

The Presentation of the Lord

February 2, 2020

GOSPEL LUKE 2:22-40

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord,

Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord, and to offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:

“Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples:

a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and 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.”

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

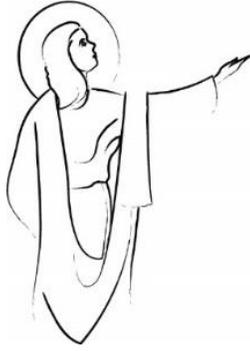
When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Presentation of the Lord

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(taken from [Formed.org](https://www.formed.org), Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Imagine that you are in the Temple when Mary and Joseph arrive with Jesus. You see Simeon approach and allude to the prophecies from Isaiah about the coming of Israel's redeemer. You look at the baby in Mary's arms. What do you think?
2. Do you believe that it is possible that this child could be the Messiah? Next, you hear Simeon's stark words about the opposition the child will face and the suffering Mary will endure as a result. What enters your mind when you realize that accepting Jesus as the Messiah also means accepting the sword and the cross?
3. This week take some time to consider what it means to realize that accepting Jesus as the Messiah always means accepting the crosses that are to come. What cross are you carrying right now that you can offer to Jesus?



5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 9, 2020

GOSPEL MT 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples:

"You are the salt of the earth.

But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?

It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world.

A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.

Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket;

it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.

Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."



5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 9, 2020

4. (taken from *In Conversation with God*, v. 3, p 220) Salt gives flavor to food, makes it pleasant, and preserves it from going bad. It was a symbol of divine wisdom. In the Old Testament it was prescribed that everything offered to God should be seasoned with salt (Leviticus 2:13) signifying that the one who was offering willed that his sacrifice be pleasing to God. Christ's disciples, his followers—you and I—are the salt of the earth. [We] give a deeper meaning to all human values. [We] avoid corruption and bring wisdom to all by our words....

When have I been “salt” to others? When I have received the wisdom from others and had deeper meaning added to my life?

5. (taken from *A Catechumen's Lectionary*, ed Hamma, Robert, 226)
Light was one of the first things God created in the book of Genesis. Light dispelled the darkness. Christ is calling his disciples now to be that same light: to dispel the darkness with our good deeds and words filled with encouragement and truth. As Pope Francis is fond of saying, “Be builders of a culture of encounter.”

Where is there darkness in your world? (those who suffer physically, emotionally or spiritually?) How can you be a light here?

6. **What is the “bushel basket” that keeps you from sharing your light? Is it fear, shyness, or perhaps a past hurt? Present this weakness to the Lord and let's pray for one another for strength in this particular area. (The first Reading from Isaiah highlights the promise of healing to those who share their light—it may help to read this out loud.)**



6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 16, 2020

GOSPEL [MT 5:17-37](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ***You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.***

But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will

hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said, ***You shall not commit adultery.*** But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

"It was also said, ***Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.*** But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife - unless the marriage is unlawful - causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ***Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.*** But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one."

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 16, 2020

1. (taken from *A Catechumen's Lectionary*, ed Hamma, Robert, 233)

Jesus calls us to holiness. It is a holiness that must surpass the of the scribes and Pharisees. Our holiness should not focus only on external fulfillment of the law, but must be the result of an internal transformation of our hearts. Holiness first of all is a decision. Now is the time to renew your commitment to the process of change and growth.

Holiness is not beyond us. As Sirach says in the first reading, “if you chose, you can keep the commandments. God does not give strength for lies but God does give strength for holiness.” Fire and water, life and death are set before us. We receive whatever we choose.

Is there someone in your life with whom you need to be reconciled? Bring that person before the Lord in your prayer. Ask for wisdom to understand that person, to see him or her as Jesus does.

2. How does our culture see the body? Oftentimes we can err and choose either of these two extremes: exalt the body in over indulgence and over sexualization OR see the body as a detriment, and as something we can't wait “to get rid of” so to “free our spirits”. The Christian worldview views the whole person—body and soul—as created in the image and likeness of God. The body reveals the person and as such all of our created being is redeemed and holy.

What part of the Christian worldview challenges me? Where have I agreed too readily with the world's over indulgence of the body or where have I rejected the holiness of the body?

3. (taken from [St Paul Center.com/blog/Affair of the Heart](http://StPaulCenter.com/blog/Affair%20of%20the%20Heart)) The law of the new covenant is a law that God writes on the heart (see Jer 31:31-34). The heart is the seat of our motivations, the place from which our words and actions proceed. Jesus this week calls us to train our hearts, to master our passions and emotions. And Jesus demands the full obedience of our hearts. He calls us to love God with all our hearts, and to do his will from the heart.

How would you explain this claim of Jesus on our heart to someone who is “spiritual but not religious”? Why does God desire our heart?



7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 23, 2020

GOSPEL MT 5:38-48

Jesus said to his disciples:

"You have heard that it was said,

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil.

When someone strikes you on your right cheek,
turn the other one as well.

If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic,
hand over your cloak as well.

Should anyone press you into service for one mile,
go for two miles.

Give to the one who asks of you,

and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

"You have heard that it was said,

You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies

and pray for those who persecute you,

that you may be children of your heavenly Father,

for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good,

and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what recompense will
you have?

Do not the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet your brothers only,

what is unusual about that?

Do not the pagans do the same?

So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 23, 2020

1. (taken from *A Catechumen's Lectionary*, ed Hamma, Robert, 239)

The first sentence of the reading from Leviticus and the last sentence from the Gospel offer a striking parallel: Be holy as God is holy; be perfect as your Father is perfect. This is the context in which we should hear Jesus' words in the Gospel. By human standards, what he asks is indeed foolish. But his call is to abandon our human perspective and to take on the perspective of God. We are called to love as God loves—"for his sun rises on the bad and the good."

This gospel passage gives us an indication where we may need to grow in our walk with the Lord. Which of these standards of holiness do you find difficult?

Hand over your tunic...

go for two miles....

do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow...

love your enemies...

pray for your persecutors...

2. Not only may this call seem foolish to us, but it may also seem impossible. Who can love like this? We are called not only to love as God loves, but to love WITH God's love. Paul reminds us that we are holy because the Spirit of God already dwells within us. It is the Spirit, the love of God dwelling within us, that enables us to follow the call of Jesus.

When have there been times when I missed the opportunity to love like Christ?

When did the eye for an eye philosophy seem like the most logical or useful or "right" way to behave or react?

3. **Christ has modeled for us a divine love and called us to live as children of God the Father. Can you name some instances where Jesus followed this teaching in Matthew 5: 38-48?**

4. **Might there be times when I have loved like Christ...share those experiences when the Spirit was making you more Christ like and a reflection of divine love.**