

**Українська Католицька  
Церква Св.Родини**

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**Holy Family Ukrainian  
Catholic Church**

**Pastor:** Fr. Olvian N. Popovici

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Bogdan Shafranski (516) 250-8009

**Choir Director:** Iryna Popovych 943-3348

Nataliya Popovici – **English cantor**

**Advisor:** Gloria Tolopka (631) 667-6483

**Sunday Divine Liturgies:** 9:00 am - English / 10:15 am - Ukrainian

**Weekday Divine Liturgies:** 8:00 am or 9:00 am or 7:00 pm

**Holy Days Liturgy:** 9:00 am or Previous Day at 7:00 pm

**No. 5/17**

**CHURCH BULLETIN – ЦЕРКОВНИЙ ВІСНИК**

**January 29, 2017 / Січень 29, 2017**

**DIVINE LITURGIES SCHEDULE:**

**37<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Zacchaeus), January 29, 2017.** Translation of the Relics of Great Martyr Ignatius the God – bearer Of Antioch.

**Tone 4:** Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15. / Gospel: Luke 19:1-10.

**9:00 a.m. – Pro Populo – English.**

**10:15 a.m. – (God's' Blessing upon Ihor, Antonina, Ihor and Artem Hyshko, req. Family) – Ukrainian**

**Monday, January 30, 2017.** The Holy Three Hierarchs.

**9:00 a.m. - ☩ Nestor Hudziy, req. Smith Family**

**Tuesday, January 31, 2017.** Cyrus and John Unmercenaries.

**9:00 a.m. - God's Blessing upon Robert & Leticia Nalewayko. (5)**

**8:00 p.m. - Bible Study (Reading, Explanation, etc) – Eng.**

**Wednesday, February 1, 2017.** Trypon Martyr.

**9:00 a.m. – God's Blessing upon Slawomir & Helen Samilo**

**8:00 p.m. - Bible Study (Reading, Explanation, etc) – Ukr.**

**Thursday, February 2, 2017.** Presentation of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Note: It's a major Holy Day.**

**9:00 a.m. – Pro Populo (after Ambo Prayer blessing of the candles) – Eng.**

**7:00 p.m. – God's Blessing upon Martin & Silvia Smith**

**Friday, February 3, 2017.** Synaxis of the Holy Prophets Simeon and Anna.

**9:00 a.m. – God's Blessing and God health upon Oleksandra, req. Sophia Khodyn**

**Saturday, February 4, 2017.** Isidore Venerable.

**6:00 p.m. – Vespers (Вечірня)**

**7:00 p.m. – God's Blessing upon Ihor & Olesia Warywoda**

**Publican and Pharisee Sunday, February 5, 2017.** Translation of the Relics of Great Martyr Ignatius the God – bearer Of Antioch.

**9:00 a.m. – Pro Populo – English.**

**10:15 a.m. – (God's' Blessing upon Oksana and Moskalyuk Family, req. Moskalyuk Family) – Ukrainian**

**Confessions:** Can be heard by appointment daily and on Sundays before or after the Divine Liturgy.

**Baptism and Chrismation:** By appointment. Sponsors must be practicing Catholics.

**Marriage:** Please contact the Pastor at least six (6) months in advance.

*Attendance at pre - Cana is required.*

**Ukrainian Culture School will be held Every Saturday from 9:00 am**

**until 1:30 p.m.** For more information please call the Rectory or contact the Director, Mrs. Izolda Maksym at (631) 225 -1203 or visit our web page: [ukrainskaschkola.com](http://ukrainskaschkola.com).

**Ukrainian Cultural Dances** for children ages 5 to 12 are provided by Mr. Gregory Momot of Paramus, NJ, every Saturday, by groups: ages (5 – 8) 1:35 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.; ages (8 – 12) 3:05 p.m. – 4:35p.m.

**Religious Education:** Classes for religious education will be held every Monday from 5:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. Please contact the rectory for further information.

**Ministry to the Sick:** Rev. Popovici will make visits to the sick on the first Friday of the month. It is the responsibility of an immediate family member to kindly notify Rev. Popovici at the Rectory office about any sick or aged individual who is hospitalized or confined at home or in a nursing home, and he will gladly visit and administer the sacraments. In case of emergencies please call any time.

**Pray the Rosary:** The Apostleship of Prayer requests members and parishioners pray the Rosary on the **First Sunday** of each month, beginning 20 minutes before Divine Liturgy. The Rosary Society requests members and parishioners pray the Rosary on the **Third Sunday** of the Month beginning at 10:00 a.m. before Ukrainian Divine Liturgy.

**Mothers in Prayer:** Next prayer group will be held on **February 3, 2017 at 8:00 p.m.**

**St. Joseph's Men's Prayer:** group will be held every Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

**Rectory Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm; Saturday: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm;** Evenings by appointment. **Attention: Tuesday** is a free day for the priest. In case of an emergency, please call at any time.

**Divine Liturgy:** Dear Parishioners! Remember your faith; please come every Sunday and Holy Days to Church.

**Divine Liturgy for Children:** Special Divine Liturgy (English/Ukrainian language) for family/children will be held today **Sunday February 5, 2017 at 12:00 Noon.** All parents are requested to bring their children to church to celebrate the Holy Divine Liturgy.

**Sunday Bulletin Deadline:** Notices should be phoned in or brought to the Parish Office **NO LATER** than 12:00 noon on the Friday prior to the Sunday of publication.

**Bequests:** In making out your will, kindly remember your church. Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church of Lindenhurst, N.Y. is our legal title.

**New Parishioners:** Welcome to Holy Family Church! To all who are tired and need rest, to all who mourn and need comfort, to all who are friendless and need friendship, to all who are discouraged and need hope, to all who are hopeless and need sheltering love, to all who sin and need a Savior, this Church opens wide its doors in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please stop by the Rectory to introduce yourselves and register. We look forward to meeting you.

**Change in address or telephone?** Parishioners, kindly provide the rectory with your new address and telephone numbers as soon as possible.

**Parishioners and guests: after each Divine Liturgy, coffee, rolls, & cakes are served in the Parish Center for a donation of \$3.00 per person.**

**Sunday Collection – January 22, 2017. Caroling - \$300.00**

*"Give to the Most High as He has given to you, generously, for the Lord is one who always repays, and He will give back to you sevenfold." (Sir. 35: 9 – 10).*

Candles: \$165, Terapod: \$5, Shopka: \$3, Initial: \$5, Energy: \$40, Epiphany: \$120, Christmas: \$70, Pyrohy: \$30, Holy Days: \$30, Annual Support: \$250, Coffee: \$95, **Pledge: \$210.00, Sunday Offering: \$1,070.00, Total - \$2,393.00.**

**Dear Parishioners:** *Sincere thanks for the offerings made on Sunday, January 22, 2017. May God bless you all for your generosity.*

**Our Prayer:** *Please remember all those parishioners who are ill or elderly within your families. They are part of our parish and need to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacraments of Confession and Communion. To schedule a visit by the priest, please call the rectory for an appointment.*

**Attention: To all who celebrate their birthday** during the month of **January and February**, our best wishes and many happy healthy years! Mnohaya Lita and God's Blessing.

**Our Church News:**

**1. Dear Parishioners "Annual Parish Support"**. Please remember to use the "Annual Parish Support" envelope in your box of donation envelopes! All parishioners should make this donation to ensure we have funds to help get us through the long winter months. The yearly amount is \$25 for an individual and \$50 for a family.

**2. Fresh Pyrohy** for sale with: potatoes, cheese kapusta (onions included.) The price for one dozen is \$6.00. This is a church fundraiser.

**3. February collections: Regular church cleaning:** The next free will donation will be collected on Sunday, February 19, 2017.

**4. We wish to express our sincere thanks to:**

a) Mr. Thomas Laraia who prepared parishioners' donation tax receipts for the 2016 tax year.

b) **eighteen** parishioners who donated their time and energy to make an assortment of pyrohy on Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup> for our Prospora Luncheon and for sale later this month.

c) Mrs. Oksana Vladychack and her daughter Anastasia who removed the Christmas trees from our vestibule and Church this past week Mr and Mrs. Slawomir and Helen Samilo who removed and stored our Nativity and cleaned our church this past week. May God bless all those who volunteered or made donations and may He reward you with His choicest Blessings.

**5. House Blessings with a special Prayer:** It is a long standing custom among Ukrainians to have their homes blessed with holy water sanctified during the Feast of Theophany (the feast which commemorates the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River.) If you would like to have your home blessed, please contact Fr. Popovici or call the office to make arrangements or to ask questions.

**6. Dear Parishioners: Our Prospora (end of the Christmas season) Luncheon will be held on January 29, 2017 after the 10:15 am Ukrainian Divine Liturgy. Admission will be \$25.00 per person. To bring the Christmas Season to a close, please plan to attend and celebrate as a parish family with Honored Artist of Ukraine Mrs. Iryna Lonchyna. More information is attached to our bulletin.**

**7. Dear Parishioners:** We have scheduled a **Valentine's Day Luncheon** on Sunday February 12, 2017 after both Divine Liturgies sponsored by the Rosary Society. Admission is \$6.00, children under 7 are free. Please come and join us on this day.

**8. Traditionally Sorokousty (both calendars) begins on the Saturday before the Sunday of Meat fare (Carnevale) this year February 18, 2017. During Lent, Sorokousty will be held on Saturdays. Kindly provide the names of your loved ones whom you wish to have remembered in our prayers.**

**Dear Parishioners: ANNOUNCING our 2nd parish pilgrimage: A MARIAN PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY SITES OF EUROPE is scheduled from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Only 43 seats are available.** Join us on a ten day spiritual journey focusing on the apparitions of the Mother of God in Lourdes and Fatima. As St. Louis Marie DeMontfort, author of *True Devotion to Mary* said, "To Jesus Through Mary." **VISIT 3 COUNTRIES – STAY IN 10 CITIES – ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE SHOWERED WITH GOD'S BLESSINGS!** We invite you, not just on another trip, but a spiritual journey you will never forget. **For more information ask Fr. Popovici.**

**House Blessing:** *It is the custom among many Ukrainian and Eastern Christians to have their homes blessed with the holy water sanctified on the feast of Theophany (the feast which commemorates the Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan River). **The Purpose:** The annual blessing of homes is a custom of special beauty and significance. We again ask Christ to bless and enter into our homes and our lives. We ask Him to be with us, as we desire to be with Him. We ask that by the sprinkling of blessed water, the Holy Spirit renew us, our families and our lives in our homes. As Christ brought salvation to the house of Zacchaeus; we ask the same for all those who dwell in our homes. Theologically speaking, the blessing of home constitutes an invocative blessing, meaning that by prayer and by the sprinkling of the Holy Water the priest invokes God's protection upon the home and those living in it. One of the prayers used in the blessing of homes declares: "Now, You, O Lord, protect also all those who dwell in this house from all harm and injury; grant them Jordan's blessing, purifications, which are for their salvation and life eternal." As our souls, so also our homes become tainted by the sins of those living in them and, consequently, lose God's protective power. Every year then, at the Feast of Theophany, they should be blessed again to secure for them God's blessings and protection. **If you would like your home blessed, please write your name and daytime contact telephone number on a sheet of paper and drop it in the Sunday collection or call Fr. Popovici for an appointment. House blessings can be done through February 15, 2017.***

**Please Note: Holy Communion;** Holy Communion, which we have received in the state of sanctifying grace, brings us these benefits: a) A closer union with Jesus Christ, a greater love of God and our neighbors; b) an increase of sanctifying grace; c) preservation from mortal sin and remission of venial sins; d) the lessening of evil inclinations and help to perform good works.

We are obliged to receive Holy Communion each year during Easter and when in danger of death. However, it is most beneficial to receive Holy Communion frequently, even daily, but at least once a month. For that intimate union with Jesus Christ, the Source of all holiness, the Giver of all good things and graces, and helps us to lead a holy life is essential.

Is it necessary to go to Confession before each reception of Holy Communion? Confession before Holy Communion is necessary only if one has mortal (serious) sin. For venial (Slight) sins one may confess them or say sincerely an act of contrition for them. But it is recommended to go once a month to confession as part of our spiritual life with Jesus.

**News from St. Basil College Seminary:** St. Basil College is offering special cours for all who would like to attend: **BIOETHICS CERTIFICATE PROGRAM AT ST. BASIL SEMINARY** to be held between February 9 – 12, 2017. For more information and a schedule of the program please visit at [www.stamorddio.org](http://www.stamorddio.org).

## A GUIDE TO THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

.....*Continue from Previous Bulletin*

### How often should I go to Confession?

Individual and integral confession remains the only ordinary way for us to reconcile ourselves with God and the Church. A Catholic who has committed mortal (grave) sin is obliged to seek God's forgiveness in this sacrament as soon as possible. In ordinary circumstances, a Catholic who has committed mortal sin should not receive Holy Communion before receiving sacramental absolution. Not only does God forgive our sins, but we also receive the power of God's grace to struggle against sin and to be strengthened in our commitment to God and the Church. So powerful is the grace of this sacrament that the *Introduction to the Rite of Penance* reminds us that frequent and careful reception of this sacrament is also very useful as a remedy for venial sins. This is not a mere ritual repetition or psychological exercise, but a serious striving to perfect the grace of baptism so that, as we bear in our body the death of Jesus Christ, his life may be seen in us ever more clearly. (Catholics are required, at a bare minimum, to go to Confession at least once per year during the Easter season.)

### Conclusion: Our Continuing Conversion

As we complete these thoughts on the sacrament of Penance, we might well reflect that the deepest spiritual joy each of us can sense is the freedom from whatever would separate us from God, a loving and merciful Father who receives each of us with all the forgiveness and love lavished on the prodigal son. Renewed, refreshed and reconciled in this sacrament once more, we who have sinned become a "new creation." Once more we are made new. It is this newness of spirit and soul that we hope all of us experience time and again in the sacrament of Penance.

### Examination of Conscience

As you prepare to make a good confession, you want to ask God's forgiveness for any way in which you have offended Him but particularly for any serious sin. If you are not certain what you should bring to the priest in confession, do not be afraid to ask him for help. The priest is there to assist you and to share with you God's love and mercy. Many people find the Ten Commandments to be a good frame of reference for an examination of conscience. The Commandments are listed here as a reminder that you might find helpful.

I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not kill (murder).

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

**Act of Contrition:** O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee (you), and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend Thee (you), my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy (your) grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

**Original Sin** is the sin committed by Adam and Eve, the first human beings. This sin was a willful act of disobedience, a rejection of God's command that was so devastating that it ruptured the relationship which our first parents enjoyed with God. As a result of this sin, paradise was lost to them and to their descendants until our Redeemer, Jesus Christ came to conquer sin and death and restore us to our inheritance of the Kingdom of God. Original sin taints all human beings and is washed away through the sacred waters of Baptism. However, while original sin is removed, its effects remain. One of these effects is concupiscence, that disordered desire within us which produces an inclination to sin.

**Mortal Sin** is defined by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as "a grave infraction of the law of God that destroys the divine life in the soul of the sinner (sanctifying grace), constituting a turning away from God. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be present: grave matter, full knowledge of the evil of the act, and full consent of the will". The *Catechism* emphasizes that "to choose deliberately - that is both knowing it and willing it - something gravely contrary to the divine law and to the ultimate end of man is to commit a mortal sin. This destroys in us the charity without which eternal (happiness) is impossible. Unrepented, mortal sins brings eternal death". This "eternal death" we call Hell, where those who have died unrepentant of mortal sin suffer the actual pain and eternal separation from God and loss of eternal happiness, i.e., seeing God face-to-face.

**Venial Sin**, according to the *Catechism*, "does not destroy the divine life in the soul, as does mortal sin, though it diminishes and wounds it". Venial sin is a failure to observe necessary moderation, in lesser matters of the moral law, or in grave matters acting without full knowledge or complete consent". We must realize, however, that while venial sins do not have the grave effects of mortal sin, "deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin". It should be the goal of every Christian to strive, through steadfast prayer, acts of penance and works of charity, for a life free of sin.

### Icons

by Matthew Saadalla

Iconography of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Theotokos Virgin Mary, and the saints who have died in the faith, stands as a great heritage in the Eastern Church. Iconography has existed within Christianity perhaps since apostolic times. The earliest evidence of icons is found in the catacombs. Later, in the early house churches, there were icons that focused on Old Testament themes, which were in turn taken from

elaborate Jewish synagogues in the Diaspora, such as the Dura-Europos synagogue. As Eastern Christians, we do not worship icons, but we praise what and whom the icons represent. This is due to the fact that icons are essentially representations of what they portray, and as such we venerate what the icon represents. Accordingly, St. Cyril of Alexandria, in his address to the emperor Theodosius, said, *"Images are representations of their archetypes and therefore are similar to them."* There has been various ways that the use of icons has been attacked, whether by Christians themselves (known as the Iconoclasts) or by people of other faiths, such as Islam. Three main arguments have been made by Iconoclasts against the use of icons: First, the second commandment clearly says that no one should make idols or images; others would think that Christians worship the icons in the same way that pagans worshipped images and statues of the gods; and yet others would hold that representations of Christ imply a Nestorian tendency of separating the human nature and the divine nature of the Incarnate Logos. Let us begin with a response to the first iconoclastic argument. The second commandment does not merely state that images must not be made, but it continues by saying that images should not be worshipped: *"You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them..."* (Ex. 20:4, 5a). The commandment, then, was given to lead the people of Israel away from idolatry – they should not make the idols or images to worship them. Also, during the days when the commandments were given to Moses, there were various nature religions, and all civilizations on earth, such as that of the Ancient Egyptians, worshipped idols by turning the created matter into a god, just as St. Paul the Apostle wrote: *"Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!"* (Rom 1:22-25). So, in answer to the second iconoclastic argument, we can say that the mistake of these ancient peoples is that they worshipped created matter, rather than use matter as an aid of worshipping the true Creator. In fact, God, who gave the second commandment, told Moses himself to build a tabernacle, where in the first tent there was the Holy of Holies, covered by two golden, forged Cherubim. The Cherubim were heavenly creatures, and were made as commanded by the Lord, but they were not worshipped -

Moses used this altar to offer praise and sacrifice to the Lord. Another case with Moses was the wooden cross with the bronze snake on. The wood and the metal did not heal the people from their ailments, but God Himself worked through the material to heal the people, so when the people looked at the cross and the bronze snake, they were looking for hope through God, rather than the snake and the wood itself. St. Athanasius sums it up in his thirty-eighth chapter of the one hundred chapters written to Antiochus the Prefect with the following words: *"We the faithful do not worship images as gods, as did the heathen Greeks – God forbid! – but our only purpose and desire is to see in the image a reflection of the facial form of the beloved. Therefore if the image should be obliterated, we would throw it into the fire as so much scrap lumber. Just as when Jacob was about to die, he bowed down before the point of Joseph's staff, not honouring the staff but its owner, so also the faithful do not embrace images for their own sake, but kiss them as we often embrace our children or our parents, to show the affection in our hearts. So also the Hebrew, when they venerated the tablets of the law, or the two cherubim, hammered from gold, did not honor stone or gold for its own sake, but the Lord who had ordered them to be made."* Hence, the material itself has no power, and for this reason we do not worship icons. But we believe that when we look at an icon of Christ, we are truly looking at whom it represents. Also, when we venerate the icons of the saints, we venerate the saints themselves, who are alive with Christ and pray for us, and by venerating them we venerate their virtues, and so we venerate the Author of all virtues, our Lord and God. Now, if for example you choose to show "admiration" to the picture, are you really showing this sentiment to the picture, or to whom the picture represents? The same thing applies to icons. We do not venerate the wood or the gold or anything on the icon, but whom or what the icon represents. St. Anastasius of Constantinople wrote in a letter to Simeon of Bostra: *"Just as in the emperor's absence we bow down to his image instead of himself, so also when he remains present it would be strange to ignore the prototype and bow before the image. This is not to say that the image we ignore because the prototype is present can be dishonoured. Just as someone who insults the emperor's image is punished as if he has insulted the emperor himself, even though the image is composed merely of wood and paint joined together, so also one who insults someone's image intends the insult for the original."* The final iconoclastic argument was about depicting Christ in icons – can Christ be depicted in images, and would that be seen to have a Nestorian tendency of separating the divine and human natures in Christ? According to St. John of Damascus, we can depict God (specifically the Son and the Holy Spirit, but never the Father) because God took matter – that is, human nature – and united it to Himself. So now, the undepictable God became depictable,



and we can depict the depictable. Furthermore, when the Lord is depicted in icons, he is worshipped as the one Incarnate Logos, and His depiction as a Man does not divide the union, as St. Basil the Great said in the eighteenth chapter of his *Thirty Chapters to Amphilochius on the Holy Spirit*: “*The image of the emperor is also called the emperor, yet there are not two emperors. Power is not divided, nor is glory separated. Just as He who rules us is one power, so the homage He receives from us is united, not divided, for the honour given to the image is transferred to the prototype. Therefore, the One whom the image materially represents is He who is Son by nature. Just as the likeness of a corresponding form is made by the artists, so also in the divine and unconfused nature, union is accomplished by divine indwelling.*” In conclusion, the material used in making the icons can and never will heal us on its own accord. Rather, icons are representations of the real Lord and the real saints, and when we venerate the icons, we are truly venerating the Lord and the saints, and hence worship God who revealed Himself and showed marvellous wonders through His saints. St. Dionysius the Areopagite, in his *Letter to Titus*, said, “... *Instead of attacking the common understanding of them (i.e. images), we ought to comprehend their sacred significance, and not despise their divine origin the sacred things which they portray, for they are visible manifestations of hidden and marvellous wonders,*” and Stephen of Bostra, one of his book said that “*we make images of the saints to remember such people as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, and Zechariah, the rest of the prophets and holy martyrs, who gave their lives to God. Everyone who looks at these images remembers these saints, and they glorify the One who glorified them.*”

**Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ:** The Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ commemorates the Entrance of Our Lord into the temple 40 days after His Nativity. At that time, in fulfillment of the Old Testament Law, Christ Our Savior was carried by His Mother and the Holy and Righteous Joseph to the temple, where a Holy Prophet, Simeon the Just, received the Divine Savior into his arms and presented Him at the Holy of Holies. Liturgically this feast is called “The Meeting-The Presentation” for it was at this event that the Lord God, Our Savior Jesus Christ, first “encountered” the people of the Law in the Jewish Sanctuary. The Holy and Righteous Simeon had been promised that he would not die before he would behold with his own eyes the Messiah. When he received Our Lord, he joyfully prayed this prayer - which is properly sung at the time of Vespers: *Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and for the glory of Your people Israel.* The Feast of the Presentation is among the most ancient feasts of the Church. There are sermons on the Feast by the bishops Methodius of Patara († 312), Cyril of Jerusalem († 360), Gregory the Theologian († 389), Amphilochius of Iconium († 394), Gregory of Nyssa († 400), and John Chrysostom († 407).

The earliest reference to specific liturgical rites surrounding the feast are by the nun Egeria, during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land (381–384). She reported that 14 February was a day solemnly kept in Jerusalem with a procession to Constantine I's Basilica of the Resurrection, with a homily preached on Luke 2:22 (which makes the occasion perfectly clear), and a Divine Liturgy. This so-called *Itinerarium Peregrinatio* (“Pilgrimage Itinerary”) of Egeria does not, however, offer a specific name for the Feast. The date of 14 February indicates that in Jerusalem at that time, Christ's birth was celebrated on 6 January, Epiphany. Egeria writes for her beloved fellow nuns at home: “The fortieth day after the Epiphany is undoubtedly celebrated here with the very highest honor, for on that day there is a procession, in which all take part, in the Anastasis, and all things are done in their order with the greatest joy, just as at Easter. All the priests, and after them the bishop, preach, always taking for their subject that part of the Gospel where Joseph and Mary brought the Lord into the Temple on the fortieth day, and Symeon and Anna the prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, saw him, treating of the words which they spake when they saw the Lord, and of that offering which his parents made. And when everything that is customary has been done in order, the sacrament is celebrated, and the dismissal takes place.” Originally, the feast was a minor celebration. But then in 541, a terrible plague broke out in Constantinople, killing thousands. The Emperor Justinian I, in consultation with the Patriarch of Constantinople, ordered a period of fasting and prayer throughout the entire Empire. And, on the Feast of the Presentation/Encounter of the Lord, arranged great processions throughout the towns and villages and a solemn prayer service (*Litia*) to ask for deliverance from evils, and the plague ceased. In thanksgiving, in 542 the feast was elevated to a more solemn celebration and established throughout the Eastern Empire by the Emperor.

### **Candles in our Holy Church**

For the Feast of the Encounter-Meeting of Our Lord it is a pious and venerable tradition in our Holy Church to bless candles. It is impossible to imagine an Eastern Church without burning candles. Candles made of beeswax are used in our Holy Church as a form of sacrifice and devotion to God or Saints. They are used in various Divine Services and ceremonies and are symbolic of Christ, who is “the Light of the World.” According to a different symbolism, the two elements of a candle represent the two natures of Christ: the Divine (the burning wick) and the Human (the wax body). According to our venerable father Simeon of Thessalonica (XV century), the pure wax symbolizes the purity and innocence of people offering it. The wax is offered as a sign of our repentance for our obstinacy and willfulness. The softness and malleability of the wax speak of our readiness to obey God. The flame of the candle shows the warmth of love to God. We should not put up a candle just for the sake of the ritual, with our hearts remaining cold.