

One of my friends, Fr. Jim Dabrowski,  
passed away on New Year's Day.

Jim and I met in the seminary, he was a pastor in NJ.  
He'd had some big health issues in recent years,  
but his death was not expected.

Jim was a devoted pastor, dedicated to his family and friends,  
and loved to travel - he lived a full life.

For many years, his 'go to' vacation spot was Ireland.

After his mom passed away, Jim decided to  
connect with his family in Ireland - it became an important  
item on his bucket list.

### **SCREEN: bucket list image**

Lots of people nowadays have a bucket list -  
things they want to do before they die.

For one person it might be traveling to a foreign country or  
finding long lost relatives.

For another it might be learning a language.

For the really adventurous it might be skydiving or bungee jumping.

Do you have a bucket list?

Is there something spiritual on your bucket list?

### **SCREEN: 20/20 Vision main screen**

We've come to the final week of our message series titled, 20/20 Vision.

For five weeks we've been discovering what it means  
to see ourselves as God sees us.

And we've met some amazing people in the scripture readings  
who've guided our journey.

And we end this message series with one final guide,  
whose name was Simeon.

Simeon had one item on his bucket list.

Let's talk about how it was fulfilled.

Today we're celebrating an event in the life of Jesus referred to as, the Presentation of the Lord.

It was part of Jewish tradition that a family's first born male child was presented in the temple.

So as an infant, Jesus's parents took him to the temple in Jerusalem. It's like what we do at baptism.

It was a way of saying that the child is dedicated to serving God.

For Mary and Joseph it was saying to God,

*"we know our son's life is meant for you!"*

But then, Simeon appeared, sort of crashed the party, so to speak.

Who was he?

We were told that Simeon was a righteous and devout man -

a good, practicing Jew, who worshipped in the Temple.

We were told the Holy Spirit was upon him; he was a truly holy man.

And on top of all that, Simeon had been given a special revelation from God that he would not die until he had seen the Christ, the messiah, the savior all of Israel awaited.

And on this particular day, Simeon was in the temple when Jesus's parents arrived.

He took Jesus into his arms and blessed God, saying:

**SCREEN:** "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: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

Simeon waited his whole life to see who he saw that day.

There was only one item on his bucket list:

see the Christ - to see his salvation. Done!

But here is why Simeon is a great guide for us.

He was about as perfect a person as you could find:

*righteous, devout, filled with the Holy Spirit....*

and still, still, he knew he needed a savior.

Knew he could not save himself.

All his good deeds, all his righteousness, all his acts of worship and devotion, they wouldn't save him.

Only God could save him - Simeon needed salvation.

And because he admitted this, his heart and his soul were open to God.

Simeon had 20/20 spiritual vision.

**SCREEN: blank red background**

God wants you and I to have this same vision.

Wants us to see our salvation, to see Christ every single day.

And it begins when we, like Simeon, admit we need salvation.

On our own, we can't save ourselves.

We are sinners, redeemed by Christ,

but called to grow in faith and holiness everyday.

This past Wednesday I had dinner with my mom.

And she talked about the cataract surgery she had done on her eyes last year.

Cataracts are when the lens of a person's eye becomes cloudy, making everything appear hazy.

My mom said that the improvement in how she saw things was dramatic.

But it wasn't until after the cataracts were removed that she realized how bad her vision had become.

I heard a talk at a religious conference recently

and the presenter talked about spiritual cataracts -

things in life that make it hard to see as God does and keep us from

having that 20/20 spiritual vision.

What might they be?

Well, sometimes people develop spiritual cataracts because of things that happen in life - a tragedy, a setback, or some crisis occurs making it hard to see as God does.

Spiritual cataracts can develop when someone decides to make life all about their job or their schooling or a certain relationship.

It's nearly impossible to see as God sees when someone decides that money or more stuff will make them happy.

Sometimes our own sins are the cause of spiritual cataracts.

When we sin we are giving in to temptation or accepting Satan's lies.

Think back to a few weeks ago when we renewed our baptismal promises.

We renounced Satan and the lie that we are unlovable, unforgivable and can't be redeemed.

The truth is that God loves us NOT because we are perfect but because we are his children.

So, when we become like Simeon, when we admit that we can't save ourselves, then the spiritual cataracts clear and we see as God sees - we see our salvation.

Then we open up a space in our souls for God to enter in.

So ask yourself these questions:

*are you living the life God wants for you? AND*

*are you living the life YOU want for you?*

If not, you may need spiritual cataract surgery so that you can have 20/20 spiritual vision.

What would this process look like?

**SCREEN: 20/20 Vision main screen**

As we said last weekend, the process begins when we take a step towards Christ.

And your step can take many forms.

We see as God sees when we receive the sacraments or pray or serve others.

Today we are offering you two powerful opportunities to take a step.

The first will take place at the end of Mass right after the dismissal.

I will invite you to approach the sanctuary to offer a prayer of commitment or recommitment to Christ.

All you have to do is take a prayer card from the end of your pew, then come and face the altar and quietly offer your prayer.

When you are done, you can leave your prayer card in the basket as a sign that you have presented yourself to God.

And I'd like to share with you the wording of the commitment prayer:

*Lord Jesus, I know I need you as my Lord and Savior so I invite you into my life.*

*I realize I am a sinner and that I can't save myself.*

*Thank you for dying for my sins.*

*I ask you to be the Lord of my life.*

*Help me to grow in love of you,*

*so that I may act as you would*

*and seek your will in all aspects of my life.*

*Help me to develop my 20/20 spiritual vision*

*to always see myself as you see me,*

*to see others with eyes of compassion, and*

*to see you as the Son of God, my salvation. Amen.*

That's the first step you can take today.

The second step, the second opportunity, is to sign up for an adult small group.

You've heard me talk a lot about them so

I won't go through all the details again.

I could go on about how my spiritual vision has improved

from being in a men's small group for the past several years.

I would encourage you to take this step in faith.

The initial commitment is just 8 weeks,

which would take you through most of Lent.

So if you are looking for a powerful way to jump start your faith life and help you see as God sees, small groups could be it for you.

You can sign up right after Mass today in the entranceway.

So two steps: the first one brings you to the altar, the second step is joining a small group.

Brothers and sisters,

God wants there to be one item on the top of our bucket list:

to see our salvation and make the most of each day, everyday.

God offers us a life of joy and purpose and meaning beyond anything this world has to offer.

Don't put off for another day, another month or another year living the life God offers you.

My hope and prayer is that today and in this new year of 2020, you would clearly see your salvation. Amen. +