

**Icon with the Presentation of Christ in the Temple,**  
Metropolitan Museum  
1400–1500 Byzantine

Wood, painted, with gold ground ❖ Bequest of Lillie P. Bliss, 1931 (31.67.8)

Reflection by Father Anthony Stratis  
Holy Trinity Cathedral ❖ New Orleans, Louisiana  
February 2006

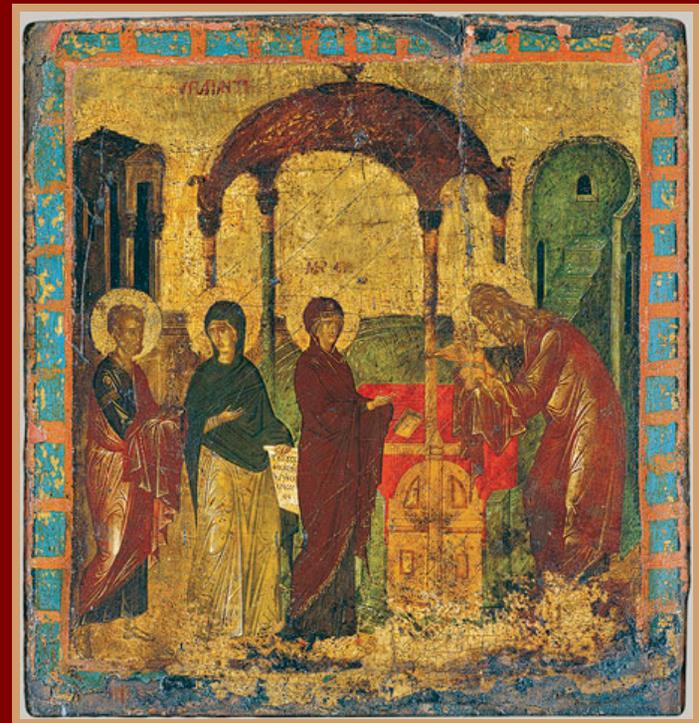


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The Presentation of our Lord to the Temple

The Historical and Personal Meaning of  
**The 40-Day Blessing**

## **The Historical & Personal Meaning of the 40-DAY BLESSING**

### **Jesus was brought to the Temple on the 40<sup>th</sup> Day**

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, we celebrate the Feast of “Ypapanti,” often translated as the “Presentation” of our Lord to the Temple, although a more accurate translation would be the “Meeting” between Jesus and Symeon.

The Gospel reading for the feast, Luke 2:22-40, tells us the story which is the origin of the holiday. Jesus was taken by His parents to Jerusalem, “to present Him to the Lord.” Once they arrived at the temple, they were met by Symeon. Symeon was “righteous and devout,” upon whom was the Holy Spirit. It was revealed to Symeon that “he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” When he met the baby Jesus, Symeon took Him into his arms, in accordance with the custom of the Old Testament laws, and blessed Him. Symeon then said to God: “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 peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel.” These words are recited by the priest as he holds the baby at the conclusion of the Orthodox Christian 40-Day blessing.

### **What does this tell us?**

But what about this “meeting”? What does it tell us? First, it tells us something of the Jewish practice of presenting a child to the temple. Jesus was brought, according to the custom, forty days after His birth to the temple. Based on His example, we in the Orthodox Church also bring our children to Church for their forty-day blessing. Although it is a brief service, it is indeed powerful and a wonderful opportunity for parents to express their thankfulness to God for giving them their child, and thereby dedicating the child back to God.

This “meeting” of Jesus and Symeon also tells us that Symeon knew of the importance of Jesus, though we know that not everyone did. Symeon knew that Jesus is indeed our salvation. Not everyone understands this fact today, even among all who claim to be Christians. When we present our children to the Church for their 40-day blessing, we have an opportunity to be reminded of our own need to “meet” with Christ and to be thankful to God for our meeting.

### **We can meet the Lord**

When can we meet with Him? We can meet with the Lord when we are in prayer, when we serve our “neighbor,” when we practice His commandments, and when we participate in the sacraments. We have opportunities throughout our day to meet with our Lord; however, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to inspire us! If we do that, we will find numerous opportunities to meet Him daily. All too often, as a consequence of our daily concerns, we place our meetings with the Lord at the bottom of our “to do list” and often fail to finish that list by the end of the day!

In accordance with the practice of the Orthodox Christian faith, we bring our children to the Church, to be presented to the Lord, for their own forty-day blessing. We do so out of our thanksgiving to God. Let us continue that spirit of thanksgiving by meeting with Him throughout our day and throughout our life. Let us not give Him the mere leftovers of our time, but the first fruits, that our meeting may prove to be of great importance to us! Let us keep Him - as we chant in the Hymn of the Feast of His Presentation - as our own “Sun of Righteousness,” guiding us throughout our day and throughout our life, for He has indeed, “conferred upon us the Resurrection.”