

## This Month's Liturgy; February 2018

This month began with a Feast which our brothers and Sisters in the Orthodox Church refer to as 'The Encounter' but which we know better as the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, or Candlemas as it later came to be called. This Feast, kept on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, marks the passage of 40 days from Christmas and recalls the event of the taking of the child Jesus to the Temple of Jerusalem where he, as a first-born male child, was according to the Law of Moses 'consecrated' to the Lord and to His Service. Mary and Joseph are there, as too are Simeon and Anna and it is in the encounters, the conversations and meeting which take place on this occasion that we learn more about the unfolding of God's plan and purpose for Jesus and for his people. Mary and Joseph are faithful to the requirements of the Law of Moses and they 'present' the child Jesus to God in the Temple – except of course that it is in fact Jesus who is being presented, made known, to the whole people of Israel in this moment – as Simeon recognized when he refers to Jesus as 'the light to enlighten all peoples' and also in his words to Mary, 'You see this child, he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel'.

The richness of Simeon's words is perhaps one reason why the Church uses his prayer, known often by the first words in latin 'Nunc Dimittis' ( now you let your servant depart ) as part of the Prayer of the Church every night at Compline. Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, is the one who recognizes in Jesus the fulfillment and perfecting of God's work; he gives thanks for that, and is happy that he has now held in his arms the one who is to be 'the glory of your people, Israel'. We, in our own time, echo his thanksgiving; we pray for peaceful sleep and a renewal of the Holy Spirit in our lives that we may recognize and respond to the calling of the Lord our God each and every day of our lives.

At last, all-powerful Master, you can let your servant depart in peace, according to your promise;

for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all the nations

a light for revelation to the gentiles, and for glory to your people, Israel.