



Archdiocese of San Antonio
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Feast of the Presentation of the Lord February 2, 2014

It has been over a month now since we celebrated the Incarnation of our Lord on Christmas Day, and now we gather to celebrate his Presentation in the Temple as a child. These two feasts are linked however, because in both, Jesus does something very human, but reveals the depths of all that is divine.

As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews puts it, Jesus “had to become like his brothers and sisters in every way.” In this case, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple to fulfill the law that: “Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord.” This was a very normal custom among the Jewish people of the time, and Mary and Joseph were probably not expecting much more than that normal ritual to occur. But when Jesus was presented along with the prescribed sacrificial offering, something far greater occurred. The two prophets of God, Simeon and Anna recognized the truth about the child. He was not only the first-born son; he was also the Promised One, Christ the Lord. Jesus’ parents came to present their son according to the normal custom, but witnessed the Presentation of the Light of the World.

Simeon proclaimed that his “eyes have seen [God’s] salvation,... prepared in the sight of all the peoples.” His eyes have now been enlightened by the light that came to shine in all corners of the world. Anna glorified God and spoke of the true identity of this child to all present in the Temple. The Presentation of the Lord was not only the presentation of a child in the sanctuary, but the Presentation of the Light to all of

creation. This had been promised from of old. Malachi had predicted this when he proclaimed: “Suddenly there will come to the temple the Lord whom you seek, and the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.” Simeon and Anna recognized that this prophecy had been fulfilled, and the Light began to dawn on the earth. The light came “like the refiner’s fire” to purify all that was done in darkness, so that all would be made new. Mary and Joseph had brought along the sacrifice prescribed in the law “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,” but in truth, the child himself would grow to be the sacrifice that sets us free.

We praise our God because the light of his love shines in the world. But we cannot forget that just as the Incarnation requires us to respond to the Word that was spoken into human life, the Presentation also calls us to action. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that “Because [Jesus] himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.” Jesus did not come as a King to live a life of luxury and comfort. He is the King of Glory who gives his very life for his Kingdom. If we follow the Lord, our lives will be filled with the same call to self-sacrifice that Jesus lived. But we can be certain that the Lord will be there to help us in our sufferings. His beloved mother Mary was not spared the sufferings of following her son. Simeon told her in the Temple, “you yourself a sword will pierce,” and truly Mary suffered as she watched her only child suffer cruelly at the hands of those he came to save. Joseph endured hardships as he cared for Christ as a father. Uprooting his life and family and moving to Egypt to keep them safe, protecting the Christ by sacrificing his own interests. All throughout history people have opened themselves up to this call to self-sacrifice, but have found fullness of life and true joy in that call. They have helped others to have a true encounter with Christ, the Light of the World, and know the King of Glory and witness the salvation he has prepared in the sight of every people. The way we bear our burdens in Christ, allows the light to shine brightly. Bearing loss, or pain, or injustice, or difficulties in relationships, or any struggles that come our way with faith, hope, and love – being people of joy even as we carry our crosses – allows the power of God to become visible. After all, it is only through the power of God that we can bear all things. Let the light of his love shine in you this day.

As we celebrate this “Candlemass”, remember that we are each called to bear God’s Light to the world. How well we shine that light to those we meet depends on how open we are to bearing our crosses for the sake of the Lord. Never be afraid to walk the path of Christ. “Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!” It is he who shared in blood and flesh with us and who has never abandoned us. He will guide us through all darkness in the way of eternal light, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.”