

## **Presentation of the Lord - Luke 2:22-40**

Today is the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. This feast is always celebrated on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, but it has been years since it has fallen on a Sunday.

At the time of Jesus, it was Jewish custom that every male child would be presented in the Temple forty days after that child's birth.

Joseph and Mary were pious Jews, and so we have no doubt that they brought Jesus to the Temple to be presented before the Lord. The early church wanted to celebrate this event, but there was one problem.

The scriptures never give us a date of Jesus' birth. It is, therefore, impossible to calculate what forty days after that date should be. For centuries, different early church communities experimented with different dates on which to celebrate Jesus' birth.

It was not until the 4<sup>th</sup> century that Christians settled on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Well, February 2<sup>nd</sup> is forty days after that, and this is why we celebrate the feast of the Presentation of the Lord today.

Of course, much more important than the date of Christ's presentation is the meaning of that event for our own lives. Here we are particularly blessed, because today's gospel from Luke is filled with meaning.

Let me draw your attention to one beautiful detail. Luke tells us that there was a righteous man, named Simeon, living in Jerusalem and that the Holy Spirit had promised him that he would not die before he saw the Messiah.

Coming into the Temple, Simeon sees Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to be presented before the Lord.

He takes the child in his arms and gives praise to God in the famous words, “Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation.”

Simeon knows that his life is now complete, because with his own eyes he has seen God’s Messiah. Then the prophetess, Anna, steps forward, and in a similar way announces to the people the significance of this child.

Now the Temple of Jerusalem was a busy place. We can be sure that many people would have noticed this young Jewish couple, Mary and Joseph, bringing their child to be presented before the Lord.

Hundreds of people looked at Jesus, but only Simeon and Anna understood his significance. These two characters from the gospel, then, remind us of the essential difference between **looking** and **seeing**, between observing and understanding. Simeon and Anna call us to move beyond the surface of life and to discover the meaning and the opportunities that lie deep within it.

We can for years, live daily in our families and never notice the acts of care and kindness that are provided by our spouse or by our parents.

We can overlook how one of our children or a brother or sister is always trying to be the peacemaker or the helper. And because we don’t really see these actions of care, service, and peacemaking and the love that lies behind them, we are not able to affirm that love and celebrate it.

Our families suffer as a consequence. We can cooperate regularly with people at work, joining with them on effective projects. We can spend hours texting our friends, talking to them after class, or going out with them on the weekends.

But although we regularly look at these co-workers and friends, we can fail to recognize a cry for help. We can fail to see how they are waiting to tell us something, asking us for our time and assistance. And because we fail to see that need, we miss the opportunity of being the agents of Christ's healing presence.

Simeon and Anna were able to recognize God's presence in the infant Christ. They invite us to recognize God's presence in our lives.

They ask us to slow down, to look deeper, to recognize all the opportunities that lie around us. There are people in our lives loving us who we should not take for granted. There are people needing us who we should not ignore.

We are surrounded by opportunities to give thanks and to serve. But in order to discover them, we must do more than look. We must be willing to see.