

February 2, 2020

Presentation of the Lord

Twenty years ago, I received a card from my youngest sister, Carol. She and her husband, Dean who had been trying for several years to have a child and their doctors told them that they had less than a 2% chance of ever having a child. I opened the card and it had a simple message. "We are happy to share with you the good news that we are expecting a baby to arrive in September." My niece, Anica was born the last day of September in the year 2000 and she is now a freshman at the University of Montana. I will never forget that I received that card on February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Simeon and Anna had waited for the coming of the Lord to the temple and now their faithful waiting and praying had been fulfilled. A similar message of hope had come true for my sister and all our family.

Jesus is the fulfillment of every long-awaited hope. The presentation is much more than just Joseph and Mary fulfilling their Jewish obligation of presenting the firstborn son to God in the Temple. Rather, this event is yet another sign that God is faithful to his promise even when we are not. We hear of this promise in the first reading from the Prophet Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament. Malachi tells us, "Suddenly, there will come to the temple, the Lord whom you seek." Hold it a minute. Wouldn't the Lord already been in the temple? Isn't the idea of the temple to have a sacred place where the Lord dwells? If we go back to the book of the Prophet Ezekiel, we will find two important messages. First, the Lord had left the temple because of Israel's infidelity. Later on in Ezekiel we hear of the promise that the Lord will return. The presentation in the Temple is the very return of the Lord to the temple that Ezekiel promised. This feast is a

proclamation of yet another example of how Jesus is the fulfillment of every promise that God makes.

The presentation of Jesus in the temple means more than the temple as a building. In the letter to the Hebrews we hear today that Jesus shares in our flesh and blood that he didn't come to "help angels, but rather the descendants of Abraham." That is us! Which is to say that Jesus enters our bodies and transforms us so that through our baptism we become temples, temples of the Holy Spirit. God fulfills his promises in Jesus and Jesus fulfills God's promises in us.

Seminarian Brody shared with me that the monks of Mt. Angel gather outside every February 2 in the evening and process into the Abbey Church with lighted candles together to express their desire to be filled with the light of Christ. Together, the light of Christ shines so brightly that no one is in the darkness.

Every time we receive the Eucharist, we receive the light of Christ and God the Father calls us to share the light of Christ. Jesus comes to the temple of our bodies as we receive the personally and individually, but never for just us alone. The light of one candle becomes brighter when we share that light with others.

Here is how we live out this feast every day. Receive the light of Christ every day through five minutes of prayer, especially reading the Bible. Make the decision to share the light you receive from Christ in every word and action. Receive the light Christ and share the light Christ. The world will then not be such a dark place.

