

The Presentation in the Temple

Luke 2:22-40

NARRATOR 1: When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord') and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons'.

NARRATOR 2: Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

SIMEON: 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.'

NARRATOR 1: And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

SIMEON: 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'

NARRATOR 2: And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

NARRATOR 1: And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favour of God was upon him.



THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD (CANDLEMAS)

First celebrated during the late fourth century as a feast of Our Lord in the Eastern Church, and previously called the Purification of Mary in the seventh century, Candlemas celebrates the faithful observance of Mary and Joseph of 'all that the Law requires' and the value placed on the sacredness of life. Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, not only became man but was born into a humble, working-class, normal family. Mary, Queen of Heaven lived an incomparably holy life as a poor wife and mother. Joseph, universal protector of the Church worked hard to keep bread on the table. Centuries later and for generations to come, candles will be blessed and lit in abundance on this day to celebrate Light from Light.

REFLECTION

From the New Testament we can draw various conclusions about Joseph. We read that Joseph was betrothed to Mary when the conception occurred, but had no sexual relations with her. After the conception, Joseph took Mary into his home as his wife and together they shared their faith in the mystery. Together they cooperated in fulfilling their mission to be parents to the Son of God. As spouses they showed each other all the love and affection that resulted from their experience of God's love and that contributed to providing a loving human family for Jesus.

Joseph and Mary are called 'parents' together (Luke 2:41-48), and Joseph is called 'father' and referred to as such by Mary (Luke 2:48). Together they see to the circumcision and naming of the child, obediently fulfil all the prescriptions of the law and temple worship, and are blessed by Simeon (Luke 2:27). Together they are subject to parental worry and incomprehension while raising Jesus. Together they are obeyed by him.

In the passage from St Luke (2:22-40) we hear the wonderful prayer of Simeon. God was faithful to his promise that Simeon would live to see the 'light promised to the gentiles'. St Charles Borromeo summed up what this must have meant to Simeon:

'The patriarchs and prophets longed and prayed and yearned with all their hearts for this time. That just man Simeon at long last saw this time and his joy was boundless.'

QUESTIONS

- *What strikes you most about the passage from Scripture? What did you notice that you hadn't noticed before?*
- *What can we do to live more fully the Church's uniquely fruitful and beautiful teaching on family life?*
- *How can we increase our sincere reverence for God's gift of life to us and to those around us, particularly in this time and instead of taking it so much for granted?*
- *How have you let Christ enter more into your most mundane struggles and joys, instead of reserving him just for the times when you go to church or when you're really in trouble?*