God in the Temple by fasting and prayers, recognized the Messiah and glorified God and proclaimed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem about the coming of the long-awaited One. The Pharisees present in the Temple, who having seen and heard all, became angry with Zacharias because he placed the Virgin Mary in the area reserved for virgins and reported this to King Herod. Convinced that this is the new king about whom the Magi from the east spoke, Herod immediately sent his soldiers to kill Jesus. In the meantime the Holy Family had already left the city and set out for Egypt under the guidance of an angel of God. The Feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple was celebrated from earliest times but the solemn celebration of this day was established in the year 544 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Justinian. (Prologue of Ohrid)

## CONQUERING FEAR

*Written by the Very Rev. Vladimir Berzonsky*

“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” (John 20:21).

This alone if nothing else one realizes and takes away from the Divine Liturgy—the peace of Christ. This makes it worth every effort to be present among Christ’s loved ones. Who is more fright-filled than those Galileans in Jerusalem on the day when Jesus Christ had been crucified, and they were certain that they were next. Trembling with fear, expecting at any moment for the door to be broken in and to be driven away for execution – suddenly He appears, not through the door but in their midst. He was there all the time, or rather there in their presence incognito. That even ought to inspire all of us, especially when we are afraid.

The great spiritual lay writer Paul Evdokimov wrote: “A lay person is also one who is freed by his faith from ‘the great fear’ of the bomb, of cancer, of Communism, of death. The faith of such a person is always a way of loving the world, a way of following the Lord even into hell.” (Ages of the Spiritual Life, p. 242) Yes, that was the last century. Today we no longer fear Communism, thank the Lord, but we have exchanged fears. Then our presidents thought to protect the USA with a defense shield that would prevent attacks from beyond our borders. Now we have become fearful of attacks within our land. Consider the exercises we go through to take a flight. We arrive at least an hour before scheduled takeoff, are sure to have an official photo image, have tickets in our name, baggage all vetted, then computers, coats, even shoes are sent through the screening apparatus, there is the possibility of a body search, and we are told to be suspicious of our fellow passengers. When out walking or jogging after dark, I cross over to the other side of the street if I notice a woman ahead of me alone, lest I startle her

and cause her anxiety. Add to that road rage, the expression of pent-up hostility that people behind steering wheels vent on other vehicles as if the highways and streets were fields of combat and the drivers were the enemy. This is life in the new millennium.

You may find temporary relief from pills from the drug store’s shelves, even stronger with a physician’s prescription. However, you will discover the glorious lasting peace offered by our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, a peace transcending anything the world has to offer, by clearing your mind and heart from the clutter of remembered offenses done to you with the help of the Holy Spirit within your soul, sweeping away all the detritus of hurts no longer in your power to react to, and thank Christ for the overwhelming gift of affection symbolized in the Cross. Then while you are in Church, forget your watch and what is going on around you. Learn to imbibe the peace of God that surpasses the ability to understand what God is doing for you and with your acceptance. Even if it lasts but a moment, try to cling to it, thank Him for the feeling, and strive to keep it with you as long as you are able, as you return to the challenges of the world outside.

As the choir sings “Lay aside all earthly cares,” you may imagine yourself wafting upward where the angels and saints hover above. The Spirit is like the helium in a balloon within you – let it fill you with peace. Your cares are like the heavy sand bags, weighing you down and preventing your ascent. Cut them off. You can see the priest ahead of you taking into the sacred altar the precious gifts of Jesus Christ Himself, offered by Him for the life of the world, and He invites you to proceed with Him. What’s holding you back? Are you enslaved to the wrongs, insults and injuries inflicted on you by the world, or do you belong to His Kingdom? If the latter, then don’t dally. Go with Him.

## WHAT IS A FIRST-PORCION GIVER?

A First-Portion Giver is a believer who offers a first-portion of his time, talent, and financial resources out of grateful recognition of the fact that all he has, he holds in trust from God.



**TIME**

A First Portion Giver offers a first portion of his *time*.

“Let us spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing. But let us encourage one another...”

Hebrews 10:24-25



**TALENT**

A First Portion Giver offers a first portion of his *talent*.

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-6



**RESOURCES**

A First Portion Giver offers a first portion of his *treasure*.

“Concerning the collection for the saints..., on the first day of the week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in proportion to the income God has given you...”

1 Corinthians 16:2

### Sunday offering for January 26

Amount	Number
\$10.00	1
\$15.00	2
\$17.00	1 (loose)
\$20.00	5
\$40.00	4
\$50.00	4
\$100.00	3
\$200.00	1
\$300.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1217.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1297.00

Visitor Total: \$20.00

Average / parish household (42): \$31.63

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Deficit: **(\$828.00)**

### **Please Note:**

When you are away, please don't forget that the church still relies on your contributions. Our bills do not go on vacation. Your absence on any Sunday does not negate your obligation to support your home parish.

### **Pastor:**

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

### **Pastoral Council:**

Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667

Vladimir Bachynsky:

(619) 865-1279

Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357

Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008

Jeanine Soucie: (718) 674-4529

### **Social Committee Chairpersons:**

Olga & Michael Miller:

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Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698

Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква  
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Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

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**Website:** [stjohnthebaptizer.org](http://stjohnthebaptizer.org)

**Pastor:** Fr. James Bankston  
[frjames@mac.com](mailto:frjames@mac.com)

Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

*Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*

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 Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, 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 true light has come, the light that enlightens everyone who is born into this world. 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. Let us be shining ourselves as we go together to meet and to receive with the aged Simeon the light whose brilliance is eternal. Rejoicing with Simeon, let us sing a

hymn of thanksgiving to God, the Father of the light, who sent the true light to dispel the darkness and to give us all a share in His splendor.

Through Simeon's eyes we too have seen the salvation of God which He prepared for all the nations and revealed as the glory of the new Israel, which is ourselves. As Simeon was released from the bonds of this life when he had seen Christ, so we too were at once freed from our old state of sinfulness.

By faith we too embraced Christ, the salvation of God the Father, as He came to us from Bethlehem. Gentiles before, we have now become the people of God. Our eyes have seen God incarnate, and because we have seen Him present among us and have mentally received Him into our arms, we are called the new Israel. Never shall we forget this presence; every year we keep a feast in His honor.

*St. Sophronius*