

FEBRUARY 2, 2022
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
Luke 2: 22-40

“BE THE LIGHT LIKE JESUS.”

In the Jewish custom and the old liturgy of the Church, this feast was called before the Purification of Our Lady which focusses on Mary and the ritual custom of those mothers who after birth will go to the temple for their purification. This was in reference to the Book of Leviticus wherein a woman who gives birth to a son remains impure for a week, and afterwards immerses in a body of water to purify herself. “She shall be ceremonially unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Her time of blood purification shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing, or come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed. When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. He shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement on her behalf; then she shall be clean from her flow of blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, male or female. If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.”¹ This was what Mary and Joseph did. They went to the temple with Jesus for Mary’s purification. As you notice, the focus is on Mary’s cleansing. Without prejudice to the old liturgy, the feast is now called the Presentation of the Lord which focusses on Jesus as the light of the world, that’s why in tradition we have blessing of candles today. we heard that there are two persons who greeted the Holy Family: first is Simeoun and the second is Anna, both religious people and servants of the temple.

Simeon “had been told that he would not die until he had first laid eyes on the promised Messiah. Guided by the Spirit he came into the Temple and recognized in Mary’s child the long-awaited Messiah. He makes a prayer of thanksgiving to God for answering his prayer ‘for my

¹ Leviticus 12: 1-8

eyes have seen your salvation.’ And what he has seen is ‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel.’ Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, is a divine revelation to the non-Jews and the glory of God's own people from whom he came. Mary and Joseph are quite amazed at the words being spoken. There is a lot they still do not know about their Son. But Simeon then had some ominous words for the Mother: ‘This child is destined for the fall and the rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’ This is the paradox of Jesus. He comes as Saviour bringing life for the whole world and yet there will be people who will reject his message of truth and life. His own people will be deeply divided over him. This will be a source of deep pain for the Mother, something she will not realize fully until she sees him die in agony before her eyes. The second person was Anna, whose husband had died after only 7 years of marriage and who had now been a widow for more than 60 years. She spent all her time in the Temple in prayer and fasting. On seeing the Child, she gave thanks to God and spoke about him to everyone she met.”²

The First Reading expresses this feast as the Lord God through Prophet Malachi said of the promised Messiah will come to his temple who will inaugurate the New Covenant and He will be a real challenge like a refiner’s fire. Those who welcome His works, message and call, He is good news but for those who will not accept His call and mission, it means death and the end of life.

My sisters and brothers, this feast is reminding us how to be a light to the nations as Jesus did in this world. It means that those who follow the Lord will also experience the sword pierce in our own heart and soul like the Blessed Mother. But do not fear, the reward is great and with Jesus we will be saved and our life will contribute in spreading the light to all. So, as we follow the Lord be a light to our brothers and sisters and like Mary, we must remain steadfast amidst sorrow and difficulties.

² livingspace.ca