

2 February 2025 – The Presentation of Our Lord

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1st Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

When God's Messenger arrives, he will refine the people

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight — indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.

Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Responsorial: from Psalm 24

R./: Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord

O gates, lift high your heads;
reach higher, ancient portals,
that the king of glory may come in! (R./)

Who is this king of glory?

The Lord, powerful and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle. (R./)

Lift up, O gates, your heads;
reach higher, you ancient portals,
that the king of glory may come in! (R./)

Who is this king of glory?

The Lord of hosts; he is the king of glory. (R./)

2nd Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18

Our perfect mediator has deeply shared our human experience

Since all the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

The child Jesus is recognised and welcomed by Simeon and Anna

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came,

and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.



Simeon and Anna

As Chicago priest and novelist, Fr. Andrew Greeley wrote about the Presentation scene, “Scripture scholars now believe that the infancy narratives arose out of the early liturgical practices of the Jesus movement. Other parts of the gospel grew up around sermons and oral and written traditions which the Gospel writers gathered together. There is no trace of this process in the infancy narratives; they appear almost full-blown with no background development. They have been carefully composed with references to the Jewish scriptures and are like liturgical plays, little dramas written for the community and perhaps acted by children in the community (just as the infancy narratives are often acted out today). This is not to suggest that they are pure fiction, but rather that they are stories put together for the community to emphasize their faith in *who and what they knew Jesus to be*. The elderly spokespersons in today’s Gospel repeat the early Christian faith — and ours too.

Mary and Joseph must have pondered the words of Smeon and

Anna, wondering what this meant for their child. They, like most new parents, probably had dreams for him but the prophecy of Simeon, and the words of Anna sounded somewhat ominous. Incidentally, the custom of blessing candles today comes from the fact in ancient Rome, the “station” for the Mass today was a church in the ruins of the Forum (Santa Maria in Foro) and, since it was in the middle of winter, it was dark and people needed the candles to find their way among the ruins. The devotion to the young Jesus, the Light of the World, presents him as one who overcomes the darkness

When new parents bring their precious bundle home from its birthing place, they feel that their child is the most precious baby in the world and they begin imaging all the great things this child will accomplish. As they share their dreams for their child with family and friends, there is always someone ready to throw a wet blanket on their hopes and remind them of the cost of child-rearing, both in financial and energy terms. The visitor would be better advised to say how lucky they are to have this precious bundle. S/he could then add this bit of advice, “Love your child with all your heart and soul. Encourage him/her in whatever interests s/he displays. If you do that, you will be great parents. But if you try to live out your dreams through what your child does or accomplishes, you will only be frustrated when your child makes his or her own life choices, especially if they are not the ones you had hoped to see.”

Predicting His Future

Today's Gospel describes a meeting between a young couple and their infant child with Simeon and Anna, both of them well on in years. Simeon's response when he met the infant Jesus was to pray; he blessed God. His prayer has become part of the official night prayer of the church. Anna's response on meeting the child Jesus was to speak about Jesus to others, especially to those who were waiting for God to visit them in a special way. Whereas Simeon lifted up his heart in prayer, Anna bore witness to Jesus before others. Simeon's meeting with Jesus and his parents led him to look towards God in prayer; Anna's meeting with Jesus and his parents led her to look towards others in witness. Simeon and Anna have each something to say to us about how to receive the Lord. We too are called to receive the Lord in prayer and in witness. We bless God, we thank God, in prayer for the gift of his Son, the light to enlighten all people, and we proclaim God's gift to others, by witnessing to the Lord in our lives, by what we say and do. The Lord who entered the temple in Jerusalem as the light of the world has entered all our lives; today we look to Simeon and Anna to show us how to respond to his gracious coming.
