

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church  
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese  
13407 Roxbury Rd., Silver Spring, MD - stgregoryoc.org

## *A sermon by St. Theophan the Recluse*

*d. 1894*

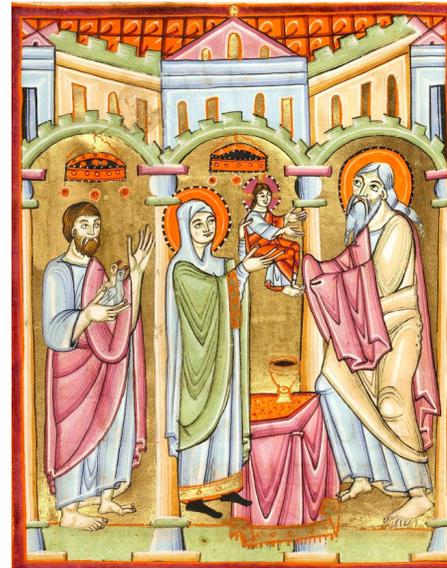
**W**hat a tender scene the Meeting of the Lord shows us! The venerable elder Simeon, holding the infant God in his hands, on either side of him are the righteous Joseph and the Most Holy Mother of God. Not far away is the Prophetess Anna, an eighty-year-old faster and woman of prayer.

**T**heir eyes are all directed toward the Savior. Their attention is absorbed by Him and they drink in spiritual sweetness from Him, which feeds their souls. You can judge for yourself how blessed was the state of these souls!

**H**owever, brethren, we are called not only to think about this blessedness, but also to taste it in reality, for all are called to have and carry the Lord in themselves, and to disappear in Him with all the powers of their spirit. When we

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have reached that state, then our blessedness will be no lower than that of those who participated in the Meeting of the Lord. They were blessed who saw it; we shall be blessed who have not seen, but believed. Pay attention. I will show you briefly how to achieve this. Here is what you should do.

**F**irst of all, repent. Remember that nothing must be done in spiritual life without repentance. No matter

what anyone endeavors to seek, let the beginning of it be repentance. Just as a house cannot be built without a foundation, nor a field be sown or planted without first being cleared, so also without repentance we cannot begin our spiritual search; anything begun without repentance was begun in vain. Thus, first of all, repent—that is, weep over everything bad that you have done, and resolve to do only what is pleasing to God. This will be like turning your gaze and your whole body towards the path of meeting the Lord, and taking the initial step upon that path.

**N**ext, keep this state of repentance constant; establish for yourself a manner of life and conduct that would make every step or movement something directing your attention to our Lord and Savior. Such an order of life will establish itself naturally, if: you do everything that you do for the Glory of the Lord...

**Y**ou can even more conveniently do this and reap fruits from it if you also insert into the order of your daily activities the practice of prayer... As the content of all prayer is the Lord and our turning to Him, by doing it and participating in it you will be

meeting the Lord through your heart's sympathy and delight. If... you fill all your interim time with reading the Scriptures about the Lord, listening to talks about Him, or with your own contemplation of Him and the great work of salvation that He wrought on earth, then you will see for yourself that nothing will remain within us or outside of us that does not bring remembrance of the Lord, bring Him to your attention, or carry your spirit to meet Him.

**Y**ou should not forget that all of these labors and occupations are only preparation. You should not stop at them, but rather strive onward. Just as food taken in rough form later imbues refined elements needed for life, so must these occupations performed visibly and tangibly turn into a spirit of a very refined inclination or striving toward the Lord... When we do all our prayers or attend the Divine services, a feeling should form in our hearts of accord only with the Lord and what is His. Underlying our reading and hearing the Holy Scripture about the Lord should only be the eager directing of our mind's attention toward the Lord alone... From that moment on, our spirit will begin to taste the blessedness of Righteous Simeon; that is, it will begin to bear in the embrace of its powers a striving for the Lord... If you thus dispose yourself, you will soon meet the Lord. He will come down to you and abide in you, as in the embrace of Righteous Simeon. There is no other way to lighten the labor needed to seek a meeting with the Lord...

*From the website of the Moscow Patriarchate*

## *Ss. Martinian, Zoe, and Photina*

*Feast Day ~ February 13*

**I**n this highly sexualized age of ours stories of seduction are all too common. In the early fifth century the devil was even then using sex as a tool to lead people into sin.



**M**artinian was a young man who, from an early age, sought to live his life in constant contemplation of God. He lived in the wilderness around Ceasarea (in Palestine) from eighteen years of age and became well known in the area for his holiness. A local prostitute, Zoe, decided to use her wiles to tempt Martinian and she even made a bet with some townspeople that he was like every other man and would easily lose his virtue.

**O**ne night when the weather was especially bad, the harlot, dressed in rags, came to Martinian's cell asking for shelter for the night. The hermit felt sorry for her and didn't want to be the cause of harm to her, so he offered the warmth of his cell while he moved as far away from her as possible. Then Zoe took off her ragged clothing and Martinian realized what she was attempting. Recognizing the danger he was in, he quickly made a fire and explained to Zoe that he would rather burn in this fire than to succumb to the illicit fire that she wished to stir up.

**W**hen Martinian jumped into the fire, Zoe realized what a horrible thing she had done and she repented and expressed her remorse and shame. Martinian told Zoe that she should go to Bethlehem to the monastery of Paula, who would help her change her life. So both St. Martinian and St. Zoe were saved from a terrible sin.

**S**ometime later, St. Martinian left his hermitage to find a more remote place for his ascetic struggle. He found an uninhabited island and settled there. One day in a storm, a young woman who had been in a shipwreck, managed to float to the island on some debris from the ship. When Martinian realized that he would once again be tempted by the devil, he left the island, with the help of dolphins (according to legend) and spent the rest of his life wandering until he died in Athens around the year 422. The young

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*Address Correction Requested*

woman, Photinia, had been instructed by St. Martinian on how to survive on the island and that in two months, a ship would arrive to take her back to the mainland. However, St. Photinia decided to carry on the life of prayer and contemplation that St. Martinian had shown her, so she did not return with the ship.

These three saints are examples of resistance to sin, by St. Martinian's choosing even extreme measures to ensure resistance, by St. Zoe's example of repentance and change of life, and by St. Photinia's following in the path of holy living. Holy Martinian, Zoe, and Photinia, pray for us.

## *Parish News*

We begin the month of February with the celebration of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, or The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or Candlemas. Following Arch-diocesan directions (since the feast falls on Monday this year), we will observe the blessing of candles and procession at 6:30pm and then sing Second Vespers of the feast.



On February 25, Ash Wednesday, we begin the season of Lent with the Western custom of the blessing and imposition of ashes ("Remember, O man, that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return:") at 6:30pm, followed by mass.

Thanks to Jennifer Caldwell for delivering to the Manna Food Bank all 196 pounds of our food collection for the Food for Hungry People program. Thanks also to Max Asare, Dave Caldwell & Fr. Nicholas for their difficult work to clear our sidewalk (only to have it re-covered by the County work crews!) "O ye ice and snow, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him forever." *from the Benedicite omnia opera, sung at Matins during penitential seasons.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2026</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
<b>1</b> Fourth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Bridget, V, 523  <i>G</i>	<b>2</b> Presentation of Our Lord: Candlemas  <i>Vespers at 6:30pm</i>	<b>3</b> St. Blaise, BM, c. 316; St. Anskar of Hamburg, BC, 865	<b>4</b> New Martyrs of Russia, 1917 and following; St. Joseph of Aleppo, M, 1686	<b>5</b> St. Agatha, VM, c. 250	<b>6</b> St. Photius, BCD, 891; St. Elian of Homs, M, 3 <sup>rd</sup> C; St. Dorothy, VM, c. 313	<b>7</b> St. Romuald, Ab, 1027  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>8</b> Septuagesima  <i>V</i>	<b>9</b> St. Cyril of Alexandria, BCD, 444; St. Apollonia, VM, c. 248	<b>10</b> St. Scholastica, V, 543	<b>11</b> St. Gregory II, PC, 731; St. Benedict of Aniane, Ab, 821	<b>12</b> St. Meletius of Antioch, BC, 381	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> St. Valentine, PrM, 3 <sup>rd</sup> C  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>15</b> Sexagesima; Ss. Faustinus & Jovita, Mm, 120  <i>Meatfare</i>  <i>V</i>	<b>16</b> St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912  <i>(Presidents' Day)</i>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> St. Simeon of Jerusalem, BM, 1 <sup>st</sup> C; St. Flavian, BM, 449	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>22</b> Quinquagesima; Chair of St. Peter at Antioch  <i>V</i>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> St. Matthias, Apostle, 1 <sup>st</sup> C	<b>25</b> Ash Wednesday (omit St. Walburga of Heidenheim, V, 779) <i>Blessing of Ashes &amp; Mass at 6:30pm</i>	<b>26</b> St. Porphyrius of Gaza, BC, 420; St. Ethelbert, KC, 616	<b>27</b> St. Raphael of Brooklyn, BC, 1915; St. Leander of Seville, BC, c. 600	<b>28</b> St. Oswald of Worcester, BC, 992  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>