

Time and Patience

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.

☐ **On February 3rd the Church remembers two people whose lives are extraordinary examples of patience. In the calendar they are called the "righteous Godbearer Simeon" and "Anna the Prophetess."**

The previous day is the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, an event in which Simeon and Anna had central roles. Jesus Christ, a new baby, was brought by his parents into the Temple in Jerusalem. They presented Him to the Lord according to the Old Testament Law, given to Moses in God's words: "Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine" (Exodus 13:2).

Simeon and Anna were overjoyed. For the aged Simeon, seeing Christ the Savior was the fulfillment of God's long-awaited promise of the "consolation" of Israel. He knew very well the words of the prophets concerning this, for example: "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned..." (Isaiah 40:1) He knew that Isaiah had described a voice crying, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (40:3). Now it had all been fulfilled in the preaching of John the Baptizer and the coming of Jesus Christ, and Simeon was ready to die in peace.

Anna, a prophetess from a family of prophets, had fasted and prayed for decades in the Temple. On this day of the Savior's coming, she recognized Him. She was prepared, though by this time she was well over eighty, to spread the good news to everyone.

One of the readings for February 3rd is about that quality of faithful patience that Simeon and Anna demonstrate so well. The Letter of James counsels, "Be patient therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient" (5:7-8a).

The words remind us that things happen in God's time, not ours. The farmer is patient with the land until God sends the rain. For Simeon and Anna, the time of waiting was very long, so their patience had to be very great. Whatever situations face us—the ones that require patience—may also stretch on. We must "strengthen our hearts" as Simeon and Anna did.

So we can't just idly wait around for something to happen. We have to be ready for God to act at any moment, and not "grumble against one another" when our patience gets tested for a longer time than we might have expected and wished. Even a lengthy period of time in human reckoning is only an instant in God's sight. So no matter how far away it seems to us, James writes, "the coming of the Lord is near" (5: 8b).



Kontakion - Tone 3

Let the godly pair be praised together:
Simeon the Righteous and Anna the Prophetess,
well-pleasing to God.
They became witnesses of the Incarnate Lord
when they saw Him as an infant;
together they worshipped Him.