

An Encounter with Jesus Christ

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Often, we hear about the “American Dream.” This refers to the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone. The American Dream is achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance.

It is not out of place that we all have visions or goals in life and want our dreams to come true. It brings frustration when the realization of our dreams falls short of our expectation. It is even more devastating when our dreams are never realized, and we find ourselves lost and wondering what is next for us. But when our dreams do come true, we are so transformed, fulfilled and joy-filled that we easily forget the hardship and hurdles endured along the way. We often do not and should not forget the people that helped us get there.

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord Jesus in the Temple. In the Eastern Rite, this feast is called the “Feast of Encounter:” it is the encounter between God, who became a child to bring newness to our world, and an expectant humanity with dreams, represented by the elderly man and woman in the Temple.

Pope Francis sheds light on this when he says: “In the Temple, there is also an encounter between two couples: the young Mary and Joseph, and the elderly Simeon and Anna. The old receive from the young, while the young draw

upon the old. In the Temple, Mary and Joseph find the *roots of their people*. This is important because God’s promise does not come to fulfillment merely in individuals, once for all, but within a community and throughout history. There too, Mary and Joseph find the *roots of their faith*, for faith is not something learned from a book, but the art of living with God learned from the experience of those who have gone before us. **The two young people, in meeting the two older people, thus find themselves. And the two older people, nearing the end of their days, receive Jesus, the meaning of their lives.** This event fulfills the prophecy of Joel: *Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions (2:28)*. In this encounter, the young see their mission and the elderly realize their dreams. All because, at the center of the encounter, is Jesus.”

Jesus’ presence was the fulfillment that Simeon and Anna sought all their lives. It was a dream that came true toward the end of their lives, such that Simeon exclaimed: “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 the sight of all the peoples....”

Dear friends, for us today, when could we say we have had a profound moment of encounter with the Lord? At our Baptism, we were officially presented to God. It was our first moment of encounter with Jesus Christ in whose life we share. Every time we participate at Mass, it is an opportunity to renew that encounter. A renewal we make not just for our selves, but we also present our dear ones on the altar before God our Father through our Savior Jesus Christ at every Holy Mass.

How often do you bring someone with you – whether it is in the silence of your heart or physically – as you come to renew your first encounter with God? Are the people we present to Christ limited to our loved ones and friends? How about the people that are not close to us or see things the way we do? Remember the words in today’s gospel that “this child (Jesus) will be a sign of contradiction.” Jesus wants to meet not only you but also someone else that you accompanied. As we come before God, we also present our dreams and aspirations to him and ask that his will, not ours, be done.

As we strive to encounter Christ with others daily, let our prayer be: **Lord Jesus, may your will, not mine, be done.**

May Christ Our Savior give each one of you grace and strength daily. Amen.

*--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule
Parish Priest*