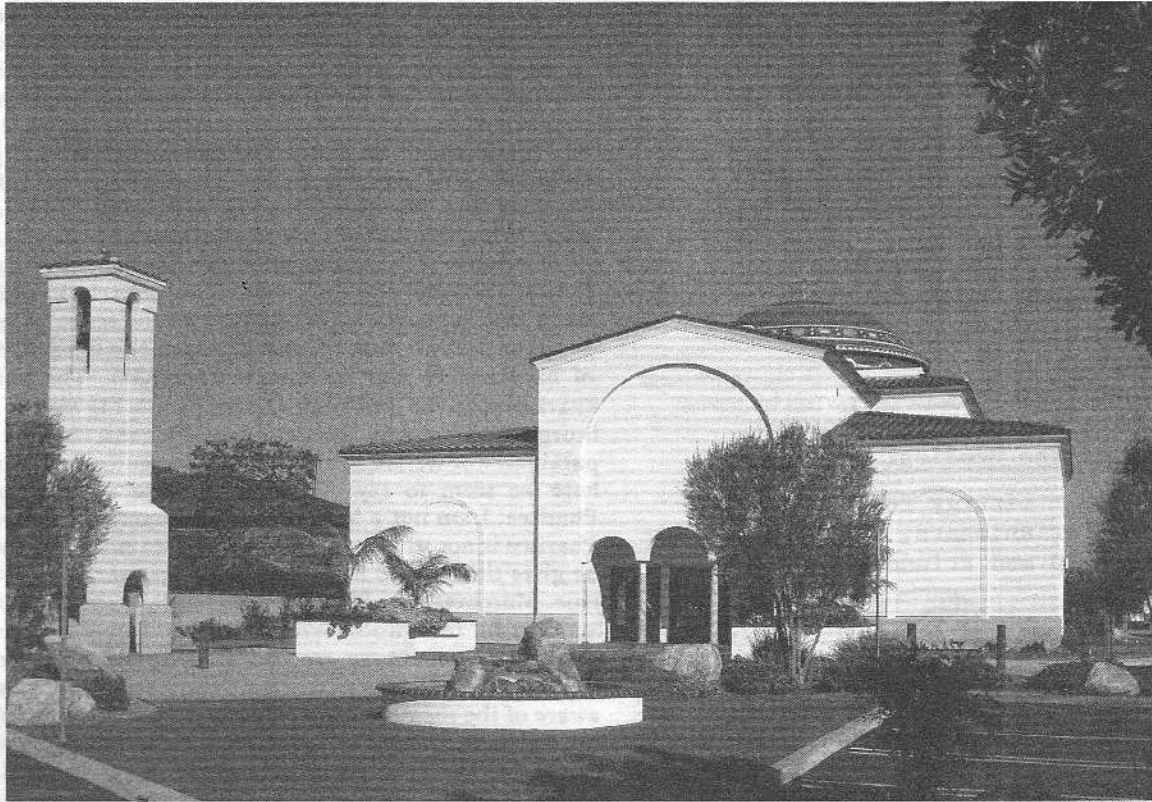


Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church



995 WEST STREET . ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA 92801

Daily Liturgy: 9:00 a.m. • Holy Days: 9:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Sunday Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday at 5:00 p.m.

Rev. Msgr. George N. Vida

Office (714) 533-6292 • Parish Center (714) 991-9782 • Fax (714) 991-9738

Parish E-Mail: annbyzcathchurch@sbcglobal.net

Website: www.annunciationbyzantine.org



DIVINE LITURGY SCHEDULE

MON (30) Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs

Simple Holy Day

9:00 am - Int Carol Pasmant
(Ron Pasmant)

TUE (31) ----- No Liturgy -----

WED (1) 9:00 am - + Families & Friends
(Denis & Sally Rock)

7:30 pm - Vesperal Liturgy
+ Sue Vanischak
(Helen Ruglovsky)

Blessing of Candles

THU (2) Solemn Holy Day
Encomter of our Lord with Simeon
and Anna

9:00 am - Liturgy for the people
Blessing of Candles

FRI (3) + Vasil, Mikulas & Anna
(Mary Calus)

SAT (4) + Edward Ruglovsky
(Helen Ruglovsky)

SUN (5) Sunday of the Prodigal Son

10:00 am - Liturgy for the good intentions of our Parishioners, Also remembering our Benefactors and Friends. Festal anointing.

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REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Jean Anderson, Margie Aquilar, Valerie Babyak, Joe Barolak, Marjory Bates, Betty Belanger, Mary Ann Bennett, Jennie Bergeron, Margaret Bivens, William Brown, Sarah Cadorette, Martha Cline, Dolores Demko, Fr. Harold Drexler, Monica Flores, Ramon Flores, Estela Garcia, Patricia Harrison, Dorothy Hazard, Eleanor Hipsley, Lillian Hoffman, Fr. Nicholas Ivan, Ruth Johnson, Tanya Johnson, Alex Justic, Don & Irene Knapp, Felicia & Ray Kuna, Anthony Kuwae, Fr. James Laue, Ralph Livingston, Don Jose Gallegos Marin, Fr. John Monestero, Enrique Moutelongo, Msgr. Michael Moran, Nick Moyta, Jutta Murray, Elaine Nale, Karen Nale, Stella Navarrette, Veronica Navarrette, Peter Nesbella, Evdokiya Obushko, Helen Onder, Carol Pasmant, Katherine Peavey, Betty Perebzak, Rosemarie Persek, Fr. Christophger Petruska, Fr. Gregory Petruska, Carol Petyo, John Pipta, Mary Jane Pipta, Deacon Paul & Irene Pipta, Rita Pipta, Grace Rocco, Laura Schaufel, Richard Sesma, Diana Shea, LaVida Sinek, Robert Skopeck Sr., George Smolinsky, Dr. Stephen Torday, John Valdez, Robert Valdez, Robert Vida, Susie Vida, Pilar Vree, Betty Wilcox, Don Wilson, Brian Wollwebber, Ramona Zifchak, Fr. Chris Zugger.

IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COUNTRY

Jerelle Hamaker, Allen Latimer, Dennis Lloyd, Scott Nale, Michael Perko, Matt Reynolds, Robert Skopeck Jr., Loui Villanueva.



*The Gates of Repentance
Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee*

'Open unto me, O Giver of Life, the gates of repentance . . . ' sings the Church at matins for the first of the four Sundays which prepare us for Lent. Indeed, this Sunday could be thought of as a gate: a gate through which we enter the sacred period which leads us on to Easter; a gate which opens into that atmosphere of repentance, to that life of repentance which Lent should bring to each one of us. But we must remember that the word "penitence" or "repentance" is a translation of the Greek gospel term *metanoia*: and that this means "change of spirit". Much more is involved than the observance of some kind of outward repentance. What is asked of us is radical change, renewal, conversion.

This Sunday, in the liturgical calendar, is called the 'Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican'. The Church, in order to exhort us to true repentance, sets before us the scene of two men who go to the Temple to pray, and of whom one is justified on account of his humility and his sincere contrition. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18. 10-14) that is read at the liturgy is, if one may dare to say so, the most dangerous of all the parables. For we are so accustomed to condemn Phariseeism that here we seem to say: 'At least, despite all my sins, I am no Pharisee. I am not a hypocrite'. We forget that the prayer of the Pharisee is not wholly bad. The Pharisee states that he fasts, that he gives tithes, that he is free of the grosser sins; and that is all true. Moreover, the Pharisee does not take the credit for his good actions; he recognises that they come from God, and he gives thanks to God. There are two ways in which the prayer of the Pharisee errs: it lacks repentance and humility. He does not seem aware of the shortcomings - perhaps excusable ones - of which he, like all men, is guilty; and, what is more, he compares himself to the publican with a certain pride, a certain disdain. Do we have the right to condemn the Pharisee, and to consider ourselves more righteous than him if, first of all, we break the commandments that the Pharisee observes? Have we the right to place ourselves - in contrast to the Pharisee - on the same level as the justified publican? We cannot do that unless our attitude is exactly the same as that of the publican. Would we dare to say that we have the publican's humility and repentance? If we ostentatiously condemn the Pharisee without truly becoming like the publican ourselves, we fall into Phariseeism itself.

• "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

—Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

THE FIRST ALL SOULS SATURDAY IS ON FEBRUARY 11.

"It is a holy and pious thought to pray for the dead..that they be freed from sin.." (Macc. 12:42-45) A free will offering envelope and name request card may be found in the Offertory Envelope box:

January 22, 2012

Adult Tithes	\$3,850.35
Youth Offerings.....	5.00
Votives.....	209.00
Mortgage Reduction..	25.00
Sanctuary Fund.....	205.00

SPECIAL DONATIONS

SANCTUARY FUND

- \$125. - In memory of George Sinek - His family
- \$55. - Robert Skopeck, Sr.
- \$25. - Moon Mary Gilbert
- Sanctuary "Eternal" Light
- \$201. - Moon Gilbert, Mitzi Moore, Jill Morse, Sally Rock, Kay Terry, Ruth Terry.

Thank you so much!

PILGRIM VOCATION ICON PROGRAM

Everyone in the parish is invited to pray for and encourage others within the Church that they might respond generously to God's call in their lives. We need generous women and men to minister among us as priests, deacons, monastics and sisters. We need people like you to pray for and encourage them. Sign up today to have the Pilgrim Vocation Icon in your home. You will be greatly blessed. Please sign up on the sheet that is posted on the bulletin board in the Center. For more information or to volunteer to help, please contact our parish coordinator, Sally Rock.

MARK THE DATE:

The ByzantEEN Youth Rally of 2012, involving all of our Eparchies, will be held July 12 - 15 at the University of San Diego in San Diego: 5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, 92110. Ages: 13 - 19 (Must be age 13 by July 12, 2012. No exceptions) Cost: \$275. per person. Theme: "O Joyful Light" Registration: Space is limited. Early registration recommended. Full payment together with completed registration forms must be sent and received by the Rally Planning Office no later than June 1, 2012. See enclosed flyer for more details.

Super Bowl Party

Good time with friends and family fun!

Annunciation Church Hall
995 N. West Street
Anaheim, CA 92801

February 5, 2012 at 3:30 p.m.



Come join us for fellowship, great food, and a super game!

Tickets: \$10.00 Adult \$20.00 Family

Menu: *Pulled Pork, Pulled Chicken Sandwiches on Hawaiian Sweet Bread* Hot Dogs*Chili*Potato Salad*Chips & Dip*Beer*Soda*Water*Coffee*

Please see Rita Pipta for tickets and information

Mardi Gras Dinner



Pre Lenten Celebration

Fat Tuesday on Saturday

February 18, 2012 - 5:00 to 9:00 P.M.

Dinner Menu

Festive Hors d'oeuvres

Basin Street Salad

"Chicken Gumbo"

Classic Southern Rice

French Quarter Veggie Medley

Bananas Foster

Rolls & Butter, Coffee, Soda, & Wine

Vegetarian dinner also available

Chinese Auction, Silent Auction, Door and Raffle Prizes,
Photo's (Wear a Costume and Join the Fun!)
No-Host Bar! Great Fun! Food! and Friends!!!

Annunciation Parish Center

995 North West Street

Anaheim, CA 92801

Adults: \$25.00, Children (4-12): \$15.00

Pre-Sale Tickets Only- See Rita M. Pipta for Tickets - 714-838-6067

Exhortation to the Lapsed

Of all the church fathers, St. John Chrysostom was the one who feared most the sinner's despair. He concludes his "Exhortation to the Lapsed Theodore" with the words, "Only do not despair." Throughout his homilies, he tries to impress upon his readers how easy forgiveness is: "You have sinned? Say to God, 'I have sinned.' How much trouble is that?"

When we are overwhelmed by guilt and in despair, we should not feel that it is hopeless to turn to God. The psalmist declares: "If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness." This is a marvelous hope-giving vision of the merciful nature of God. He will pay attention to a cry for mercy, for he is merciful. As another psalm, Psalm 103, put it (vv. 8-10),

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us
according to our iniquities.*

For Pondering

Among all my patients in the second half of life, that is to say, over thirty-five, there has not been one whose problem was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook. — K. Jung

The Power of the Name

Many times we wonder how the early Christian martyrs marched to their death so courageously. We cease to wonder about the source of their courage, however, when we consider the life of St. Ignatius, the God-bearer, Bishop of Antioch, who was crowned in Rome with a martyr's death under the emperor Trajan. We read about him: "When they were taking him to be devoured by wild beasts and he had the name of Jesus constantly on his lips, the pagans asked him why he unceasingly remembered that name. The saint replied that he had the name of Jesus Christ written in his heart and that he confessed with his mouth Him whom he always carried in his heart." The Jesus Prayer gave him the power to face death victoriously.

The Jesus Prayer can give us the same power to resist every evil thought and temptation with which Satan attacks us. For example, when Satan knocks on the door of the mind seeking entrance through some evil thought, send Jesus to the door and he will flee. Resist every temptation with the Jesus Prayer. As soon as you feel that the stronghold of your soul is being assaulted by Satan, start praying the Jesus Prayer constantly and with faith. Satan will flee. St. John Climacus says, "With the name of Jesus flog the foes, because there is no stronger weapon in heaven or earth."

Astronauts carry their own atmosphere with them when they enter outer space. In like manner it is possible for the Christian to create his own atmosphere or climate in the soul by the constant use of the Jesus prayer. Thus even though we live in a sinful world, we can have the power to resist the world of sin which surrounds us.

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On Religious Freedom, Years of Battles Ahead

A pair of momentous new government decisions on religion—in particular on whether religious institutions are exempt from secular laws—has given advocates of religious liberty a severe case of whiplash.

Early this month, the Supreme Court held (in *Hosanna-Tabor* *Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*) that a Lutheran school's decision to dismiss a teacher is an internal church issue that cannot be challenged under federal employment laws.

Just as the decision was beginning to sink in, the federal department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that numerous religious organizations won't be exempted from Obama-Care's requirement that employer health-care plans cover all of the costs of contraception. The message to Catholic hospitals and ministries that object to contraception: No accommodation for you.

After several decades in which the central church/state issues involved to what extent religious symbols and practice can appear in the public square, the key question of the coming decade will almost

certainly involve to what extent federal and state regulations will inject the government into internal religious affairs. The Supreme Court this month called for accommodation, but HHS didn't answer.

And this doesn't appear to be an accident. In the *Hosanna-Tabor* case, President Obama's solicitor general filed a brief insisting that the employee be permitted to sue the school and argue that the real reason she was dismissed was her decision to invoke employment laws. The government also suggested that, with regard to such laws, religious organizations are no different than other forms of association.

The Supreme Court swatted these arguments away by a 9-0 vote, recognizing an exception from the employment laws for those whose role is in some sense "ministerial." "[I]t is impermissible," Chief Justice Roberts wrote, "for the government to contradict a church's determination of who can act as its ministers." The court called the government's claim that religious organizations are no different than other organizations "hard to square with the text of the First Amendment itself, which gives special solicitude to the rights of religious organizations."

Consider the ironies: An administration that swept into office in

2008 promising to bring together people of all kinds seems to have less interest in accommodating diverse views than either the Supreme Court or many state legislatures, several of which have carved out robust religious exemptions for recent gay-marriage legislation.

The high court calls for accommodating religion. The White House pushes back.

New York, for example, not only exempted religious organizations from any obligation to perform or make their facilities available for gay marriages, but it also ensured that they won't be deprived of government benefits such as tax exemptions and licenses.

The Obama administration's reluctance to accommodate is also at odds with many years of progressive efforts to enhance protection for those whose religious views are out of the mainstream. Liberals were strong supporters of the Supreme Court's decision to exempt Jehovah's Witnesses from saluting the flag in 1943, and they were vociferous critics of a 1990 Supreme Court decision that upheld the denial of unemployment

benefits for Native Americans who smoked peyote, an illegal drug, in religious ceremonies.

To be sure, although the administration's HHS ruling flouts the spirit of the Supreme Court's decision, it probably satisfies the letter because it allows that religious organizations whose purpose is "the inculcation of religious values" aren't subject to the contraceptive-coverage requirement. This limited exception—which covers churches and some Catholic schools but not Catholic hospitals—appears consistent with the language of *Hosanna-Tabor*, as narrowly construed.

But it is also the worst possible solution to the deeply held commitments that divide us. Courts are precisely the wrong place to resolve the difficult accommodation issues that are pressing in from every side. Far better to hash them out legislatively, or through practical accommodation by the affected groups themselves. By adopting the stingiest plausible interpretation of the Constitution's protections for religion, the administration is steering us toward years of unending legal battles.

Mr. Skeel is a professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania and the co-author of the blog Less Than the Least.

WALL STREET JOURNAL

1/27/12

Glory to Jesus Christ!

January 26, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively impacts the Catholic Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The federal government, which claims to be “of, by, and for the people,” has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of the people—the Catholic population—and to millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful.

The US Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, *including Catholic employers*, will be *forced* to offer their employees’ health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be *forced* to buy that coverage as part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation’s first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. And as a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled either to violate our consciences or drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration’s sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom: Our grandparents and parents did not come to these shores to help build American cities and towns, its infrastructure and institutions, its enterprise and culture, only to have their posterity stripped of their God given rights. In generations past, the Church has always been able to count on the faithful to stand up and protect her sacred rights and duties. I hope and trust she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

I would ask of you, therefore, two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend visiting www.usccb.org/conscience to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration’s decision.

It is time for us to stand up and be counted. We cannot remain idle and hope this will go away by itself. Please join me in prayer and taking action by writing our local representatives in the Congress. May God bless all of our endeavors to right this wrong!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald N. Dino
Bishop of the Eparchy of Phoenix

ObamaCare and Religious Freedom

By Timothy M. Dolan

Religious freedom is the lifeblood of the American people, the cornerstone of American government. When the Founding Fathers determined that the innate rights of men and women should be enshrined in our Constitution, they so esteemed religious liberty that they made it the first freedom in the Bill of Rights.

In particular, the Founding Fathers fiercely defended the right of conscience. George Washington himself declared: "The conscientious scruples of all men should be treated with great delicacy and tenderness; and it is my wish and desire, that the laws may always be extensively accommo-

dated to them." James Madison, a key defender of religious freedom and author of the First Amendment, said: "Conscience is the most sacred of all property."

Scarcely two weeks ago, in its *Hosanna-Tabor* decision upholding the right of churches to make ministerial hiring decisions, the Supreme Court unanimously and enthusiastically reaffirmed these longstanding and foundational principles of religious freedom. The court made clear that they include the right of religious institutions to control their internal affairs.

Yet the Obama administration has veered in the opposite direction. It has refused to exempt religious institutions that serve the common good—including Catholic schools, charities and hospitals—from its sweeping new health-care mandate that requires employers to purchase contraception, including abortion-producing drugs, and sterilization coverage for their employees.

Last August, when the administration first proposed this nationwide mandate for contraception and sterilization coverage, it also proposed a "religious employer" exemption. But this was so narrow that it would apply only to religious organizations engaged primarily in serving people of the same religion. As Catholic Charities USA's president, the Rev. Larry Snyder, notes, even Jesus and His disciples would not qualify for the exemption in that case, because they were committed to serve those of other faiths.

Since then, hundreds of religious institutions, and hundreds of thousands of individual citizens, have raised their voices in principled oppo-

sition to this requirement that religious institutions and individuals violate their own basic moral teaching in their health plans. Certainly many of these good people and groups were Catholic, but many were Americans of other faiths, or no faith at all, who recognize that their beliefs could be next on the block. They also recognize that the cleverest way for the govern-

How about some respect for Catholics and others who object to treating pregnancy as a disease?

ment to erode the broader principle of religious freedom is to target unpopular beliefs first.

Now we have learned that those loud and strong appeals were ignored. On Friday, the administration reaffirmed the mandate, and offered only a one-year delay in enforcement in some cases—as if we might suddenly be more willing to violate our consciences 12 months from now. As a result, all but a few employers will be forced to purchase coverage for contraception, abortion drugs and sterilization services even when they seriously object to them. All who share the cost of health plans that include such services will be forced to pay for them as well. Surely it violates freedom of religion to force religious ministries and citizens to buy health coverage to which they object as a matter of conscience and religious principle.

The rule forces insurance companies to provide these services without

a co-pay, suggesting they are "free"—but it is naive to believe that. There is no free lunch, and you can be sure there's no free abortion, sterilization or contraception. There will be a source of funding: you.

Coercing religious ministries and citizens to pay directly for actions that violate their teaching is an unprecedented incursion into freedom of conscience. Organizations fear that this unjust rule will force them to take one horn or the other of an unacceptable dilemma: Stop serving people of all faiths in their ministries—so that they will fall under the narrow exemption—or stop providing health-care coverage to their own employees.

The Catholic Church defends religious liberty, including freedom of conscience, for everyone. The Amish do not carry health insurance. The government respects their principles. Christian Scientists want to heal by prayer alone, and the new health-care reform law respects that. Quakers and others object to killing even in wartime, and the government respects that principle for conscientious objectors. By its decision, the Obama administration has failed to show the same respect for the consciences of Catholics and others who object to treating pregnancy as a disease.

This latest erosion of our first freedom should make all Americans pause. When the government tampers with a freedom so fundamental to the life of our nation, one shudders to think what lies ahead.

Timothy Dolan is archbishop of New York and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

WALL STREET JOURNAL
1/23/12



The Meeting of the Lord

The Meeting of the Lord

Celebrated on February 2

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

Epistle: Hebrews 7:7-17; Gospel: Luke 2:22-30; Old Testament: Leviticus 12:2-8

FESTAL HYMNS

Troparian 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 Your Nativity, you sanctified the Virgin's womb! And blessed Simeon's hands, O Christ God. Now You have come and saved us through love. Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians, O only Lover of Man!

From Vespers and Matins

Receive, O Simeon, Him Whom Moses once beheld in darkness granting the Law on Sinai, and now Who has become a child subject to the Law. This is He Who spoke through the Law. This is He Who the prophets heard, Who for our sakes has taken flesh and saved man. Let us worship Him.

The aged servant of God, Simeon, seeing the Word of God held in the arms of His Mother, understood that this was the Glory revealed to the Prophets; and he cried: "Rejoice, O Holy Lady, for as a throne you carry God, Lord of the light that knows no evening and King of Peace."

PRAYER OF ST. SIMEON (Sung at each Vespers)

Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared in the presence of all people, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel. (Luke 2:38)

FOR PARENTS

Forty days after Christ was born He was presented to God in the Jerusalem Temple according to the Law of Moses. At this time as well, His mother Mary underwent the ritual purification, and offered the sacrifice as prescribed in the Law (Leviticus 12). It is at the Temple that the elder Simeon and the prophetess Anna, filled with the Holy Spirit, confirmed that the infant was the new-born Messiah Who would "cause the fall and the rising of many in Israel."

In the service of the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord, the fact emphasized is that Christ, the Son and Word of God, through whom the world was created, now is held as an infant in Simeon's hands; this same Son of God, the Giver of the Law, now Himself fulfills the Law, carried in arms as a human child.

The celebration of the Meeting of the Lord in the Church is not merely an historical commemoration. Inspired by the same Holy Spirit as Simeon, and led by the same Spirit into the Church of the Messiah, the members of the Church also can claim their own "meeting" with the Lord, and so also can witness that they, too, can "depart in peace" since their eyes have seen the salvation of God in the person of His Christ. (Taken from *Worship, The Orthodox Faith*, Vol. II, by Fr. Thomas Hopko)

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Read the Scriptural References and describe to your children how Christ fulfilled the "Law of Moses." (Leviticus 12)
- Identify and discuss the key figures in the festal icon.
- On this feast, we bless candles. This is to remind us that Christ, in the words of St. Simeon's Prayer, is "the light that enlightens" all mankind. Either bring a candle to Church to be blessed or pur-

chase a blessed one for your children. It can then be used at your evening meals during the post-festal period until February 9.

- Read or sing the Festal Troparion before or after each of your meals during the post-festal period.
- Discuss with your children the idea that Christ is the "light of the world" (i.e. He guides us in the way we should live; He helps us overcome evil; He gives us understanding in the ways of His Father).
- Use this truth that Christ is the "light of the world" and this feast as an opportunity to explain the reason for lighting our candles in Church. Encourage your children to light their own candles at each service.
- Incorporate "St. Simeon's Prayer" into your daily prayers during this post-festal season. (Compiled by Fr. Stephen Belonick, Binghamton, NY)

THE ICON

St. Joseph - on the extreme left; an elderly man with white hair and beard.

The Theotokos - second from the left.

Christ - as an infant in the center.

St. Simeon the God-Receiver - second from the right; an elderly man with white hair and beard.

St. Anna the Prophetess - on the extreme right; an elderly woman.

The Center Gates - indicate the entrance to the Holy of Holies, the most sacred section of the Temple. (Taken from *The Icon Book* by Boojamma, Essey, McLuckie and Matysiak)

Freedom of Religion and Prayer

In support of the truth – www.cinopsbegoneblogspot.com – Friday, January 27, 2012

Preface: As we proceed in reversing this HHS mandate forced on Catholic and other Christian institutions by the Obama regime; let's start with a historical perspective. The following are some thoughts from one of the books by one of the several Talk Shows hosts.

"The Founding Fathers guaranteed us "freedom of religion" not "freedom from religion." America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles. Go back to the drafting of the Constitution. It was the summer of 1787, and the representatives who broke free from the tyranny of the British Empire were gathered in Philadelphia to hammer out this great document. After weeks of almost no progress, many were ready to walk away from the convention.

"Benjamin Franklin, who was eighty-one years old, stood and challenged the leaders as follows,:

"I have lived, sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice [which, I should point out, is a direct reference to the words of Jesus in Matthew 10] is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sit, in the Sacred Writings that "except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this ... I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning."

"If you still have any doubt about America's Judeo-Christian heritage, listen to our third president, Thomas Jefferson. He said, "God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their own firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God? ... Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever." But the radical liberal socialists, who are intolerant of competing views, are counting on Americans to remain dumb sheep.

"Read what President Abraham Lincoln said in his Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer on April 30, 1863:

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplies and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that has made us! It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

George H. Kubeck

Feast of the Three Holy Bishops

On the 30th of January we celebrate the memory of three great and very outstanding bishops, teachers, preachers and Fathers of the Eastern Church: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Among our people this feast is known as the feast of the "Three Saints". These three hierarchs-bishops were giants of faith, courage, holiness and learning. They handed down to us the pure faith of the Council of Nicea; they expounded the dogmas of the Holy Trinity, Christ's divinity and the Holy Eucharist. Because of their great merits, in her liturgy our Eastern Church calls them peers of the Apostles, instruments of the Holy Spirit, pillars of the Church and universal teachers of the whole world. All three lived in the fourth century — the golden age of the Christian faith. St. Basil and St. Gregory were sons of Cappadocia in Asia Minor, intimate friends of approximately the same age. St. John Chrysostom, an Antiochian, was younger than the other two by twenty years. Apostolic zeal for the holy faith and salvation of souls united them.

Outstanding Features of the Three Hierarchs

St. Basil the Great (329-279)

The parents and grandparents of St. Basil the Great were distinguished patricians, influential and fearless champions of the holy faith. Basil's singular abilities and unusually keen mind, his insatiable desire for learning and his ample financial means, gave him access to the finest schools of learning and the most renowned professors of his time. The British historian, F. Farrar, describes St. Basil in this way: "His features and bearing, his slender form, his pale countenance, his keen eye, and grave manner — bore witness to his noble birth. The natural excellence of his character rendered his enemies shy, but attracted his friends. He was a born leader who by Christian humility overcame, with difficulty, his natural consciousness of his own superiority." (Lives of the Fathers, Vol. II)

St. Basil by nature was an ascetic and theologian. As the archbishop of Caesarea, he shone forth as a heroic defender of the holy faith, an efficient organizer, excellent orator, distinguished writer, reformer of liturgical services, zealous protector of orphans and the poor, and an outstanding legislator of communal monastic life. Because of his merits, holy Church bestowed upon him the title "Great". Our Church recalls his memory on January first, the day of his death.

St. Gregory the Theologian (c.326-290)

St. Gregory was named for his father who was a bishop in Nazianzen, in Cappadocia. Before he was even born, his pious mother, Nonna, made a vow to offer him up to the service of God. After he had grown to manhood, she gave him the Holy Bible, saying, "As I promised even before your birth, I now offer you to God; I beg you, therefore, to fulfill my desire. You were born as a result of my prayers. For this I now pray, that you be perfect. I entrust to you, my son, this precious treasure. Use it throughout your entire life, and in the future you shall receive still more blessings."

St. Gregory, like St. Basil, received a thorough education in the higher schools of learning. On his way to study in Athens, his ship was caught in a fierce storm at sea. At the time, he had not yet been baptized, and fearing lest he die without holy baptism, he made a vow that if he came out of the storm safely, he would consecrate himself to the service of

God. In Athens, he met St. Basil and they became faithful friends and remained so throughout their entire lives. St. Gregory speaks briefly about their life in Athens: "We knew only two roads — one to church to pray, the other to school to study."

His father ordained him to the priesthood, and later St. Basil appointed him Bishop of Sazima. St. Gregory was the Archbishop of Constantinople for several years. He distinguished himself as a profound preacher; his sermons are pearls and masterpieces of sacred eloquence. St. Gregory had great devotion to the Holy Trinity, regarding that dogma as the foundation of the Christian religion. Because of his deep knowledge of theology he received the title "the Theologian". In Byzantium, he was called the Christian Demosthenes.

St. Gregory was by nature quiet, tender, sensitive and compassionate. He always dreamed of a life of prayer and contemplation in solitude. As a writer he left sermons, poems and letters for posterity. He penned a sublime funeral oration in honor of his friend, St. Basil, and his father, Gregory. We celebrate the memory of his death on January 25.

St. John Chrysostom (347-407)

St. John Chrysostom was born in Antioch and labored there for many years as a zealous priest and an untiring evangelist. Preaching was an inseparable part of his life and soul. "I cannot allow one day to go by," he said to his congregation, "without offering you nourishment from the treasures of Holy Scripture. Although he was frail, nevertheless, he seemed to acquire new strength every time he ascended the pulpit to preach. He himself speaks of this: "Preaching makes me healthy. As soon as I open my mouth, all fatigue leaves me." He captivated great throngs of people by his sermons. Most of his homilies were Scripture-oriented, and in these he beautifully explains many parts of both the Old and New Testaments. For his ardent and moving sermons he received the title "Chrysostom-Golden-Mouthed". St. John Chrysostom as priest and bishop was completely dedicated to his Church and to his faithful. He was a great friend and protector of the poor, widows and orphans. Because of his illustrious talents, he was raised to the archbishop's throne in the capital city of Constantinople.

St. John Chrysostom was a zealous and completely dedicated pastor, a magnificent speaker, and a great teacher of faith and morals. He left over 800 sermons, a book on the priesthood, and numerous letters.

The Institution of this Feast

The feast of the Three Hierarchs is one of the very recent feasts of the Greek Church. A great dispute in the second half of the eleventh century gave rise to the institution of this feast. This controversy arose among Christians over which of these three Saints contributed the most to the Church. Some thought St. Basil to be the greatest, others, St. Gregory the Theologian, still others, St. John Chrysostom. Those who were advocates of St. Basil were called Basilians, those of St. Gregory — Gregorians, and those of St. John Chrysostom — Joanites. This dispute was settled by the three bishops themselves. Each one separately, and later all three together, appeared to John, Bishop of the city of Euchaita (a suburb of Constantinople), who was known for his wisdom, learning and virtue, and said: "We, as you can see, are one before God and there is nothing between us that is contrary or controversial; each one of us, differently inspired by the Holy Spirit, taught that which was necessary for the salvation of man. Therefore, there is no first or second among us, but as you call one so shall the others be called. Arise, then, and command those who are arguing over us, not to divide themselves, for as during life, so too after death, our goal is to bring peoples from all corners of the earth to peace and unity. Institute, therefore, the celebration of our memory on the same day, as all three of us are of the same rank before God, and we shall help those to achieve salvation, who shall celebrate our memory."

Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ

The Christmas cycle of feasts concludes with the feast of the Presentation of our Lord on February 2nd, the fortieth day after the Nativity of Christ. This feast is closely connected with the Nativity of our Lord, for just as Christ's divinity was revealed at his Nativity, so it is also manifested at his presentation in the Temple. From the meeting of the Divine Child and his most Holy Mother with the just Simeon, the feast in the Eastern Church receives its name "The Meeting or Encounter".

The Basis of the Feast

The feast of the Presentation or the Encounter is based on an event from the life of our Saviour, recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke (2,22-40). The law of Moses prescribed that every woman who gave birth to a male child was excluded from the temple for forty days, for during that time she was regarded as impure. These forty days were called "days of purification". When this period of purification was ended, the mother of the newly born child went to the temple and offered a year old lamb as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or turtle dove, while a poor woman had to offer a pair of pigeons or a pair of turtle doves. The most Pure Virgin Mary, being the Mother of God, was not bound to submit to this rite of purification, for she was sanctified by the birth of Christ, as our kontakion stresses: "You, O Christ, sanctified the Virgin's womb by your birth." Nevertheless, in her humility, she fulfilled the prescription of the law and offered as a sacrifice two turtle doves.

In addition to this, another rite was performed over the firstborn male on the fortieth day — the rite of offering him up to God and his subsequent redemption. He who was to sanctify and redeem all mankind, desired that he, himself, first be consecrated to God and then redeemed. "The Eternal God," says the stichera of Lytiya, "who of old gave the law to Moses on Sinai appears this day as an infant. The Creator of the law fulfills the Law. He is brought into the temple and given over to the elder."

Here the providential meeting or encounter of the Divine Child and his most Pure Mother with the righteous Simeon merits special consideration. St. Luke relates that Simeon "was just and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord." (2,25-26) Through divine inspiration Simeon recognizes the Child Jesus as the Messiah. He takes him into his arms and with a beautiful prayer blesses the Lord God for the grace of seeing with his own eyes the Promised Redeemer. Our Church always concludes the Vespers service with the prayer of Simeon "Now you may dismiss..." Meanwhile, the aged Simeon predicts to the Most Holy Mother of God her forthcoming sacrifice and suffering because of Jesus Christ.

The Institution of the Feast

The feast of the Presentation or the Encounter originated in Jerusalem in the second half of the fourth century. First mention of it is made by the pilgrim Silvia Egeria in her Diary, where she calls it "the fortieth day after the Epiphany". She describes its celebration in the following words: "The fortieth day after Epiphany is indeed celebrated here with the greatest solemnity. On that day there is a procession into the Anastasis (Church of the Resurrection), and all assemble there for the Divine Liturgy; everything is performed in the prescribed manner with the greatest solemnity, just as on Easter Sunday."

From Jerusalem the feast spread throughout the entire East, but only in the sixth century under the Emperor Justinian (527-565) did it assume special significance. Emperor Justinian ordered that the feast of the Presentation or Encounter be regarded as a great feast and celebrated throughout the entire Empire. For this reason, in the service of this feast the Church prays several times for the emperor.

The motives for the solemn celebration of the feast of the Presentation were two extraordinary events: a plague in Constantinople and vicinity, and an earthquake in Antioch. At the end of the year 541 a plague, from which people died daily by the thousands, afflicted Constantinople and its surrounding districts. This plague lasted for three months. In addition to this, a great earthquake occurred in Antioch. Tradition reports that, at the time, a certain holy man received a revelation from God that the disaster which had befallen the nation would cease when the solemn celebration of the Lord's Presentation had been instituted. The emperor ordered the feast of the Presentation to be solemnly observed and the plague ceased.

From the East, the feast of the Presentation passed over to Rome in the fifth century, and from there it spread to France and Spain in the seventh century, and then to Germany in the eighth century. Some ascribe its institution in the West to Pope Gelasius (†496), while others attribute it to Pope Gregory the Great (†604). Pope Sergius (687-701) is believed to have introduced the custom of holding a procession with candles on this feast, a custom which quickly spread from Rome to Jerusalem and other cities in Palestine. Cyril of Scythopolis (†557) in his "Life of St. Theodosius the Great" relates that a wealthy wife of a Roman official, named Icalia, built a beautiful church between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in honor of the Most Holy Mother of God and there introduced the custom of celebrating the feast of the Presentation with candles. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius (†c.541), speaks of this custom also in his sermon on the feast of the Presentation. The light of the candles is a beautiful symbol of the true light of God — our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Carrying candles in procession on the feast of the Presentation seems to have been practiced earlier in Alexandria. In his sermon on the bringing of the Child Jesus to the temple, Cyril of Alexandria (†444) mentions the carrying of candles on that day. Theodotus of Ancyra (†446) speaks of the same custom being practiced in Ancyra. Blessing candles on the feast of the Presentation became a custom only after the tenth century. First mention of it is made in the Roman-German Missal of the twelfth century.

In the West, the feast of the Presentation originally was counted as a feast of our Lord; only at a much later date was it recognized as a Marian feast designated as, "The Purification of the Most Pure Virgin Mary", or "The Offering of Jesus in the Temple". The most recent prescriptions of the Latin Church promulgated at the Second Vatican Council again place the feast of the Presentation among the Lord's feasts, designated as "The Offering of Jesus in the Temple".



Dear Padre

What is Candlemas?

Q My mother always went to church on Candlemas because she thought the candlelit procession was so beautiful. I haven't heard the name *Candlemas* in years. Do we still celebrate it?

Velma Mary

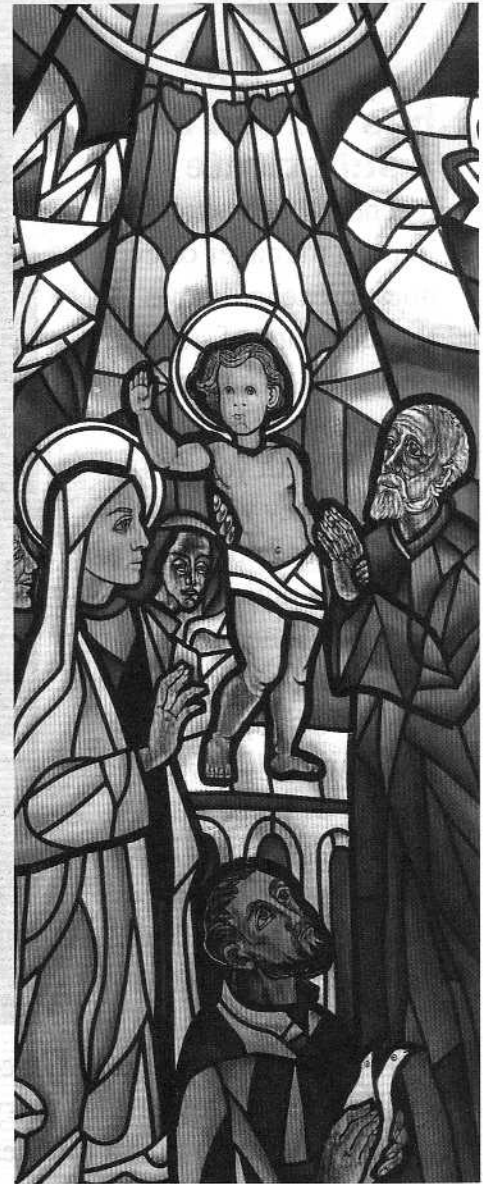
Dear Velma Mary,

Candlemas falls on February 2, forty days after Christmas. It's a popular name for the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, which recalls the day Mary and Joseph presented their child to God in the temple at Jerusalem in accordance with the law of Moses. We remember how the elderly believers, Simeon and Anna, recognized Jesus as their longed-for Messiah and how, addressing God in a canticle (song), Simeon proclaimed Christ to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

On the Feast of the Presentation, Mass starts with a blessing and the lighting of candles, which the priest and people carry either in procession or in a solemn entrance into the church. They rejoice over the Good News of Christ—the light of the nations—entering the world. The name *Candlemas* springs from this ritual blessing of candles.

In 1997, Pope John Paul II added an extra layer of meaning to Candlemas by proclaiming the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord to also be the annual World Day for Consecrated Life. Now many religious brothers, sisters, and priests mark the day as a moment for renewing their vows of religious consecration and celebrating their special vocation within the Church.

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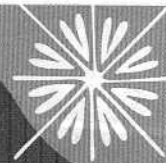
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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
January 30	January 31	February 1	February 2	February 3	February 4	February 5
Weekday	Saint John Bosco, priest	Weekday	Presentation of the Lord	Weekday	Weekday	Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
■	□	■	□	■ ■ □	■ □	■
2 Sm 15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13 Mk 5:1-20	2 Sm 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30-19:3 Mk 5:21-23	2 Sm 24:2, 9-17 Mk 6:1-6	Mal 3:1-4 Heb 2:14-18 Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22-32	Sir 47:2-11 Mk 6:14-29	1 Kgs 3:4-13 Mk 6:30-34	Jb 7:1-4, 6-7 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23 Mk 1:29-39

January 29, 2012

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sunday



Anyone who has served as a substitute

teacher or babysitter or interim manager or even guest preacher knows the challenge of stepping into a role of authority over people who aren't familiar with you. It's possible they will hear your message or lesson plan with anticipatory ears, awakened from their usual routine. More likely, though, will be complaints: "Our teacher doesn't do it *that way*," or "That's not how Mom makes our grilled-cheese sandwiches," or "Our pastor doesn't preach *that long*!"

Jesus had a similar experience in the synagogue in Capernaum. It was customary for men in the community to take a turn teaching in the synagogue. However, Jesus' teaching was like none the people had heard before—he spoke as one with authority. You can imagine the murmurings that traveled among the hearers, "Our scribes don't teach that way." "That's not what we're used to



hearing!" One unclean spirit even confronted Jesus.

Certainly this wouldn't be the last time Jesus' teachings led him into controversy. His continual challenge of the status quo eventually provoked those in power to send him to the cross.

But the Gospel reports that the people in Capernaum were "amazed" at his new teaching. Most responded with awe and respect for his profound words.

We who have been Christians for a while may think we know this Jesus and his teachings. We may have decided what

his message is, and we may have constructed for ourselves a simple Christianity that just requires us to be "nice" to others.

But are we willing to hear Jesus with new ears? His teachings are challenging, and they ought to shake us to the core. Will we, too, be amazed?

JANEL ESKER

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Today's Readings

Dt 18:15–20 • 1 Cor 7:32–35 • Mk 1:21–28



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