

February 2

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Byzantine style, egg tempera, cm 32x40

The icons of Bose, Presentation of Jesus to the Temple

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

On February 2 all of the Christian churches celebrate the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. This feast reminds us that forty days after the birth of her firstborn son, Mary took the baby to the Temple to offer him to the Lord with a sacrifice of two turtledoves or pigeons, in accordance with the Law of Moses.

This fulfillment of the Law is also Jesus' first official encounter with his people, in the person of the elderly Simeon. For this reason the Orthodox churches call today's feast the Lord's Holy Meeting (Hypapanté). It is a meeting and a manifestation, because Mary enters the Temple "to reveal to the world the one who gave the Law and fulfills it," and to accompany the Son in his first act of offering to the Father.

The feast of the Presentation originated in Jerusalem, and is attested there as early as the fourth century. The church of Jerusalem's liturgy included a candlelit procession, which was later incorporated into Western liturgies and is still practiced today. It is inspired by the song of the elderly Simeon who, taking the infant Jesus in his arms, gives thanks to God and recognizes in the baby the "light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel."

As Christians celebrate this feast, they are invited to remember that poverty and longing - as expressed by Simeon, Anna the prophetess, and all of the poor of Israel whom Luke presents in the infancy Gospel - are what make it possible to recognize the Lord and his mission of universal salvation.

PRAYER

God of light,
you willed that your Son, the Word made flesh,
meet his people in the Temple
and be welcomed there by the poor
who were awaiting consolation.
Grant Israel the fullness of your salvation
and grant all nations the Messiah's light:
for this we offer ourselves to you
as a holy and living sacrifice,
through Jesus Christ, our only Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Gal 4:4-7 (vigil); Mal 3:1-4; Heb 2:14-18; Lk 2:22-32

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

The Presentation of the Lord (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (24 tubah/terr):

Mary of Alexandria (6th-7th cent.), nun (Coptic Church)

Marha Krestos of Dabra Libanos (d. 1497; Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple; Burkard of Würzburg (d. 753), bishop and missionary

MARONITES:

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

The Meeting of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

The Meeting of Christ in the Temple with the old Symeon

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

OLD CATHOLICS:

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple