



Presentation in the Temple

Study Guide - Level 3 (Grades 6–8 / Ages 11–13)

February 2

Lesson Format

- Intro / Summary of the feast
- Review the epistle and gospel readings
- Review festal hymns of the day
- Read front page of handout together
- Use study guide content for discussion and Q&A on this week's topics
- Complete activities on inside pages of handout
- Recap / Review of the feast

Tips & Hints

- Use as few or as many of the questions and explanations found in the study guide based on ages of the youth, helping them discover how the Orthodox Faith can be a part of their daily life.
- Watch for the 🗨️ in the handout for topics/questions which might spark conversations with participants.
- It's recommended to use open-ended questions, encouraging young people to think, share their experiences or ideas, and strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ and His holy Orthodox Faith.
- Questions, ideas, feedback, and suggestions can be directed to the publisher at orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

✦ Overview

The dedication of a child to God is a very important moment in their relationship with God.

According to the Old Testament covenant, this event was celebrated in the Temple, as an offering was made to God for the redemption of the people.

The tribes of Israel had a covenant (agreement) with God with certain expectations of what they needed to do if they were to remain His people.

When Jesus Christ was born, the Law of Moses took on a different meaning, because Jesus is the Son of God and sinless. Since Christ is perfect God and perfect Man, He fulfills the Law.

His offering of redemption will come when He is crucified and dies on the cross for all of humanity. This transforms the covenant of the Old Testament.

The Righteous Elder Simeon recognizes Jesus for Who He is - the Messiah, exclaiming his prayer at "seeing the Light to enlighten the Gentiles," which we recite at every vespers service.

As the Light of the world, Jesus provides for us a path to Salvation, beginning with His own entry into the earthly Temple.

Through his ministry, Jesus prepares us to one day dwell with Him and God the Father in the Heavenly and eternal Temple in Paradise.

☑ Goal

After completing this handout, youth should be able to articulate the following:

- What we celebrate/commemorate on the feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple
- Be familiar with the festal theme songs (apolytikion/troparion and kontakion).
- Understand what is featured in the festal icon.
- Why the feast is important, and celebrated annually in the church.
- Understand what took place and how this reveals Christ as our Great High Priest.
- Know why this feast is relevant to us today.
- How the Church encourages us to live godly lives regardless of age or situation.

📖 Apostolos / Epistle and Gospel Readings

Open the bible and have someone read the Apostolos/Epistle and another student read the Gospel lesson for the day.

Epistle: Hebrews 7:7-17

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

Talk about the epistle reading:

Today's epistle was written by St. Paul.

It is one of the books (or letters) found in the New Testament of our bible.

1) Ask: "What is the author of today's epistle/apostol talking about?"

Possible Answers

- In the Old Testament, God established covenants and a priesthood
- The orders established in the Old Testament could only go so far, because humans were making the offerings and leading the prayers
- Melchizedek was a very important priest in the Old Testament, but Christ is the "new" Melchizedek, providing a perfect example of how to live: with mercy, compassion, forgiveness, service, and worshipping God in Spirit and truth
- Since Jesus is God, His priesthood is perfect, without flaws, and eternal

2) Ask: "How is the message of this epistle apply to our lives?"

Possible Answers

- As Orthodox Christians, we follow the perfect Priest: Christ
- Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament rules and regulations, meaning as Christians, we don't follow those
- We live according to the teachings of the Church as prescribed by Christ and lived by His apostles, the church fathers, and the saints
- We receive eternal life through Jesus, as His followers, we obey His commandments which makes it possible for us to inherit eternal life

Talk about the Gospel reading:

Today's gospel was written by St. Luke.

It is one of four written accounts of the life of Jesus Christ, found in the New Testament of our bible.

1) Ask: "What took place in today's lesson?"

Possible Answers

- St. Luke provides an account of Jesus' entry into the Temple
- This took place 40 days after His birth
- The Virgin Mary and Joseph were obedient to the Law of Moses
- While Jesus was in the Temple, a righteous man named Simeon received Christ, praying over Him
- The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that Christ was the Messiah
- A prophetess, Anna, was also present glorifying God for the blessing to see Christ

2) Ask: "Why is this important for us living in the 21st century?"

Possible Answers

- Simeon and Anna are examples for us of holy and godly lives
- The teachings of the church are for our benefit - we grow closer to God by following them
- The Virgin Mary was obedient to God, and is an example of humility and compassion for us
- Our faith in Jesus helps nurture our relationship with God
- Christ is the salvation and True Light of the world
- He shares His love with us, giving us what is needed for the journey to salvation

Hymnography

Have someone read the Troparion/Apolytikion and Kontakion on the handout.

Review: Troparion (tro - par - ee - ohn) or Apolytikion (ah - po - lee - tee - key - ee - ohn) and Kontakion (kon - tahk - ee - ohn) are theme songs for each feast, celebration, or saint.

Troparion and **Apolytikion** are names for the same hymn. **Kontakion** is a separate hymn expanding on the ideas proclaimed in the Troparion or Apolytikion, where the last line is used as a refrain during some services.

Both hymns describe what or who we're celebrating, and how this event or saint is important to our lives as Orthodox Christians.

These are celebratory hymns, rejoicing in God's mercy and wonders.

1) Ask: "What do the hymns teach us about the feast?"

Possible Answers

- We glorify the Theotokos because, as the Mother of God, she brought Jesus Christ into the world
- Christ is the Light of the world, the Son of God, providing redemption to all
- Simeon, the Righteous elder glorifies God, providing his personal witness to Christ, affirming for us that Christ is the Messiah

2) Ask: "How can the message of the hymns apply to our lives?"

Possible Answers

- We glorify the Virgin Mary because of her closeness to Christ, as His mother
- Christ, as the Son of God, is also the Great High Priest of God, restoring our relationship with God to what it was when the world was created
- We can glorify God for His wonders and mercy, singing these hymns as praise
- Christ gives us peace and salvation from sin and the devil
- As God, Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, providing for us salvation: we rejoice and celebrate, thanking God for His love towards us
- St. Simeon is an example for us of how to live a godly life, and what happens when you do: you can encounter God face to face

A Closer Look

After reading the front page of the handout, discuss and explore the themes below. Related questions can be found on the next page "Discussion Questions."

Opening Review:

The feast we celebrate today is one of the 12 Great Feasts of the Church Year. We remember when Our Lord, Jesus Christ was brought to the Temple, forty days after His birth in Bethlehem.

The infant Jesus was brought by His Mother the Theotokos, and Joseph from Nazareth to Jerusalem where they were to obey the rules and rites of the Law of Moses.

During the rites of purification at the Temple, they are met by the Righteous Elder Simeon, a man who according to Church Tradition was very old (nearly 400 years old that is!), having been promised by God that He would not die until he saw the Messiah. (see "Who's Who in the Icon" on page 2 of the handout for more about St. Simeon.)

St. Simeon proclaims that Christ is destined for the rise and fall of many nations, and then exclaims the prayer we hear sung or read at every vespers service:

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 the glory of your people: Israel.

The reading indicates that Joseph and the Virgin Mary marvelled at the things spoken of the Child (Luke 2:33).

An elderly prophetess named Anna, who lived in the Temple, dedicating her life to prayer and worshipping God came to behold Jesus. The reading concludes with a look forward to Christ's childhood, indicating the grace of God the Father was upon Him.

What Does This Mean for Us?

Our participation in this feast is a way for us to celebrate the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Light of the world, the Son of God, and the Messiah Who came to provide salvation and redemption for all.

Ask: Why is it important that Jesus was brought to the Temple as an infant?

Possible Answers:

- His parents were obeying the Law
- As God, Christ was obedient to the Law He gave to Moses
- Christ teaches us by His own example to obey the teachings of His Church
- As perfect God and perfect Man, Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live

This feast remembers a historical event in the life of Jesus. The Church invites us to participate in the timeless celebration of the feast, making a past event real for us today. During the divine services, we hear hymns and texts announcing what took place, and teaching us about God, and how this celebration is important for our life.

Ask: Why is the liturgy celebrated on the feast day?

Possible Answers:

- The divine liturgy is an opportunity to receive the Eucharist: the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ Who is at the heart of this feast
- We honor and glorify God, giving thanks in worship for the wonders God has worked for our salvation - His presentation in the Temple is a revelation of His glory
- As Christ is our Great High Priest, we honor Him with adoration and worship like the Righteous Simeon and Anna do when they see the infant Christ child
- Our liturgy is a bloodless sacrifice (using the bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of Christ), instead of the Old Testament animal sacrifices at the Temple
- We are reminded that Christ died once for all, His death on the cross eliminating the need for ritual animal sacrifices

At every liturgy, we glorify Jesus Christ for His great mercy and voluntary sacrifice through His death on the cross. We give thanks for Christ's redeeming us from sin.

This feast reminds us that Christ is the Light of the world.

Godly Examples for Us

The Righteous Simeon and Anna are wonderful examples for us because they show how living a life of prayer and worship centered on God can be fruitful and good.

Our Church tradition says Simeon was inspired by the Holy Spirit to come to the Temple on the exact day Christ was brought by the Theotokos and Joseph.

Anna, whom the Virgin Mary presumably knew from her own time of living in the Temple (see the feast of the Entry of the Theotokos in the Temple - November 21), was also made aware by God that the infant Jesus was special: the Messiah.

Both of them had been faithful in their prayers, asking to receive the blessing of seeing God's chosen one: the Messiah.

Ask: What can we learn from Simeon and Anna?

Possible Answers:

- God hears our prayers
- If we lead a life of prayer, we can draw closer to God
- Even if we have to live over 380 years, God will still fulfill His promise to us
- Our faith in God helps us live a meaningful life
- Simeon's dedication to God's word made it possible for Him to see God face to face
- Anna's obedience to the teachings of God revealed His Messiah to her
- We might not always understand what God has in mind for us, but prayer and faith can help us trust God's plan for us
- If we follow God in faith, He will provide us joyous and wonderful experiences - either in this life or the next

Simeon and Anna were truly righteous people in the eyes of God. There might be people in our church who remind you of Simeon and Anna, because of their humility, devotion to studying scripture, and helping others.

And, there might be others we don't know, because their modesty and quiet prayer life is seen only by God.

The love and devotion Simeon and Anna had for God makes them honorable saints we remember and honor in the Orthodox Church.

Ask: What things that Simeon and Anna did, can we do?

Possible Answers:

- Focus on God's promise of a Messiah (i.e., Jesus Christ)
- Devoted to reading, understanding, and living God's teachings in scripture
- Their faith was found in humility and the mercy of God
- Their prayers were sincere and modest, desiring to fully encounter God

Our Relationship with God

Simeon and Anna devoted themselves to being in God's Temple as the means to draw closer to God, preparing to see the Messiah. We, as followers of Christ, have the opportunity to become the living Temple of God as we prepare for the Second Coming of Christ!

Ask: How can we be the Temple of God in our lives?

Possible Answers:

- Devoting a portion of every day to prayer

- Remembering God's love and mercy when facing difficult situations at home, school, or with friends
- Caring for our body with respect, by not putting bad things into it (*junk food, drugs, inappropriate images or music*)
- Obeying our parents and teachers, and our priest at church
- Minding our words and thoughts, so other people think of Christ when they see us or hear us

These righteous people were faithful to the Old Testament covenant, waiting for the coming Messiah, we too are waiting for Christ's return in glory.

Every time we say the Nicene- Constantinopolitan Creed, we are professing our belief in God. At the end of the Creed, we state our belief in the Second Coming of Christ.

In this way, we can be like Simeon and Anna, preparing ourselves in godly ways to be ready by keeping Christ in our hearts and lives.

When we live in humble modesty, without trying to control situations or other people, our focus turns to God for guidance and direction, giving a greater purpose to our own life.

Ask: Are you willing to learn about God to be more like Him?

The students will have a variety of answers - this can be a discussion on what it means to be like God - and why it's important as Orthodox Christians to see the value in accepting God's invitation to be His followers.

Wrap Up

When we were baptized, we were initiated into the community of believers known as the Orthodox Church. In a way, our baptism is a new form of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple.

Just as Christ was dedicated in the Temple by Simeon, we, at our baptism, were washed and then anointed with Chrism. Our life has new meaning. Dedicated to Christ, we live with the promise of being raised in the knowledge and ways of God.

This knowledge allows us to encounter God, not as a far off deity, but as the personal, loving God beside us, every day.

Ask: What are the benefits of knowing more about God?

Possible Answers:

- Better understand how to pray and communicate with God
- Have a clearer picture of what we're supposed to do and how we should behave and interact with others
- Desire repentance and forgiveness
- Understand and appreciate God's love throughout history and how He cares for His people, bringing them closer to Him
- Better understand who we are as individuals, and how God has blessed us, providing us with opportunities to be creative and live a worthwhile life
- Give thanks for every blessings from God
- Share the love of God with those around us - both in charitable acts and telling them about Christ in our life

Today's feast is important because it shows us the value and importance of welcoming Christ into our lives, just as He entered the Temple to renew it.

? Did You Know

Let's get to know a bit more about aspects of this feast:

What did the Law of Moses say about the birth of a male child?

The Law of Moses stated that after a male child was born, the mother was ritually unpure and could not enter the Temple for forty days.

At the conclusion of that time period, the Mother should come with the child and either a young lamb, doves, or pigeons to be offered as a purification sacrifice.

The Law was addressing the conditions faced by a new mother, while still ensuring the Temple remained pure: There were very specific requirements to ensure the Temple was ritually pure and clean - remember how the Jews wouldn't enter the Prætorium before Christ's crucifixion (John 18:28).

There were specific rules established for both men and women on how they needed to live to do certain religious rituals as observant Jews.

To prevent even accidental impurity in the Temple, the Law of Moses was strictly enforced.

Since Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses, the Church does not adhere to these teachings.

The Church teaches that the birth of a child is a great joy to be celebrated, as new life has come into the world. There is no cause for penance or an offering of purification.

Why are candles blessed at the feast of the Presentation in the Temple?

The feasts of Christmas, Theophany, and the Presentation in the Temple represent a trio of great feasts glorifying our Lord as the Light of the world.

Therefore it's fitting, that at the last of these three celebrations, candles are blessed.

On the feast, the blessing of candles is done before the liturgy (instead of at the end as when fruit and grapes are blessed on the feast of the Transfiguration).

The blessing allows the faithful to then hold the candles during the liturgy, as we do throughout the entire festal divine liturgy on Pascha.

This sequence of events serves as a tangible reminder that each of us is called to be bearers of Christ's light, received in church, and brought with us into the world through our daily lives.

What is the meaning of the "Prayer of St. Simeon?"

After beholding the infant Christ child, St. Simeon expressed His joy and gratitude to God with these words:

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 the glory to Your people Israel.

St. Simeon had been told by an angel that he would not die until he saw the Messiah.

With these words, he acknowledges his faith and belief that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

The word Messiah means *the chosen one*, who would bring salvation.

Because Christ was born in the world, and brought to the Temple, Simeon proclaims to all who are listening (including us today), that this infant is the Promised One of God.

St. Simeon also prophesied that the Light of Christ was the glory of the people of Israel, God's chosen nation, but not exclusively for the people of Israel. Instead, St. Simeon proclaims that all humanity will be enlightened by Christ, including the Gentiles (those not of Jewish ancestry).

Handout Activities

In the handout for the feast, there are a variety of activities which can be completed:

Front Page: Read the introductory text, ensuring the young people understand the feast, what took place, and how it relates to their lives. Read the festal hymns and scripture readings, using this study guide to understand their meanings.

Page 2: Read through the *Whos' Who in the Icon*, answering questions about the icon, who is portrayed, and what's taking place.

The Presentation in the Temple icon reflects a historical event with theological meaning. By completing the blanks, students can choose from the word list, identifying what's shown in the icon, and why this feast is important to celebrate, and serves as an affirmation of the Incarnation of Christ, the Light of the world.

Page 3: "*Be a Light of Christ*" is an activity for young people of all ages to make their own candle(s). After making the candles either in class or at home, bring them to church on the feast day to be blessed and then lit before an icon, as a physical offering to God, illumined by the Light of Christ.

The goal of this activity is to give students an opportunity create something which is then blessed and used as an offering to God. The candles we use and light in church have a purpose - encourage the young people in your parish to see the value of offering prayers (and candles) both in church and at home.

Page 4: *Learning from the Feast:* Help the students understand the meaning of the liturgical texts, writing their interpretation of the hymns. As Orthodox liturgical hymns are didactic (intending to teach the singers and listeners), the message of the text reveals what we believe about the revelation of Christ as the Messiah during His presentation in the Temple.

Page 5: The first activity encourages the students to connect the icon of the Presentation with the festal troparion/apolytikion (theme song), drawing lines between the words and images to see how the liturgical arts relate to each other.

Then, students have the opportunity to draw their own visual representation of the prayer of St. Simeon. Use the notes from the "Did You Know" section on page 4 of this study guide to help students understand the meaning of this prayer, and how their drawing expresses what we believe about Jesus Christ.

As icons are images with theological meaning, encourage the students to see their drawings not simply as a sketch, but as an icon proclaiming the message of Christ's birth.

Take a photo of the student icons and email the image to us at: orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

(Be sure to include the students' first name, age, parish, city, and state/province.)

Page 6: This drawing of the Presentation icon can be used for coloring by young and old alike. By creating our own icons, we synthesize our thoughts and knowledge of the feast with our understanding of Jesus Christ and what He means to us as our God and Savior. Icons, even those printed in black and white (and colored with crayons, markers, paints, etc.) are sacred images, and should be treated with respect. Even those colored by the youngest of children have a sacred use and should not be simply tossed in the garbage after the feast.

Icons help us make a connection with God, as they teach us about His incarnation, therefore, we honor them with prominent places in our homes, and gently save them for use on the feast in future years.

Take a photo of the student icons and email the image to us at: orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

(Be sure to include the students' first name, age, parish, city, and state/province.)

On The Web

Learn more about the feast on the internet:

Homily on the Feast:

By Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas

<https://www.oca.org/fs/sermons/sermon-on-the-meeting-of-our-lord-in-the-temple>

A Prayer for Lighting A Candle:

<https://www.oca.org/reflections/berzonsky/a-prayer-for-lighting-a-candle>

Liturgical Hymns for the Presentation:

Sung in a variety of languages:

<https://youtu.be/KFL5b96adx8> (Troparion/Apolytikion)

<https://youtu.be/S5Py3AYDq3w> (Ode 9 - Irmos)

https://youtu.be/I0jvix_D8FE (Ode 9)

