

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

February 2, 2025

Readings

Mal 3:1-4

Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10

Heb 2:14-18

Lk 2:22-40 *or* 2:22-3

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When my family shared a meal together and had special guests at the table, my mother made sure that we prepared by using the plates and glasses and silverware reserved for special occasions. We had our normal plates, glasses and stainless-steel flatware for our regular family meals, but we knew that there was someone special coming, when we were to set the table with the “good ones.” This meant that for the one who was selected to set the table that morning, a little more effort in the preparation was going to be needed. At times, the silverware did not pass inspection and we had to get the polish to clean any of the tarnish that may have built up since the last meal with special guests. My mother wanted to make sure that we did our best in preparing the table so that we could present to our guests an atmosphere that helped them to know how special they are to us. Before the guests arrived, there was a period of preparation, purification and eventual presentation. This childhood memory came back to me when I read in our first reading from the Prophet Malachi: “He will sit refining and purifying silver.” Although we were not using “a refiner’s fire” to purify the silverware, in a certain sense, we were purifying the silver for our presentation to our invited guests.

This weekend, we celebrate the liturgical feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Our Gospel reading recounts that the Holy Family had a period of preparation and purification,

according to the Law of Moses, before they were ready to make the presentation of their Son to the Lord. When they entered the Temple, they encountered two people who were also practicing their own form of preparation. Simeon, we are told, was awaiting the “consolation of Israel” and when he took the child Jesus in his arms, he prayed the canticle which is now sung during Night Prayer in convents, friaries, monasteries and homes throughout the world: “*Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.*” For Simeon, the child Jesus was the sign of the fulfillment of God’s promise to the people of Israel.

The Prophetess, Anna, also received the child in the Temple and her response was to give thanks to God and to spread the good news of the “redemption of Jerusalem.” Both Simeon and Anna received the child Jesus at his presentation in the Temple, and then presented their own response of thanksgiving to the Lord. Their presentation came after much time of preparation and purification on their own part.

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is celebrated on the Liturgical Calendar every February 2, and since this year we have this uncommon opportunity to celebrate the Feast of the Presentation on a Sunday, let us reflect on how we prepare ourselves to receive Jesus Christ in our participation at the Eucharist. The Holy Family made their preparations and purifications before entering the temple to present the Lord. How can we prepare and purify ourselves so that we can receive the Lord in our own temples? And then, how can that purification process assist us to present ourselves, liked newly polished or refined silver, to the invited guest of Christ. Where are those areas in our lives where tarnish has built up: The tarnish of pride, selfishness,

unkind acts, broken relationships, prejudice, injustice? What needs a little more attention or what needs to be polished for our own presentation to be complete?

Can we see ourselves, like Simeon and Anna, receiving Christ into our lives, into our arms, and then proclaiming to those around us, in word or in action, that Salvation has come to us, and into the world? That is, are we able to proclaim that, in Christ, we are saved from the oppression of our sin? We know that we cannot purify ourselves on our own, as one who can purify silver with polish. It is only Grace, God's gift, that allows us the possibility to be purified and prepared for our own presentation. And so, we pray that we may be open to receive that purifying Grace into our lives.

Traditionally, this feast is a day when we remember in a special way, all men and women who have consecrated themselves to serving God in religious communities. Let us remember them in a special way in our prayers today and pray for an increase in the response to vocations to the religious and consecrated life and for the grace of joy and perseverance for those sisters, nuns, brothers and priests who have already professed to live their life consecrated to God. May this feast of the Presentation of the Lord be a reminder for all of us of our need for preparation, purification and eventual presentation.