

Sunday, February 2, 2020

The Presentation of the Lord (Feast)

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Malachi 3:1-4
2nd Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18

Responsorial: Psalm 24:7-10
Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, *A Prophetic Promise Fulfilled*

This man was . . . awaiting the consolation of Israel. (Luke 2:25)

Who wouldn't like a bit of consolation today? Who wouldn't like to feel the Lord put his arm around their shoulders and tell them, "Everything's going to be okay"?

Simeon was looking for God's consolation. God had promised restoration for his people, Israel. He had promised a Messiah who would sit on the throne of David and draw all the nations to Jerusalem. For many years, Simeon had prayed for these promises to be fulfilled, but nothing had happened. Israel was still an occupied nation, and her people were still divided between rich and poor, Pharisee and Sadducee, Galilean and Judean. So Simeon continued to pray for redemption. And he waited.

Then the day came. Imagine how tender that moment was when Simeon took the child Jesus into his arms. The "consolation of Israel" had finally arrived (Luke 2:25). You can just hear the emotion welling up in his words: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace" (2:29). At last, I have seen him. I can depart now, Lord, because you have come to save my people.

Simeon knew right then and there that everything was going to be okay. He didn't know how it would happen or when it would happen, but that didn't matter. He knew that it would happen, and that was enough for him to believe.

God knows your anguish; he hears your prayers; he knows your concerns. So let him console you. Today in the house of the Lord, you will meet Jesus in the unlikely form of bread and wine—as Simeon met him in the unlikely form of an infant. When you receive him, think of this prayerful man. Just as he did, take Jesus into your hands and into your heart. He has come to bring salvation and consolation. He may not tell you how or when, but it doesn't matter right now. Christ is in you, and everything is going to be okay.

"Master, my eyes have seen your salvation. I surrender myself to you."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading (Malachi 3:1-4) is a prophecy regarding the role of John the Baptist: *Thus says the Lord GOD: Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me; And suddenly there will come to the temple the LORD whom you seek, And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire.*
 - This week at Mass, we celebrate “The Presentation of the Lord” in the Temple. In what way was John the Baptist also a “presenter” of the Lord?
 - In what ways are you?
2. The Responsorial Psalm opens with these words: *Lift up, O gates, your lintels; reach up, you ancient portals, that the king of glory may come in!* It continues with these words: *Who is this king of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle.*
 - The Lord is referred to as *the king of glory* in the psalm. Why do you think this title is used?
 - The psalm speaks of doing specific actions so that *the king of glory may come in*. What are the actions you take to allow this to happen in your life? Are there some steps you can take so that it happens in a deeper way?
 - This question is frequently asked in the psalm: “Who is this king of glory?” How would you answer it and why?
3. The second reading begins with these words: *Since the children share in blood and flesh, Jesus likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the Devil, and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life.* It goes on to say that *he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people.* The reading ends with these words: *Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.*
 - How does this reading describe how Jesus conquered sin, Satan, and death?
 - What impact does this truth have in the way you live your life? What can you do to increase its impact?
 - What do the ending words of the reading mean to you?
4. The Gospel reading describes the “The Presentation of the Lord” in Jerusalem. It includes the reaction of Simeon, *the Holy Spirit was upon him* and Anna, *a prophetess*. Here are some of Simeon’s words: *My eyes have seen your salvation, ...a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel. 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.*
5. *d.* Here’s what the reading says about Anna’s reaction: *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.*
 - How would you describe the role the Holy Spirit had on the life of Simeon as told in the Gospel reading?
 - What do you think Simeon meant when he said to Mary that a sword would pierce her soul? How was this prophetic word fulfilled in Mary’s life?
 - What was the impact on Anna’s life because she *worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer*?
 - What impact does the Holy Spirit, worship, fasting and prayer have on your life?
6. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and describes the anxiety that Simeon must have felt as he was *awaiting the consolation of Israel* (Luke 2:25), “Then the day came” when he met the baby Jesus in the temple. The meditation ends with these words: “God knows your anguish; he hears your prayers; he knows your concerns. So let him console you. Today in the house of the Lord, you will meet Jesus in the unlikely form of bread and wine—as Simeon met him in the unlikely form of an infant. When you receive him, think of this prayerful man. Just as he did, take Jesus into your hands and into your heart. He has come to bring salvation and consolation. He may not tell you how or when, but it doesn’t matter right now. Christ is in you, and everything is going to be okay.”
 - Like Simeon each of us has anxieties. Do you believe that “God knows your anguish; he hears your prayers; he knows your concerns” and wants to “console you”? How has this happened in your life?
 - What do these ending words of the meditation mean to you? “Today in the house of the Lord, you will meet Jesus in the unlikely form of bread and wine—as Simeon met him in the unlikely form of an infant. ... Christ is in you, and everything is going to be okay.”

Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to surrender your life to the Lord in a deeper way? Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Master, my eyes have seen your salvation. I surrender myself to you.”

Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]