

Presentation 2020 SML
LK 2:22-40

Ever since Israel had been delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians, after the firstborn of the Egyptians had been slain, the firstborn of the Jews had always been looked upon as one dedicated to God. Forty days after His birth, then, which had been the appointed time for a male child according to the Law, Our Blessed Lord was brought to the temple. Exodus decreed that the firstborn belonged to God. So when the Divine Child was taken to the temple by Mary and Joseph, the law of the consecration of the firstborn was observed in its fullness. For the Child was God, and His dedication would be so absolute, that God would proceed to the Cross.

Here in the Presentation, we find yet another instance of how God in the form of man shared the poverty of mankind. The traditional offerings for purification were a lamb and a turtledove if the parents were rich, and two doves or two pigeons if they were poor. Thus the mother who brought the “Lamb of God,” had no lamb to offer.

The man who received the Divine Child in his arms was Simeon, who Luke describes as righteous and devout, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Although Luke does not say, most

scripture scholars assume Simeon was the priest on duty at the time. Regardless, the Holy Spirit was upon him, and it was revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. And once he took the Divine Child in his arms, he knew Jesus was the Messiah and explained, in his own words, “Now, Lord, you may let me die.” It is as if the last or the only thing left on his bucket list was crossed off. It is as if his words imply that as soon as one sees Christ, the sting of death departs. Simeon did not look back on:

- ✓ the poor Child,
- ✓ brought by poor parents
- ✓ making a poor offering,

but rather Simeon looked forward, to the future of his own people, and to the future of all the Gentiles of the world.

An old man:

- ✓ who at the sunset of his own life, spoke of the sunrise of the world;
- ✓ who in the evening of his own life, told of the promise of tomorrow.

And now his eyes could close, because there was nothing more beautiful to look upon than the Divine Child. He had seen, not salvation from poverty, but salvation from sin.

What unfolded next was one of the seven sorrows of the Blessed Mother, the prophecy of Simeon:

This child is destined to be a sign that will be contradicted; and you, yourself, (Mary), a sword will pierce . . .

It was as if the whole history of the Divine Child were passing before the eyes of the old man, as every detail of the prophecy was to be fulfilled within the lifetime of the Divine Child. Here was the hard fact of the Cross before the Baby could stretch His arms in the form of a cross. This Divine Child would create:

- ✓ terrible strife between good and evil
- ✓ He would be a stumbling block
- ✓ He would read minds and reveal secrets
- ✓ and men would no longer be the same once they heard His name and learned His way of life.

They would be compelled either to accept or reject. There would be no such thing as compromise,

- ✓ only acceptance or rejection,
- ✓ resurrection or death.

Jesus' way of life would not leave much room for the complacency by which most people live their lives.

There is an old Eastern fable that tells of a magic mirror that remained clear when good people looked into it, but became cloudy when the bad people looked into it. Thus the

owner of the mirror could always tell the character of those who used it.

Simeon was telling His Mother Mary that her Son would be like this mirror. Men would either love or hate Him, according to their own reflections.

Simeon also said the Divine Child would disclose the inner dispositions of men. He would test the thoughts of those who were to encounter Him:

- ✓ Pilate would procrastinate and then weaken;
- ✓ Herod would mock;
- ✓ Judas would lean to a kind of greedy social security;
- ✓ Rich young men would reject His poverty;
- ✓ Nicodemus would sneak to see Him at night;
- ✓ Tax collectors would become honest;
- ✓ Prostitutes, pure;
- ✓ Prodigals would return home;
- ✓ Peter would repent . . .

From Jesus' day to today, Our Blessed Lord continues to be a sign that will contradict.

I'd like to share with you something I said as boy that I remember me to this day. I must have been about the third

grade and I had a crush on a girl down the street who was in the second grade. She was pretty as pretty could be. We were playing on the swing set in a neighbor's yard. In the course of our conversation, she said that she didn't care too much about God. And because I liked her, and I wanted her to like me, I said, "Me neither." And it was flat out lie. Because, even as a boy, God was and is now, a very important part of my life.

A benign example . . . sort of . . . but we as "committed disciples," baptized and confirmed, often say by our decisions, our habits, our way of life, "Me neither."

What will stand the test of time will be what your loved ones, those who will mourn your death, will say about you in your eulogy, will say about me in my eulogy. Or will they just read the weak, weak poem about the dash?

One of my most favorite authors is one of the greatest Catholic preachers in American History, Bishop Fulton Sheen. Sheen used to say that he preferred to live in times when the Church had suffered rather than thrived, when the Church had to struggle, when the Church had to go against the culture. For it was then that real men and real women stood up and were counted. "Even dead bodies can float downstream," Sheen said, pointing out that many people can coast when the Church

is respected. “But it takes a real man, a real woman, to swim against the current.”

Will your loved ones remember you as one who stood up and was counted, as one who swam against the current? Or will you be remembered for living, what would seem to the onlooker as a “me neither” life? Will I be remembered as a priest who was out to win a popularity contest, or did I do my job? Will you be remembered for your spaghetti sauce, or being a life-long Phillies fan, or because you loved Atlantic City?

On this feast of the Presentation, it's decision time, time to decide for or against being a committed disciple, baptized and confirmed. Time to decide right now. And if you need time to think about your decision, well, you've already decided. Because not to decide is to decide.