Peace to you, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

We just celebrated one of the most significant festivals of the Church: Presentation in the Temple. These are a few comments from Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin’s sermon:

This festival is unusual. We are already far from Christmas, we have already heard about the Baptism of the Lord, we heard about the miracle at the wedding at Cana and about the call of the first disciples, we observed the Confession of Saint Peter and the Conversion of Saint Paul, and Feast of his followers: saint bishops Timothy and Titus.

But today we read again about Saint Mary and about the Wonderful Child, again almost there is a Christmas theme.

It looks that we are back to Christmas, but this is not by accident: thus, the Church reminds us again that the Word became Flesh, that the Light came into the world, and that this Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.

You hold salvation in your hands. That is why the confession of Simeon -- “now let Your servant, O Lord, to rest in peace, for mine eyes have seen Your salvation” -- for all the time the Church recognizes this in the Eucharistic sense.

“*My eyes have seen Your salvation.*” One of the ancient liturgists, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem wrote: “Do not think that it is about your feelings. No, but about your unbreakable faith. Because when eating, you not eat the bread and wine, but the flesh and the blood of Christ. Come... and place the left palm under the right, and make as the throne, to obtain the King and receive... the Body of Christ and say
Amen. Carefully consecrate your eyes at the contemplation of this holy body and then taste of it” (end of the quote).

Have you noticed the similarity? “Make as the throne, to obtain the King ... carefully consecrate your eyes...” -- this is quite paraphrasing of the words of Saint Simeon. Our eyes see the King, the Lord, the salvation, too. What God has prepared before the face of all nations, now it has reached you and me.

In the holy sacrament, God comes to us so close that we can touch Him. He comes to us not in our dreams, or fantasies, or feelings, not in metaphorical sense, but objectively, really, that is: “eucharistically.”

Saint Simeon devoted to waiting to meet God through all his life. How hard it is -- to wait through all your life? I do not know. Probably, it is very difficult. The Gospel does not say about it. Gospel just describes the joy that God’s promises come true. The joy that long life was lived as devoted to one purpose – to meet with the Savior. And now He came, and now we are not afraid to die. Because there is no death, if you hold in your hands your salvation.

We wish you blessed time after Epiphany. Please pray for the Lutheran clergymen and laypeople in Siberia.  

This “Faith and Hope” newsletter is published by: The Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC). Her bishop, Vsevolod Lytkin, serves St. Andrew congregation in Novosibirsk where the SELC continues to grow and be a place where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, and the Holy Sacraments provided for sinners seeking forgiveness and healing of body and soul. This edition of the Faith and Hope newsletter is edited, reformatted and distributed by The Siberian Lutheran Mission Society (SLMS), a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LC-MS).

In this newsletter, the members of the SELC reveal their faith and hopes. They are Siberian Russians seeking an answer to challenges and problems in their lives. They are a people who have been called by Christ in the healing waters of Holy Baptism and fed by the holy precious food of His body and blood. They may speak a different language, but they are all baptized in the name of the same LORD and eat and drink the same Jesus. These are a people who know the mission of the Church — a mission which begins and finds its conclusion in the Word and Sacraments properly administered. We invite you to read this newsletter with a prayer of divine grace for our Lutheran brothers and sisters in Siberia. Their challenges in a land of pagan Buddhism, shamanism, and atheism is great. Your prayers and continuing support is appreciated.

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