



My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Giving an oath to God can be a very powerful spiritual act that can bring us great benefit. However, making such an oath places on us a very grave responsibility. We must be sure that we will be able to complete what we are promising. Also, we must be sure that our promise is a holy and moral one. An example of an oath that resulted in evil was the oath given by King Herod which led to St. John the Baptist being executed. But on this coming Wednesday, we will be witnessing a fulfillment of a most holy oath which was made by the parents of the Mother of God.

The parents of the Mother of God suffered through most of their married life because they were not given a child by God. This was not only a great grief for them but also a tremendous stigma since not having children at that time was believed to be a severe punishment by God. But despite their grief, being very holy people, they never lost hope that God would sooner or later answer their prayers. They continued to believe and pray even when they became quite old and Anna, the mother, was too old to be able to naturally conceive. Then, to strengthen their plea to God, they promised that if a child was given to them, they would keep this child for only three years. When the child reached the age of three, they promised to consecrate the child to God and send it to live and grow in in the Temple. What an incredible self-sacrificial oath! After anxiously waiting for a child all their life, they were willing to enjoy it only for three years.

God heard their plea and performed a great miracle. A barren, elderly woman conceived and gave birth to a baby girl, who in time would become the Mother to the Savior. And when this child reached the age of three, the parents remembered their oath. They gathered their relatives and little friends of their daughter to accompany them to the Temple. With the singing of hymns and the little girls carrying large candles they approached the steps to the Temple where they were met at the top of the stairs by the High Priest. Anna placed her infant daughter on the first step. To the amazement of all, the little child began climbing the very large steps by herself without any help. Upon reaching the High Priest, she received his blessing. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he then did something completely unusual. He took her into the Holy of Holies. This was the third part of the Temple into which entry was strictly forbidden. Only the High Priest was permitted to enter it and only once a year for special prayers. God, through this entry, was showing the world who this wonderful child would become. Through her, Heaven, represented in the Temple by the Holy of Holies, would be opened to people by her becoming the Mother of the Savior.

May I joyfully invite all of you to participate in this event with me on Tuesday evening at 6:00 PM for the vigil and on Wednesday at one of the liturgies, at 7:30 or 9:30 AM. We will be able to walk through the streets of old Jerusalem together with these holy people, watch how the holy child climbs the steps into the Temple to begin her preparation to become the mother to the Savior, share together with her saintly parents this most holy moment which changed history and opened up to all people the promise of Salvation. I sincerely hope that you will be able to accept my invitation so that together we can celebrate this holiday.

With Love in Christ,
Archpriest Serge Kotar