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1. The Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos

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

When the Holy Virgin reached the age of three, Her holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances and dressed the All-Pure Mary in Her finest clothes. With the singing of sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45: 14-15). 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. 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.

Righteous Joachim and Anna, having entrusted their Child to the will of the Heavenly Father, returned home. The Most Blessed Mary remained in the quarters for virgins, near the Temple. The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos, from the time of Her infancy to the time of Her ascent to Heaven, is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. *"If anyone were to ask me - writes Blessed Jerome - how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer, that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian"*.

In remembrance of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Jerusalem Temple, the Holy Church from ancient times established a solemn Feastday. The evidence for the establishment of the Feast in the first centuries of Christianity is to be found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, where mention is made that the **holy Empress Helen** built a Church in honor of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos.

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

St. Colomanus Abbot of Luxeuil, France (+ 615)

St. Sozomen of Cyprus

One of the 300 Alaman Saints who came to Cyprus from Palestine, because of the Arab invasions. His grave and a Church with ancient frescos, dedicated to him, have been preserved at the village of Potamia, near Nicosia.