

February 2nd, The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple

Opening Prayers:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
for you have sent us your salvation.
Inspire us by your Holy Spirit
to recognize him who is the glory of Israel
and the light for all nations,
your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Malachi 3:1-4

Cyrus, King of Persia, has permitted the people of Israel to return to Palestine. The Temple, gutted in 586 BC, has been restored, but Israel is still a Persian province. People expected that their fidelity to God would be rewarded by (material) prosperity, but life has continued to be hard, so after several decades, they have lapsed into waywardness. It is the ungodly who prosper. In the old days, the king was God's agent, but now (there being no king), the priests have assumed this role. God's agent, will come to prepare a way for him. God, long expected, will come to "his temple", to the priests.

Thus says the Lord: See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Hebrews 2:14-18

Hebrews couches the good news in Jewish terms: it sees Jesus as the great high priest. because Jesus and we have the same Father. God reveals himself in the Church. There is a close affinity between Jesus and his followers. Jesus, through his redemptive act, frees us from the fear of death – death is no longer separation from God. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, the nature of death has changed: it has become the way out of the domain of sin. Christ's "sacrifice", death, ends this cycle: he continually takes sins on himself, keeping us in unity with God.

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Luke 2:22-40

Jesus has been circumcised, marking him as a member of God's chosen people, Israel, through whom world salvation was to be achieved. After childbirth, it was 40 days before a mother could be purified before a priest in the Temple, so it is at least that long since Jesus' birth. She was expected to offer a lamb, along with a turtledove or a pigeon; if she were poor (as Mary is), two turtledoves or pigeons sufficed. Exodus required that every firstborn boy be consecrated to God. Jesus' presentation in the Temple is like Samuel's. Jesus and his family fulfil the requirements of Mosaic law. The Spirit has told Simeon that he will see the Christ before he dies. Simeon and Anna together stand before God; to Luke, men and women are equal in God's eyes. Anna praises God, and tells many the meaning of Jesus, as Simeon has prophesied. Like Samuel, "the favour of God was upon him"

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Concluding Prayers

Let us pray for our parish of All Saints', that it continues to be a light to our communities and a beacon for all people.

Let us pray for God's people Israel, first to hear the word of God, and for God's people in Christ, the new Israel.

Let us pray for enlightened minds and hearts among those who act and work for the public good, especially for Charles, our king, and all those who serve under him.

Let us pray for God's reign of peace, that no people need live in the fear of death.

Let us pray for those who speak and those who hear the prophetic word today, that God's word would continue to blaze forth.

Let us pray for wisdom in old age and for fidelity in youth, that our faithfulness be an inspiration to others.

Let us pray for those who suffer from winter's cold, for the homeless, the unemployed and those who must look to others for their daily bread.

Let us pray for all who walk in darkness, facing illness, death, and misfortune.

Help us to love you with all our hearts, Lord our God.
May we serve you with gladness and sing of your salvation.
As we gather in faith around your table,
Make us one in hope and love,
Grant this through your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

For our Parish.

O GOD the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful:
Sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence
especially at this time when some feel they cannot gather together.
Enlighten the minds of thy people more and more
with the light of the everlasting Gospel.
Bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Saviour;
and those who are walking in the way of life,

keep steadfast unto the end.

Give patience to the sick and afflicted,
and renew them in body and soul.

Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous.

Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace,
and make us all to be fruitful in good works;

O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son together
we worship and glorify, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever. *Amen.*

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding,

keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,

and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:

And the blessing of God Almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you

always. *Amen*