

**ST. SIMEON OF THE PRAYER: A STORY FROM HOLY TRADITION BY
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*First published in The Word magazine, March 1960 and posted on
the Archdiocesan WebPage*

According to the witness of Holy Scripture, the old Simeon was a man "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him." (Luke 2:25) From God, Simeon had been foretold about the coming of the true Messiah. Ancient historians teach us the following about St. Simeon.

The great and divinely inspired work of translating the Old Testament books from the Hebrew to the Greek language was begun and Seventy-two (sometimes referred to as 70) Hebrew elders from the twelve tribes of Israel were selected for the work of translation. Each Hebrew elder was a teacher of Mosaic Law, a scriptural scholar, and proficient in both the Greek and Hebrew languages. These divinely inspired men brought forth the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. Among these scholars who translated the books of the Old Testament into Greek was the elder Simeon.

While translating the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Simeon came to the words; "Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son" (Isaiah 7:14). Reading them, he became confused, thinking it was impossible for a Virgin without husband to give birth. Simeon took a knife and was ready to erase the word – *Virgin* – and substitute the word – *wife* when an angel of God appeared, held Simeon's hand and said:

"Have faith in the written word, and you yourself will see its fulfillment. You will not die until you yourself see the one who is to be born of a pure Virgin – the Lord Christ."

With a strong belief in the prophetic words of the angel, Simeon impatiently waited the coming to earth of the Anointed One. For many, many years he led a righteous and immaculate life, avoiding all temptation and evil. Daily he prayed at the Temple that God would grant peace and mercy on His earth and save mankind from the all-vain Devil. His eyes gazed upon many infants who were brought to the Temple forty days after birth according to the Law of Moses (Exodus 13, 2). With all the infirmities of old age, and perhaps even a wish for release, Simeon continued to believe, and hope, and pray.

Forty days after Christmas, Ss. Mary and Joseph carried the Infant Jesus from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present Him in thanksgiving at the Temple. When Simeon saw the Eternal Infant, he immediately recognized the predicted Messiah; and here at last stood she through whom the prophecy of Isaiah was accomplished. Seeing the Holy Family surrounded by a heavenly glow and crowned by a Godly light, Simeon with fear and joy came forth, received the God-Infant, and while carrying Him exclaimed: "Lord now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32).

After this Simeon foretold the passion of Christ, the crucifixion, and the sorrow of the Theotokos seeing her Son on the cross. (Luke 2:34-35). He soon fell asleep in the Lord at an age likened to the patriarchs of the first biblical era. God had willed that he should live to the moment awaited for many ages – the birth of the Ageless Son from a Virgin to Whom be glory forever. *Amen.*



TODAY WE CELEBRATE ONE OF THE TWELVE GREAT FEASTS OF THE CHURCH - - THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD TO THE TEMPLE

This feast, celebrated on February 2, is known in the Orthodox Church as The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Another name for the feast is The Meeting of our Lord. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians call the feast, The Purification of the Holy Virgin. About 450 AD in Jerusalem, people began the custom of holding lighted candles during the Divine Liturgy of this feast day. Therefore, some churches in the West refer to this holy day as Candlemas. The Feast of the Presentation concludes the observances related to the Nativity of Christ, a period that opened on November 15 with the beginning of the Nativity fast.

The story of the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice.

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. He was a holy man and was noted as a very intelligent scholar. Simeon spent much time studying about the prophets of Israel. It was during his studies that he learned of the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from their conquerors. From that time on, Simeon spent his time praying for the Messiah to come. He spent many years in prayer. Finally, while Simeon was praying he heard the voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the baby in his arms and blessed the Lord and said:

"Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel."

This blessing is a part of our weekly Vespers Services

Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the Temple worshipping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Christ Child she praised God and spoke of him to all who were awaiting the Messiah. After Jesus was presented in the Temple, the family returned to Galilee to the town of Nazareth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong, and was filled with wisdom.

