

Presentation of the Lord to the Temple — February 14

The feast of the 'Presentation of Our Lord to the Temple' on February 14 provides the month with a most challenging theme of OFFERING. The word has various meanings to different people—gift, sacrifice, thanksgiving, pain, deprivation, joy, etc. And indeed, there are elements of each of the above in an offering.

The presentation of Jesus to the temple has its roots in the ancient Mosaic law, according to which every first born child was to be presented to the Lord's service. The ritual of taking the child to the Temple on the fortieth day of his birth solemnized and affirmed that offering.

Our Lord did not need to follow all the requirements of Mosaic law. However, as He said later in His earthly life, He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it, to perfect it.

When Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple, Simeon, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recognized the Messiah and blessed God. Through Christ's presentation to the Temple, all creatures who believe in Him have also been offered to God, as the words of the Hymn of the feast show us.

Today the inoriginate Word, born of the bosom of the Father, having come to the Temple, offers the creatures to the Father in heaven. (Canticle of the Presentation of the Lord to the Temple, Mode 5).

Being offered to God through Christ does not relieve us of responsibility for self-offering. On the contrary, through Christ's great offering, His sacrifice on the Cross, we have been adopted into fellowship with Him in order to live as He did and offer our life to God — and that offering is nothing but offering ourselves to each other. Such offering entails sacrifice, pain and deprivation, but also includes the experiences of joy, happiness, thanksgiving and receiving.

Congratulations

St. Vartan's day is the name day of all Armenian boys who have the name Vartan, Vahan, Moushegh, etc. and those who don't have a particular saint's name. Remembrance is made of all those brave men and women who sacrificed their lives at the battlefield of Avarayr in 451 A.D.

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ance and in defense of Christianity and human dignity was no desperate search for recognition. It was the Holy Spirit working within them urging them on to preserve sacred values. They knew what their fate was to be. They realized that like the prophecies concerning Christ, they also must sacrifice themselves so that the nation might survive! It is this spirit of sacrifice that is so rare and dear — yet so obscured in the dilemma of modern society.

Although the Ghevontian group of clergy numbered a Catholicos, two bishops, two deacons and four kahanas (married priests), the outstanding leader of the group was the Kahana, Ghevoht, also called Ierets (the senior). A great patriarch of the Armenian Church named Malachia Ormanian wrote: "Thanks to his (Ghevoht) intelligence and eloquence in addressing the Armenian Army at the Battle of Avarayr, and his ability to defend (our) Christian principles before the Persian courts and imperial prosecutors, he distinguished himself as the leading representative of the Armenian Cause. One might say that Ghevoht personified the entire movement in defense of religious freedom...and for that reason, his companions are known as the Ghevontians." (Azkabadoum No. 274, pg. 402).

Gratitude and Prayers for our Clergymen

On the occasion of the remembrance of the Ghevontian priests on February 20, let us pray to God in thanksgiving for the continued health of our Catholicos, Lord Vazken I, our Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, and for each and everyone of our diocesan clergy. May the Lord send His blessings on them, so that they may continue to shepherd their flock under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

ANNOUNCING!

The first of a series of regional grade level workshops to be offered by the CRE is to take place on February 10 at the Diocesan Center. The workshop is geared for teachers of grades 1-3. It will deal with the characteristics of religious development of children ages 5-9, introduce sound religious educational concepts and methods for this age group and will give an opportunity to plan and evaluate some of the lessons in the curriculum based on these criteria.

The workshop will be a unique opportunity to deal with the specific needs of the three grade levels.

So, watch for the announcement of the workshop that is planned for your area, and come join your colleagues.

For further information contact the CRE Office — (212) 686-0710