**Homily for the Presentation of the Lord - Feb 2nd, 2025**

**Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple:**

***Ancient ceremonies observed***

***(Luke 2:22-40) New Living Translation:***

“Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, “If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord.” So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord - “either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” The Prophecy of Simeon: At that time, there was a man named Simeon in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. That day, the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!” Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”

Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then, she lived as a widow until the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him.” (***Luke 2:22-40)***

Jewish families would go through several ceremonies soon after a baby’s birth – circumcision, redemption of the firstborn, and purification after childbirth. These three ceremonies are strange old ceremonies, but all three ceremonies have at the back of them the conviction that **a child is a gift of God**. Jesus was God’s Son, but his family carried out these ceremonies according to God’s law.

When Mary Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated to God, they met an old man who told them who their child would be. Simeon’s song is often called Nunc Dimittis. Simeon could die in peace because he had seen the Messiah. Joseph and Mary were both amazed when this old man took their son into his arm and spoke such stunning words. Simeon said that Jesus was a gift from God, and he recognized Jesus as the Messiah who would be the light of the entire world. This is at least the second time that Mary had been greeted with a prophecy about her son; the first time was when Elizabeth had welcomed her as the mother of her Lord (Luke 1: 42-45).

According to Simeon, Christ would have a paradoxical effect on Israel and on the entire world. his presence will cause the rise and fall of many in Israel. There would be no neutral ground with Christ: some people will either joyfully accept Him or totally reject him.

Anna was called a prophet because she was unusually close to God. Although Simeon and Anna were old, they never lost their hope that they would see the Messiah. Led by the Holy Spirit, they were among the first to bear witness to Jesus. In Jewish culture, elders were respected. Because of their age, Simeon and Anna’s prophecies carried extra weight. This is a great lesson for all of us today. As we value youthfulness and current information, we should also not ignore the wisdom that comes from age and experience. As Christians, we respect people’s dignity and value wherever we can, regardless of age. Let us encourage older people to share their wisdom and experiences. Let us listen when they speak, offer them friendship, and help them find ways to continue to serve God.

**Christ came to save the world**: The Jews were well acquainted with the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of the Messiah’s blessings to their nation. They did not always give equal attention to the prophecies, stating that the Messiah would bring salvation to the entire world, not just the Jews. Many thought that Jesus had come to save only his people. Luke made sure his Greek audience understood that the Messiah had come to save all who believed – Gentiles as well as Jews. When people gathered in the Temple to fulfill old rituals, Simeon and Anna recognized the presence and power of God, who appeared in the Temple to save the entire human race – their long-awaited dreams and hopes realized. Let us today follow their lead and recognize Jesus Christ in the Eucharist today, the power and presence of God who is here to bring us healing, strength, hope, love, and light.  Amen.

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