

Readings: Malachi 3: 1-4, Hebrews 2: 14-18, Luke 2: 22-40



Fr Michael says:

Jesus meets His Father and His People

The climax of the Christmas Celebrations is seen in the meeting of Jesus with His Father, in the Temple and there makes the first ritual offering of His earthly life in the sacrifices which are offered at that time. He then meets in the persons of Anna and Simeon, His believing People, who point Him out and reveal the fullness of the meaning of His life on earth, the Light to the Nations is overshadowed by the reality of the Cross: Jesus is also the Victim who is sacrificed ultimately! Jesus' Mother too is associated with her Son in His Mission of salvation.

The richness of the message is seen in the prophecy from Malachi, the last of the Prophets before John the Baptist. God's messenger is bringing cleansing and renewal, preparing the coming of God: a new Covenant is to be established. We are reminded in Hebrews that the Christ, the Son of God takes on our human condition and is thus the only Mediator and High Priest between God and ourselves. The richness this means is seen in the drama played out in the Gospel today. Simeon represents the Hebrew Testament, receiving the new Light of the Nations; however the tragedy of what will happen is also shown. His Message will not be received by all who hear Him. Today we are the New People of God and we are asked how do we receive that Light and try to live by it.

We are placed in the situation of having to make choices: each day of our lives, as we try to shine the Light of the Gospel in our little world. How do we do it? Increasingly we are facing controversy and rejection – as did Jesus – we cannot avoid it, if we are being true to our Christian Faith and our beliefs. We cannot be “Mr Nice Guy” all the time! We lost friends and our constant compromising leads to troubles. We need to look at how Jesus behaved: He was controversial and could upset people, as He did! The Gospels show us that this was very much part and parcel of His life, by His constant fidelity to the Will of His Father. If we are not afraid to stand up and say what is right, then we are bringing Christ's Light more fully into our world. Today we are invited to stand back and look at our way of life and how true we are to the values and beliefs which illuminate and guide our way forward – we are the Messengers Malachi talks about: Jesus identifies with us in all things but sin, as we are reminded in Hebrews; we speak and act for Him! As Oscar Romero, martyred Archbishop of Salvador said: “We cannot do everything, but we can do something”, and there is a sense of liberation in that! This enables us to do something. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest!”



Fr Jean-Marie says:

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemass Day)*

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. On this day some churches including our parish, celebrate Candlemass as a tribute to the light of God's glory that was manifested in Christ Jesus. In our first reading from the Prophet Malachi we read that the Lord will send a messenger to prepare things before his arrival. This reminds us of John the Baptist's preaching. Malachi says. 'the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his temple". The prophecy of Malachi was fulfilled when Jesus appeared in the temple at the time of his presentation to the Lord by his parents Joseph and Mary. In our Gospel passage from St Luke, we see Mary and Joseph going to the Temple with the infant Jesus to be purified in accordance with the Law. There, they meet Simeon and also Anna who both speak of the child as being the salvation for all the nations and the light to enlighten the pagans. Simeon blesses the Holy Family; he praises and thanks God for letting him see the Messiah before he dies and says that he can now rest in peace for he has seen the Saviour. Through the eyes of faith, under the power of the Holy Spirit, Simeon immediately recognised that the infant Jesus was the Messiah, the Lord and saviour.

Simeon also warns Mary and Joseph – especially Mary – that though this child is the Son of God there will also be suffering associated with him. He prophesied about the destiny of the child Jesus and the suffering Mary would undergo for his sake. Mary was given the blessedness of being mother of the Son of God, but that blessedness would also become a sword which would pierce her heart as her son died on the cross. Mary received both a crown of joy and a cross of sorrow. But her joy was not diminished by her sorrow because it was fuelled by her faith, hope and trust in God and his promises. As such she is a good example of a person who bears suffering in faith and her example is worth imitating.

In the Gospel we also see the prophetess Anna praising God and greeting the Child and telling all those present that he is the Saviour of Jerusalem. She also acknowledges Jesus as the awaited Messiah. Like Simeon and Anna, we are also called to welcome Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

Finally, it is worth noticing that, though Jesus was the Son of God and himself God, he was still brought up in the faith and with respect for the Law of Moses. Today, we are called to imitate the example of the Holy Family, to make an effort to bring up our children in keeping with the Law of Christ, the law of his church. Having fulfilled the Law, the Holy Family then returned to Nazareth.