

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,
and the Mid-Atlantic

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

February 2, 2020

The Meeting of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ in the Temple

Beloved in Christ,

I greet you on the solemn and joyous feast of the Meeting of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ!

From the outset of His earthly life, the Lord Christ takes on the division between the thrice holy God and man in order to heal it. The Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One. The unapproachable One is born in a cave in order to be approached. The One Who requires obedience becomes obedient.

It was “revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Lk 2.26) and, inspired by the same Spirit, he came to the Temple where he met the new-born Messiah, took Him in his arms and said the words which are now chanted each evening at the end of the Orthodox Vespers service:

“Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel (Lk 2.29–32).

At this time as well, Simeon predicted that Jesus would be the “sign which is spoken against” and that He would cause “the fall and the rising of many in Israel.” He also foretold Mary’s sufferings because of her son (Luke 22.34–35). Anna also was present and, giving thanks to God, “she spoke of Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2.38).

Yet how did the elder Simeon and the prophetess Anna recognize the Christ Child? As proclaimed in the Gospel of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, they chose “another way”. That is the key to recognizing the presence of the Lord Christ. It is the noetic way. It is the way of purification and repentance. There is no other way. Simeon and Anna were able to recognize the Christ Child as the Savior because their hearts were pure. They had noetically prepared their hearts for this “meeting.”

In similar fashion, following “another way” is the only way in which we encounter Christ in our daily lives. It is not a matter of happenstance or luck. We encounter Christ in our daily lives when we are living the life He set out for us in the Gospels and our holy Church. This is not a matter of the intellect but a matter of the nous. When we encounter in ourselves deep repentance, we find Christ, the true treasure of our earthly existence. Once we encounter Him, nothing else matters. If we live in poverty, suffering, or poor regard by others, it doesn’t matter, because we have found the “pearl of great price,” Christ the Lord.

Seek Christ with every fiber of your being. Seek Christ with your heart. Forgoing all else, it will be worth the price of our temporary, earthly existence. May the Most Holy Theotokos protect you and the thrice holy God save you.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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