

My Beloved,

February starts with the Dominical feast of **Our Lord's Presentation in the Temple (Ypapandi)**. It is one of eight (8) feasts dedicated to Christ during the liturgical year. Those, together with four (4) feasts dedicated to the All-Holy Mother of God, our Panagia, and two (2) more (one for the Holy Cross and one for the Holy Spirit), sum up the fourteen (14) most sacred worship days of the year. Previous generations made sure to honor all them. This is because Orthodox Christians do not worship only on Sundays! Feasts are as much or more important. Please check the **2019 Ecclesiastical Calendar** our office has sent you and put these 14 days aside! Making room in our schedule to honor Christ and Panagia is pleasing to God and a blessing to us all.

The last two Sundays of February are also truly a treat! They begin our **preparation to enter the Great Lent**, which starts **March 11<sup>th</sup>**. They remind us of a process very critical for our salvation: **REPENTANCE – CONFESSION – FORGIVENESS**. The parables of “**The Publican and the Pharisee**” and “**The Prodigal Son**” tell us how to repent, how to approach God, how to confess our mistakes, how to ask for His mercy and how He forgives us. Then, going into March, there are two more Sundays in the same theme, “**Judgement Sunday**,” is a warning for those who do not repent. It also shows our Lord is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. Finally, “**Forgiveness Sunday**” reminds us of the Paradise we lost with our disobedience and ushers us to the most difficult but also most beautiful part of the year, the **Great Lent!**

To call ourselves Christians, it is to follow Christ. How did Christ spend His time? What did He value most? A study of the Holy Gospels will reveal He spent most of His time praying. Immediately second came His ministry to others: teaching, healing, performing miracles. In other words, He put first the worship and communication with God through prayer, and second, the love of towards man – the two cardinal commandments He gave also to us. My Christian brothers and sisters, “**Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also**” (Luke 12:34). Let us all then gather our minds and bodies and prepare to follow our Lord as He is heading for His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. The life He is heading to is a Life to God: The eternal Life of the Holy Trinity. This is the Life He has promised and has made possible to all those who love Him.

With Love in Christ,

Your Parish Priest, Fr. Gregory