

Presentation of the Lord (A)  
(Malachi 3:1-4 / Luke 2:22-40)  
02.02.2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

Forty days after the nativity of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem, his parents Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem and brought their first-born child to the Temple. There, they **presented** Him to the Lord as required by the Law of the Lord. This is the mystery we contemplate today. As they present Jesus to the Lord, his parents acknowledge that the child they hold in their arms is not their possession; He is a gift they have received from the Lord. So, it is fitting for them to present him to the Lord with thanksgiving. From now on, they have to educate their child in accordance with the law of the Lord. Then, the child himself will have to discern the Lord's will and accomplish it each day of his life.

By this event, we are reminded that the life of every child is a gift received from God. A child does not belong to his or her parents. He or she belongs to God. Parents cannot do what they want with their children. They are only caretakers of their children who ultimately belong to God. Parents' duty is to tell their children that they are loved by God. They have to respect their children, take care of them, protect them, and help them grow.

Life is a gift from God. Life is sacred. Life has to be respected from the womb to the tomb. We have no right to end a life in the womb. I have to respect and take care of my own life. We have no right to end the life of others through violence under any form, even in countries where capital punishment is still imposed. Life does not belong to us. It is a gift from God, one we have to receive and cherish.

Those who for one reason or another don't respect life are often people who don't feel loved and don't love themselves. So, how could they love and respect others? They certainly don't need just our condemnation! What they really need is to be loved. Our duty is to love them, to be merciful in their regard, to talk with them. This is the only way of healing them... and eventually bringing about a change for the better in them.

Sometimes we hear a childless couple saying: We have the right to have a child. A child is something that is due to us and so we are entitled to make it happen at any cost. We understand and respect the immense pain of a couple who cannot have a child. But a child is not something due to any of us. We have no 'right' to have a child. A child is a 'gift' from God. We cannot give a child to ourselves. Mary, for sure, would have preferred to have her child in a normal way, but she had to accept the surprising gift from God that came to her in an unusual way.

The feast we call 'the presentation of Jesus in the Temple' is called in the Christian East '**the Feast of Encounter**': the encounter referred to is that of Christ Jesus with his people through the mediation of Simeon and Anna. Simeon and Anna recognize in the child Jesus the Saviour, the one who is coming to set his people free, the Messiah foretold and awaited by the prophets. The child Jesus is a light not only for his people Israel but also for all peoples.

The child Jesus is the light of our lives. He is the word of God made flesh. By his word he reveals to each one of us how much we are loved, forgiven and saved, saved even from the fear of death. He reveals the way forward to us: where to go and how to get there, what to do and how to do it. "His word is a lamp for our steps and a light for our path".

So, we might ask ourselves this morning: Does Christ Jesus and his Word shine as a light for our daily lives?" In the light of last Sunday, the Sunday of the Word of God, we could ask ourselves: do we take time day after day to listen to the Word of God and allow it to inform and transform our lives?

In this holy encounter in the Temple, there are two **elderly people**, Simeon and Anna, who welcome **a young couple** with their child, Mary and Joseph with Jesus. What we have here is not older persons disdaining younger ones, or younger persons ignoring older ones. On the contrary, it is an encounter between generations in which the elderly find fulfilment in those who are younger and those who are younger find roots in those who are older. Today's gospel shows us how the present moment rooted in the past is open to the future. It shows us that God does not encounter us just as individuals but within a community and throughout history. It shows us that faith is something we receive from those who have gone before us and pass on to the next generation.

So, we might also ask ourselves: Is my life of faith something lived simply between God and me? Or is my life of faith something lived between God and myself as part of God's people? In our relationship with God, do we give place to a community of faith, to the wider Church, to others? We cannot be a Christian on our own; we need the presence, the witness and the encouragement of others. We are members of God's people. We need one another to grow in an authentic life of faith.

May today's celebration be an opportunity to present ourselves anew to the Lord with the desire to do his will, to live our lives to the full in the light of the Word of God and in the communion of his people.