

Date: November 28, 2022

Subject: BURL-Choir Vvedeniye Weekend NOTICE

Dorogiye druziya!

This Saturday / Sunday, the Church commemorates the Entry of The Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple. The attached Tropar / Kondak text sheet includes the special prayers that will be used at Vsenoshchnaya on Saturday and at Liturgy on Sunday.

Earlier, on Thursday / Friday, the Church commemorates the repose of Saint Philaret (Drozdov), Metropolitan of Moscow.

Brief summaries about the Entry of The Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple, and Saint Philaret are provided below.

**** BETHANY FUNDRAISING

This December we will be concluding our 2022 fundraising for the Bethany Orthodox School in the Holy Land. Anyone wishing to make a donation may do so by check (please indicate "Bethany School" in the memo line), or directly to Treasurer dcn. Aleksei Baranoff. Your support is greatly appreciated!

**** THE ENTRY OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD INTO THE TEMPLE

According to Holy Tradition, the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple took place in the following manner. The parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the All-Pure Virgin in Her finest clothes. Singing sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple. There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, fifteen high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called "Psalms of Ascent.") The child Mary, so it seemed, could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps and ascended to the highest one. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore, all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home. The All-Holy Virgin remained in the quarters for virgins near the Temple. According to the testimony of Holy Scripture, and also the historian Josephus Flavius, there were many living quarters around the Temple, in which those who were dedicated to the service of God dwelt.

The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. "If anyone were to ask me,"

said Saint Jerome, “how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer that that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian.”

But there are accounts in Church Tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin’s stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Indications that the Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the holy Empress Helen built a church in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions this Feast. In the eighth century Saints Germanus and Tarasius, Patriarchs of Constantinople, delivered sermons on the Feast of the Entry.

The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple foretells God’s blessing for the human race, the preaching of salvation, the promise of the coming of Christ.

**** REPOSE OF SAINT PHILARET (DROZDOV), METROPOLITAN OF MOSCOW

Saint Philaret (DrozdoV) was born on December 26, 1782 in Kolomna, a suburb of Moscow, and was named Basil in Baptism. His father was a deacon (who later became a priest).

The young Basil studied at the Kolomna seminary, where courses were taught in Latin. He was small in stature, and far from robust, but his talents set him apart from his classmates.

In 1808, while he was a student at the Moscow Theological Academy at Holy Trinity Lavra, Basil received monastic tonsure and was named Philaret after Saint Philaret the Merciful (December 1). Not long after this, he was ordained a deacon.

In 1809, he went to teach at the Theological Academy in Petersburg, which had been reopened only a short time before. Hierodeacon Philaret felt ill at ease in Petersburg, but he was a very good teacher who tried to make theology intelligible to all. Therefore, he worked to have classes taught in Russian rather than in Latin.

Philaret was consecrated as bishop in 1817, and was appointed to serve as a vicar in the diocese of Petersburg. He soon rose to the rank of archbishop, serving in Tver, Yaroslavl, and Moscow. In 1826, he was made Metropolitan of Moscow, and remained in that position until his death.

The Metropolitan believed that it was his duty to educate and enlighten his flock about the Church’s teachings and traditions. Therefore, he preached and wrote about how to live a Christian life, basing his words on the wisdom of the Holy Fathers. His 1823 CATECHISM has been an influential book in Russia and in other countries for nearly two hundred years.

The reforms of Tsar Peter the Great had abolished the patriarchate and severely restricted the Church, placing many aspects of its life under governmental control. Metropolitan Philaret tried to regain some of the Church’s freedom to administer its own affairs, regarding Church and State as two separate entities working in harmony. Not everyone shared his views, and he certainly made his share of enemies. Still, he did achieve some degree of success in effecting changes.

One day, Archimandrite Anthony (Medvedev), a disciple of Saint Seraphim of Sarov (January 2), paid a call on his diocesan hierarch. During their conversation, Father Anthony spoke of the patristic teaching on unceasing prayer, and he may have told the Metropolitan something of Saint Seraphim. Saint Philaret felt a deep spiritual kinship with Father Anthony, who soon became his Elder. He made no important decision concerning diocesan affairs, or his own spiritual life, without consulting Father Anthony. Saint Seraphim once told Father Anthony that he would become the igumen of a great monastery, and gave him advice on how to conduct himself. It was Saint Philaret who appointed him as igumen of Holy Trinity Lavra.

Metropolitan Philaret wanted to have the Holy Scriptures translated into modern Russian, so that people could read and understand them. Father Anthony, however, criticized the unorthodox ethos of the Russian Bible Society, which was popular during the reign of Alexander I. In his eagerness to have the Bible translated into modern Russian, Saint Philaret at first supported the Bible Society without realizing how dangerous some of its ideas were. The first Russian translation of the Bible was printed during the reign of Tsar Alexander II.

Under the direction of his Elder, Metropolitan Philaret made great progress in the spiritual life. He also received the gifts of unceasing prayer, clairvoyance, and healing. It is no exaggeration to suggest that Saint Philaret himself was one of the forces behind the spiritual revival in nineteenth century Russia. He defended the Elders of Optina Monastery when they were misunderstood and attacked by many. He protected the nuns of Saint Seraphim's Diveyevo Convent, and supported the publication of patristic texts by Optina Monastery.

Metropolitan Philaret was asked to dedicate the new Triumphal Gate in Moscow, and Tsar Nicholas I was also present. Seeing statues of pagan gods on the Gate, the Metropolitan refused to bless it. The Tsar became angry, and many people criticized the saint's refusal to participate. He felt that he had followed his conscience in this matter, but still felt disturbed by it, and so he prayed until he finally dropped off to sleep. He was awakened around 5 A.M. by the sound of someone opening the door which he usually kept locked. The Metropolitan sat up and saw Saint Sergius of Radonezh (September 25) leaning over his bed. "Don't worry," he said, "it will all pass." Then he disappeared.

Two months before his death, Saint Philaret saw his father in a dream, warning him about the 19th day of the month. On November 19, 1867, he served the Divine Liturgy for the last time. At two in the afternoon, they went to his cell and found his body. He was buried at Holy Trinity Lavra. Saint Philaret was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1995.