

The Meeting of the Lord
(from The Law of God)

On Sunday, February 15, 2015, we will celebrate one of the Twelve Great Feasts of our Church: The Meeting of the Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This Feast celebrates the time when Mary and Joseph dedicated the infant Jesus in the Temple according to the Jewish Laws.

“Rejoice, Thou Who art full of grace, O Virgin Theotokos, for from Thee hath risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, Enlightening those in darkness. Rejoice, thou also, O righteous Elder, as thou receives in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls, Who also granteth unto us the Resurrection.” (Troparion of the Feast)

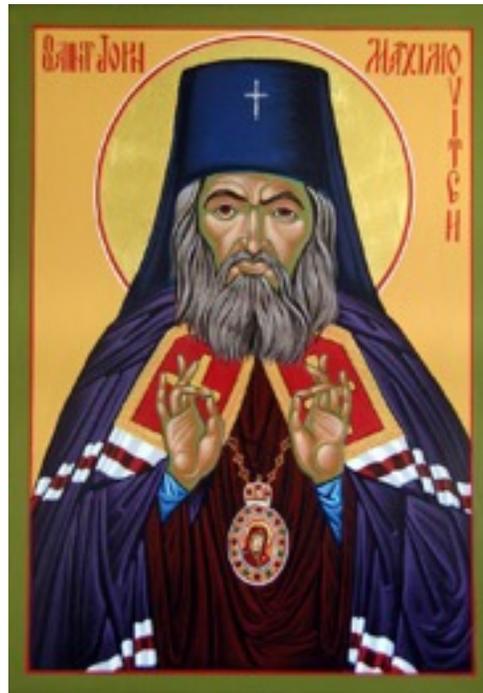
According to the law of Moses, all Hebrew parents must bring their first born son on the fortieth day after birth to the Temple to be consecrated to God. It was the custom to bring a sacrifice in thanksgiving to God. The law was established in remembrance of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt—freedom from slavery, when the first-born Hebrews were spared from death.

In fulfillment of this law, the Mother of God with Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, and for their sacrifice brought two fledgling doves.

At this time in Jerusalem, there lived an old man by the name of Simeon. He was a righteous, pious man, and he awaited the coming of the Messiah. It was foretold to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord. Simeon waited for the fulfillment of the promise of God for a long time. According to tradition he lived about 300 years. Then, one day, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he went to the Temple. When Mary with Joseph brought the infant Jesus, Simeon met the Child, took Him in his arms and glorifying God said, *“Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen*

Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples, a light of revelation for the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.”

Simeon called the new-born Lord, “a light to enlighten the Gentiles,” that is, all the tribes and nations, and “the glory of Thy people” that is, “Israel.” There are two Israels, the Old Testament and the New Testament one. In the Old Testament it was the chosen Hebrew people of Israelites, and in the New Testament—it is the whole Orthodox Christian world.



Great Lent will begin on Monday, February 23rd this year. The following is from a homily by St. John Maximovitch:

Open Unto Me the Doors of Repentance, O Giver of Life!

Repentance is expressed in Greek by the word metania (or metanoia). In the literal sense, this means an alteration of one’s mind, of one’s thinking. In other words, repentance is a transformation of one’s orientation, of one’s way of thinking, a transformation of a man within himself. Repentance is a re-examination of one’s views, an alteration of one’s life.

How can it come about? In the same way as when a dark room into which a man has happened to enter becomes illuminated by rays of sunlight. While he was looking at the room in the darkness, it presented itself to him in one aspect: much that was there he did not see, and he did not even imagine that it was there. Many things appeared to him not at all as they were in actual fact. He had to move cautiously, since he did not know where there might be obstacles. But now the room has become light: he sees everything clearly and moves freely. The same thing occurs in the spiritual life.

When we are immersed in sins and our mind is occupied only with worldly cares, we do not notice the state of our soul. We are indifferent as to how we are within, and go constantly by a false path, ourselves not noticing this.

But now a ray of Divine Light penetrates into our soul. How much filth shall we see then in ourselves! How much injustice, how much falsehood! How hideous will many actions turn out to be which we fancied excellent. It will become clear to us that we are going by wrong paths. It becomes clear to us which path is right.

If we shall acknowledge then our spiritual nothingness, our sinfulness, and with our whole soul shall desire our correction—we shall be near to salvation. From the depth of our soul let us call to the Lord: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy mercy!” “Forgive me and save me!” “Grant me to behold my sins and not to judge my brother!”

At the beginning of the Great Fast let us hasten to forgive each other all hurts and offences. Let us ever hear the words of the Gospel of Forgiveness Sunday:

If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt. 6:14-15)