

The Feast of The Presentation

February 2

(Quotes taken from *Through the Church Year: Reflections on Feasts and Seasons* by Monsignor Francis Kelly, Ave Maria Press, 2009)

. Before the Second Vatican Council, “it was primarily observed as a Marian feast, the Purification. After the Council’s liturgical reforms it was designated as a Christological feast, the Presentation of the Lord.”

. The Feast of The Presentation was the end of the Christmas season before Vatican II. Monsignor Kelly writes “as in the whole Christmas cycle, it is a feast in which Mary and her Son are inextricably united.”

. The Jewish people had the tradition of presenting children in the Temple in “remembrance of the fact that the first-born children of Israel were spared the death that came upon the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus...(Therefore) it was prescribed in the Jewish Law that every first-born should be presented to God in the Temple and then be ransomed by an offering (Exodus 13).” (Therefore) Forty days after Jesus birth, Mary and Joseph accordingly brought Him to the Temple for the religious ceremony.”

“Mary not only presented her Son to God but she herself was ritually purified as Jewish Law prescribed after childbirth. This offering of Jesus and purification of Mary become the occasion for a graced encounter of the newborn Messiah and Savior with Simeon and Anna.”

“Egeria...the nun and pilgrim describes this feast already being observed in the Fourth Century in Jerusalem, along with a special procession in its honor. From there, it spread to the East with the name of *Hypapante* or ‘the Encounter,’ highlighting the meeting of Christ with Simeon and Anna. A candlelight procession acknowledging Jesus as ‘Light of The Nations...seems to be a feature of this feast day liturgy from very early times.”

“The feast of the Presentation, at its deepest level, commemorates the consecration of the Incarnate Son, Jesus, to God the Father...Jesus was born to

give His whole being to the Father to the point of His bloody sacrifice on the Cross. In a way, this feast is a bridge feast between the Christmas commemoration of His birth and the coming Holy Week when we remember His saving death . The consecration of Jesus to the Father that we note (at the Presentation) is a prelude to His sacrificial offering of Himself on the Cross.”

“Mary profoundly participates in both this offering of the Infant Jesus in the Temple and His offering of Himself on the Cross. She is present at both, consenting in the deepest faith to God’s mysterious and salvific plan being worked out through her Son. “

. Pope Benedict XVI wrote “the first person who is linked to Christ in the road to obedience, tested faith and shared sorrow is His Mother Mary. The Gospel text shows her in the act of offering the Son: an unconditional offering...It is she whose immaculate soul must be pierced with a sword of sorrow that her role in the story of salvation is not finished in the mystery of the Incarnation, but continues in her loving and sorrowful participation in the death and Resurrection of her Son. Carrying the Son to Jerusalem, the Virgin Mother offers Him to God as the true Lamb who will take away the sins of the world.”

He continues “The Mother of All Purity has seemed to be purified by the law so as to show forth, at one and the same time, the strength of all-obedient humility and the truth of the Gospel’s purifying power. Where then is the man so stubbornly and mistakenly presumptuous of his own sanctity as to refuse to undergo the cleansing action of the remedy of penance?”

“Today is the feast of light. Recalling Simeon’s word that Jesus is ‘the light to the Gentiles,’ the Church rejoices in the dark Winter season that ‘her light has come.’ This joy is expressed by the blessing of the candles on this day and in the ancient tradition of the procession with lighted candles...Every disciple of Jesus understands his or her vocation to follow the light of Christ.”