

Presentation of the Lord Malachi 3.1-4, Hebrews 2.14-18, Luke 2.22-40

Today marks the 40th day since the birth of Jesus Christ. Over the past weeks we have heard from the scripture readings about the revealing of Jesus Christ who is the Messiah, the Son of God, the newborn King. The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is an ancient celebration in the Church. The feast dates back to at least the 4th century.

It is also called Candlemas because, on this day, candles are blessed in many parishes. These candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World. The feast is celebrated on February 2, forty days after Christmas. It recalls the day when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to present Him to God.

According to the Mosaic law, a mother such as Mary who had given birth to a male child was considered unclean for seven days; moreover, she was to remain “in the blood of her purification”—i.e., outside the temple—for thirty-three days more.

When the forty days was over, the mother was to “bring to the temple a lamb for a holocaust and a young pigeon or turtle dove for sin”; if she was not able to offer a lamb, she was to take two turtle doves or two pigeons; the priest prayed for her and so she was cleansed (see Leviticus 12:2-8).

Mother Mary, with all her humility, prepared her soul to present the Son of God to the Father and to offer herself to Him. In doing this, Mary renewed her Fiat, Mary’s “be it done unto me according to Thy Word.” My friends we should learn from Mary’s humility and that of St. Joseph as they both offered their life in full trust in God’s plan. We can offer our life to God’s plan as well by following their example.

Over the past weeks we have had revealed to us that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. Mary and Joseph went UP to Jerusalem, to the temple as faithful observers of the law. In Sacred Scripture one goes UP to Jerusalem to pray in the temple. In the temple they encounter Simeon who was “righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” Simeon in his thanksgiving states, “...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.” Simeon is revealing that this child, Jesus Christ, is the savior.

Jesus Christ came to free us from the darkness of sin. God’s plan is for Jew and Gentile, God’s plan of salvation is for everyone. Jesus will fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy by bringing the **light** even to Gentiles, “my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Is. 49.6).

Light is what conquers darkness, light conquers sin because Jesus Christ is the light! Simeon calls Jesus the “Light of Revelation.” This means that Jesus came to bring God’s truth to everyone. The light of Jesus is not just for Israel but for all nations, including the Gentiles. In this way, Jesus’ mission is for the whole world. Simeon’s words remind us that Jesus brings hope and salvation to all people, not just one group. He is a light in the darkness for everyone who believes. This is the year of Hope let us keep the light of Christ front and center of our lives.

In a homily written around the year 620 Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem states, “The Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, carried the true light in her arms and brought him to those who lay in darkness. We too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the true light as we hasten to meet him.”

My friends in Christ our focus in this year of hope is to focus on the Light of the World Jesus Christ. As we gather and soon prepare for the Liturgy of the Eucharist let us turn to Mary and Joseph and imitate their faith and trust in God. They did not waver; they did not fear. Mary and Joseph demonstrated by their life a deep and humble faith. We are called to imitate them, to follow their example and carry a light.

Again, turning to St. Sophronius, “The true light has come, the light that enlightens every man who is born into this world. Let all of us, my brethren, be enlightened and made radiant by this light. Let all of us share in its splendor, and be so filled with it that no one remains in the darkness.” Jesus Christ himself states, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life: (Jn. 8.12).

Through the sacrament of confession, we allow that light of Jesus Christ to eliminate the darkness of sin. May we see the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and when we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ and allow Him to abide in us. May we imitate Mary and Joseph with humility and remain filled with the light of Christ.