

Reflection for the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Cycles AB&C

Note: The Feast of the Presentation occurs on Jan 6 each year but in the United States it is always transferred to the closest Sunday to Jan 6.

The lectionary translation of the readings for this Sunday can be found [HERE](#)

1st Reading: *Malachi 3:1-4*

This prophecy is God speaking directly to the people through the mouth of the prophet. The only thing you might need to know is what a refiner's fire is, if you don't already know. When gold or silver is melted in a furnace, the impurities rise to the top. All you need do is scrape off the impurities and you have pure gold or silver left. There is a warning in this prophecy, but the message is the common human wisdom that growth involves work, sometimes a lot of painful work.

2nd Reading: *Hebrews 2:14-18*

The "children" in this reading refers to us, to you and I. The message is simply that God, in Jesus, became one of us to help us. It is clear in the last sentence that because he was tested, he can help us who are being tested. The "testing" is a positive testing, like the refiner's fire in the first reading that purifies us.

Gospel: *Luke 2:22-40 or Luke 2:22-32*

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord Lk 2:22

Gospel Reflection

When I was a newly ordained, a family came to me before Mass and said they wanted to do *La Presentación*. I hadn't a clue what they were talking about. I did the best I could, after Mass, with their guidance. They brought the 40 day old child up all dressed in white and I did the best blessing I could compose in my head at the time. Then, they told me they were presenting him to Mary so I composed a quick prayer asking for her to protect and guide him as he grew in wisdom and age. They were gracious and seemed to be pretty pleased.

I later learned more about this Mexican custom. It was inspired by Jesus' presentation in the temple which we celebrate today but there is at least one significant difference. Remember, you heard that the Mosaic Law requires that the firstborn son be presented to God. That's important... because the firstborn son is the one that takes over responsibility for the family from the father. That's why Jesus is referred to as the firstborn son even though he was Mary's only son.

In effect, dedicating the firstborn son to God is dedicating the whole of that firstborn son's generation to God. That's significant because, as you know, we are all Jesus' brothers and sisters through baptism. Like in the second reading today, we are all the children whom Jesus leads.

So, if we are all dedicated to God, what does that mean? That means, to us, that we reaffirm our dedication to God every week by participating at Mass and making an offering of all that we are to God,

combined with Jesus' offering of self. Then, and this is most important, we live out that offering in the day-to-day activities of our lives, during the week.

Whoa... does that mean that we should be a light to the gentiles, like in the first reading today? Is that our glory? Yes, that's exactly what it means. We, as a Church should be a light to the nations, but I'm not so sure we are doing a very good job of that right now. We are seen as inconsequential by much of society and we need to turn that around. You're not the bishop, you're not the pope and you are not the ones who brought our Church down in the eyes of so many. But, we are the ones who have the responsibility for being, now, the light for the world to see.

So let's all do our part. Let's each and every one of us make a conscious gift of ourselves to God at this Mass today. Think of it when we say amen to the "Through Him and with Him and in Him.." prayer, at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer. Think of it when you come to Communion and take in the Lord saying "amen" to being a member of the Body of Christ. Think of it when you say "Thanks be to God" at the sending at the very end of Mass; thanks for being entrusted with this awesome responsibility. Then live that responsibility out during the week.

Let's be a light to the gentiles, this week!

P.S. I know that people like to stay and sing what most think of as the final song... It's not really part of the Mass, you know. But today, follow the cross and the ministers out while you are singing... or at least imagine that you are part of the procession, following the cross out into the world where we will actively try to be, as one Church, a light to the gentiles.

Personal Reflection:

"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 sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." Lk 2:29-32

Question:

What words or phrases grabbed your attention during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they grabbed your attention?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

Alternative:

Reflect upon, share about, a time when you actually felt you were doing the will of God in your life. Was that a normal every-day thing or was it something particularly special? How can you do the normal every-day activities of this week in a special way that will help you be aware of doing God's will? How can you make those activities a light to the gentiles?

Verse by Verse:

Lk 2:22 "When her days were completed for their purification..." | "'purification', i.e. the restoration of ritual cleanness; according to the law of Moses a woman remained unclean for forty days after the birth of a male child. During this period she was forbidden to touch any sacred thing or to enter the temple. Ritual cleanness was restored by a burnt offering and a sin offering (cp. Lev. 12:1-8)." USBH

Lk 2:22 "...to present him to the Lord.." | This points back to Hannah presenting Samuel to the Lord to be forever in the Lord's service. (1 Sam 1:22-24)

Lk 22:23 "as is written in the Law of the Lord." | This refers to Ex 13:1-2 which requires that every firstborn male be consecrated to the Lord

Lk 2:27 "He came in the Spirit..." | The Greek can be translated as impelled by or led by the Spirit.

Lk 2:32 "a light for revelation to the Gentiles..." | Note that the light of revelation, here, is for the gentiles, not for the Jewish people. For the Jewish people, it is a light for the revelation of their glory; their God. Scripture notes in other places that the Jewish and Christian people are to be a light to the nations; Is 42:6, Is 49:6, & Acts 13:47.

Lk 2:35a "and you yourself a sword will pierce." | This is an interjection. The sentence should be read, first, without the interjection in order to understand that the phrase "so that the thoughts of many..." is understood to be connected to "that will be contradicted..." rather than to the comment about Mary.

Joseph Fitzmyer, in the Anchor Yale Biblical Commentary, states that the common interpretation of this saying as referring to Mary experiencing her son's suffering doesn't fit the overall understanding of Luke's Gospel. He suggests that the sword is the Hebrew Scripture's sword of discernment and suggests that Mary's thoughts, too, would be challenged. Maybe, in Luke's Gospel, this conflict can be seen in the story of the 12 year old Jesus in the temple. (Lk 2:41:52) It may also be shown in Mk 3:2-21 wherein Mary seemed to be concerned about Jesus' methods.

Raymond Brown, in the Jerome Biblical Commentary, points out that Origen, John Chrysostom, St. Basil and Ceril of Alexandria all interpreted the sword as "doubt or hesitation in faith".

Lk 2:36-38 "There was also a prophetess, Anna..." | Unique to Luke is the inclusion of a female during significant events. He doesn't say much about Anna, but he includes her as equal to Simeon in her importance. Interestingly, Anna is the Greek form of the name Hannah, the mother of Samuel who was also dedicated to the Lord. (See 1 Sam 1:24-28)