

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Year A)

Luke 2:22-40

22 When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – 23 observing what stands written in the law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – 24 and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. 25 Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. 27 Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the law required, 28 he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 29 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; 30 because my eyes have seen the salvation 31 which you have prepared for all the nations to see, 32 a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'

33 As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, 34 Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – 35 and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

36 There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years 37 before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. 38 She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. 39 When they had done everything the law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Other readings: Malachi 3:1-4 Psalm 23 (24) Hebrews 2:14-18

This lengthy gospel reading completes for us the mystery of Christmas. Jesus becomes 'completely like his brothers'. He is brought to the Temple to begin a life of service. His future path is foreseen by Simeon and Anna. His mother's pain is also foretold. He is subject to his parents in the secret life of Nazareth. But, as Simeon already proclaims, he is set to be a 'sign of contradiction', 'a light for all the nations and the glory of his people Israel'.

How does this feast reconnect us with the Christmas mysteries?

What deeper significance does Jesus' coming to the Temple contain?

Consider on this feast of Candlemas how light is a recurring theme in Bible and liturgy.

We pray for all fathers and mothers that they may treasure their children as gifts of God.