



Today we celebrate the fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, but also today we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2, 40 days after Christmas, and this feast takes precedence today. This is why the beginning of the celebration was different.

It is the Feast that celebrates the fulfillment of the law of the Holy Family. This law requires that the Virgin Mary must be purified; in fact, year ago this feast was called The Purification of the Virgin Mary. A woman, after giving birth, became impure and had to wait certain days to present herself pure before God. If she gave birth to a girl, it was 80 days, if it was a boy, 40. Another law here they had

to comply with: every first-born child had to be consecrated-to the Lord, delivered to him, that is, Jesus had to remain at the service of God, and in fact he always was in his life. But another law that killed this law: the ransom. Animal sacrifices must be presented so that the firstborn son would be freed from that service and could be with his family. For this reason, Joseph and Mary, being poor, gave a pair of pigeons.

Well in this context that Luke presents take place a revelation: Jesus is the light of the World. The Gospel of Luke recalls Mary and Joseph taking the child Jesus for his first visit to the temple in Jerusalem. This feast is also known as Candlemas because of the tradition of blessing and distributing candles and holding a candlelight procession on this day. These practices are drawn from Simeon's words in the gospel for this feast, in which he prophesies that the child Jesus will become "a light for revelation to the Gentiles."

Only Simeon and Anna, two elderly people, notice the Holy Family. They recognise a new and special presence. They find fulfilment from their watchfulness, and their long wait comes to a joyful end. Simeon and Anna's active prayer life kept expanding their brains. They were able to recognize, somehow, that God would fulfill a special promise in this child. When Jesus is brought to the temple, he is fulfilling the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures and that is why it is seen as such an important event in this Gospel of Luke. This is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi and lets those who understand the Scriptures know that this baby is the promised Messiah who will save His people.

The question, of course, is about how this Messiah will save His people. So many thought that the Messiah would be an earthly ruler—yet we see in the Hebrew Scriptures that all earthly rulers have their defects, even those anointed by God!

Jesus comes, as the second reading tells us, in the flesh and blood, just as we find ourselves. Only one who has suffered and embraced our human condition can really understand us and save us. It is in Jesus that God offers salvation.

In the first reading, Prophet Malachi prepares our minds for the coming of the Lord: "And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter the temple." This prophecy is fulfilled in both today's second reading and gospel. One question, when and how do I meet the Lord?

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Christ is a faithful high priest. In Fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi, He entered the temple, presented and sacrificed himself to God for our salvation. To achieve this mission, He had to be like one of us by assuming our nature. He completed His presentation in the temple on the cross: So that by his death, he could take away all the power of the devil...and set free all those who had been held in slavery." He entered the temple, both as the priest and the victim.

In today's gospel, through His presentation, his parents accompanied him to begin his mission in the right place, the temple. However, as an adult, He offered himself publicly on the cross. Through this public presentation and offer of himself, we now participate in his life. The lessons we are to learn from this include that, there is no limit to which we can offer ourselves to God.

Also, today's gospel reminds us that God is faithful to his promise. This is especially, to those who love and are faithful to him. Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled in today's gospel. This is because, Simeon and Anna

encountered the Lord in the temple in a way and at a time they least expected: “The Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter the temple.” They knew about His coming, hoped to meet Him, but they never knew when this would be, until He suddenly appeared in the temple. The both thanked and blessed the Lord for his faithfulness.

Brothers and sisters: this celebration invites us to recognize Jesus in our lives. He is the light of the world. He comes to illuminate our darkness and rescue us from sin and death. Like Simeon and Anna, let us recognize him in our lives and let us put all our hopes in him. Amen

Father David Arroyo, C.R.