

## **Homily For the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord - Year A**

**St. Peter's 5:00/7:00/8:00 Masses - February 1/2, 2020**

**Malachi 3:1-4** "He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver."

**Psalms 24:7-10** "Be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in."

**Hebrews 2:10-18** "Jesus, through death, freed those who were held in slavery by the fear of death."

**Luke 2:22-40** "My eyes have seen your salvation, a light for revelation to Gentiles and glory to Israel."

### **Darkness and Light**

#### **Introduction**

A boy was looking for a tooney he had lost on the way to the store to spend it. He looked so long it started to get dark. A man walked by and asked if he had lost something. The boy told him about it and the man began to help. After awhile, the man asked: Are you sure you lost it here? The boy replied: No, it was down the road a ways, but I'm looking here because the light is better.

This is a very old joke, and based on a very silly way of looking at the situation. Who would look to find something in a place where we would know we were never going to find it? And yet, that is often what happens in our own lives. Everyone has a desire to be happy. And yet we constantly look for happiness in places where we will never find it.

#### **The Presentation of Jesus**

The problem for us is the same problem in the time of Mary and Joseph. Who has the true message? Where do we look for that truth? Where is the proper light by which we should look? TV and movies are always shouting: Here is the light that will make you happy. Look over here. The internet has a thousand places claiming to be the light that will help you find the treasure, the satisfaction, the happiness you seek. Sadly, most of those places don't have anything worth finding.

In today's Gospel passage, there are three demonstrations of looking for God. Anna was a woman who looked for God constantly. It says in the Gospel that she

was a prophet. God uses certain men and women to shine a light on the truth about God. Anna was one of those.

It says that she worshipped in the temple night and day. She was used to looking for God. When she saw Mary and Joseph, and the infant Jesus: “She began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for redemption.” Anna knew where and how to look for God. And when she saw Jesus, she shared that light. She told others about it.

Mary and Joseph were doing everything to be in harmony with the law of God. Five times in this passage it says they brought Jesus to the temple “according to the law.” In general we are law abiding people. However, we have a culture where we tend to think of the law as a burden and a restriction on our freedom. We often look for ways to get around the law. How fast can I go without getting a ticket? That’s me. Do I really have to claim this income on my taxes? Mary and Joseph knew that to obey the law was a path to harmony with God. And so they brought the infant Jesus to the temple to present him, to offer him to God.

Simeon was a man who had been waiting for God to enter into the world as a Messiah, a king who would transform the world into a place of light. He was looking for God. “It had been revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He took Jesus in his arms and praised God saying: Master now you can dismiss your servant in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel.

## **The Temple**

Do you remember Jesus' baptism when John said that Jesus didn't need to be baptized, but Jesus said do it anyway? It’s the right thing to do. And what happened? Jesus made the waters of baptism holy, so that we who seek baptism into his death and resurrection would receive the grace of God to become his beloved sons and daughters.

Jesus being presented in the temple is something similar. He didn't need to be presented to the Lord. He was already intimately joined from all eternity to God

the Father in a love so profound that it is manifested as the Holy Spirit. Mary and Joseph took Jesus into the temple to make IT holy.

The prophet Malachi says: “The Lord whom you seek (who you are looking for) will suddenly come to his temple.” Later Jesus will suddenly come into the temple and chase out the money changers, turning over their tables and declaring that they have converted a house of prayer into a den of robbers. Then he will tell everyone that he is the true temple where all may find peace and happiness.

### **Darkness and Light**

There is a kind of darkness that we humans will experience many times and in different ways in our lives. That darkness happens as children when we first realize what kind of hurt people can inflict on each other. It is a darkness when, especially as teenagers, we feel a kind of self doubt about our identity.

There is the darkness that comes when things happen to us that we weren't expecting but cause us pain, sometimes small pain but sometimes large pain in our hearts or at the centre of our being, that makes it hard to just keep on going. As time goes by I become aware of how people experience the hurts that come with life.

The letter to the **Hebrews** tells us that “It was fitting that God should make the source of our salvation perfect through sufferings. Jesus himself shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. Because Jesus himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

The world has a hard time understanding this presence of a compassionate God. We are having a debate about whether we should make our doctors kill us when it feels too difficult to go on. But our faith tells us that this is exactly the point at which we are given the chance to walk with people IN their darkness and suffering. This is the point at which we get to be the love and compassion of God to walk with people through their darkest valleys.

Jesus Christ enters right into the middle of. He took on our nature and experienced the worst of everything we experience: rejection, physical pain and mental anguish. When there is darkness and sorrow in our lives, WE ARE NOT ALONE.

Earlier today, 200 of our children received the light of Christ in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Even at that age, there is such joy in them to be able to be free of the darkness in them that leads them to sin, even the little sins that are typical at that age. But they have begun the practice, that we pray they will continue, of calling on God to shine a light into their darkness.

The passage we read from scripture for them goes like this: We proclaim to you that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and with Jesus, who is faithful and will forgive us and cleanse us of our sins.

Finally, today the psalm asks us who is the king of glory. The answer is that it is the Lord of hosts. Open up the gates of your heart and let him in. In him is the true light, the true temple where God may be worshipped. Let us stop our looking in the wrong place for what is truly a treasure. No other light is necessary than the Lord of hosts, Jesus Christ.