

The Feast of Candlemas. The Reception of the Lord (Archimandrite Theodosios Martzoukhos)

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Already we're in the second month of the New Year. And we begin with the feast of the Reception of Christ, on February 2. It's a very great feast. Christ is received by a man for whom the expectation of this moment governed his life. He awaited Him and then received Him. Do we await him, though? Is our life an expectation of the coming of Christ? Symeon waited expectantly for Christ Who was the content and beauty of his life. We alas, have shifted the focus of our lives elsewhere. We have

different priorities.

How does someone 'receive' Christ? [The name of the feast in Greek means 'to go out and welcome someone'] What are the necessary conditions for a meeting with Him? What do we expect from Him?



First of all, our lives today are confused and we don't await Christ. We're waiting for other things. Our criteria are all mixed up. So are our aims. So are our wishes. Christ is an object of special interest only to the old and the naïve.

We, who are sharp as tacks and have our feet firmly on the ground, as we like to think of ourselves, haven't got the time to deal with this sort of thing. If we're not looking for monetary gain, we're out seeking enjoyment of every kind. If we're not in the fast lane, we want a holiday. If we're not concerned with whatever's buzzing

around our brain, we're reading the newspaper 'pundits' who provide an answer to everything: important and fatuous; serious and laughable; interesting and dull. And, the most important thing, who inform us of recent research which has taken place and which 'proves' that Christ doesn't exist. And so, since we now have 'valid' facts at our disposal, we're well-informed and 'in the know'. What relationship should we be pursuing? How should we be celebrating? More importantly, who should we be celebrating?

Let's dwell on ourselves for a moment. Let's sieve our conscience and our heart. Let's think: 'The way I'm going, is my life really getting any better? Has it acquired a central meaning? Joy, serenity, calm? I've expelled Christ and the Church from my life, but has that made it any the more beautiful? Maybe it's a wilderness. Maybe it's filled with wickedness? Maybe my relationships have become problematic? Maybe my soul's in turmoil?'

The feast of the Reception brings all these questions to the surface. They need to be answered! And forcefully. Sincerely. Recognition may provide a diagnosis, but not a cure. The cure demands decisiveness and hard work.

Even if the feast is strange to us, let's make it an opportunity for Christ not to continue to be a stranger to us.

The reception of Christ means: a sincere quest for Him; a methodical search (You don't go to a desert to catch fish!); a helper in the endeavor (spiritual guide); and adherence to the course of treatment we're given.

When all this occurs, our heart begins to be illumined by the light of Christ. Then everything will become the Light of Christ. Then the prospect of His Reception will be the joy of our lives. Then His face will become that of the person we love the best. Then every sacrifice for Him Whom we love will not be an effort, but a joy. Then the Sunday Eucharist won't be a duty, but a self-evident expression of life.

Let's ponder these things. They're an opportunity for reflection. Let's expand them both in terms of depth and breadth. Christ, life and death are the only issue which require an answer, a wise man said in the last [20th] century.

I pray that all of us may 'go out and meet Christ'.

Fr. Theodosios