

Father O'Connor's Homily for 2 February 2025
The Presentation of the Lord-C

Malachi 3: 1-4
Hebrews 2: 14-18
Luke 2: 22-40

This is a powerful Gospel that we have just heard on this Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. It is not just the story of Mary and Joseph and Anna and Simeon. It is the story of our lives too. So let us look at the characters in this Gospel and see if we find ourselves there as well.

First, there are Mary and Joseph. They are coming to present the Baby Jesus to His Heavenly Father in the Temple 40 days after He was born in Bethlehem. They are people of such meager means that they bring the offering of the poor to the Temple: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons for the dedication of the Child Jesus.

And they are like so many parents who bring their children to the Church to be baptized.

What do parents – and Godparents and grandparents – wish for their children on the day of their Baptism? What did you wish for? Happiness, health, a long life, and that they grow up to be good people and faithful Catholics. But parents also have fears. That their children be kept safe from harm. That they do not get into trouble with alcohol, drugs, violence or sexuality. They hope that their children will never break their hearts, or ever have to go to war.

Like Mary and Joseph, parents dedicate their children to God and pray for everything good for them. Yet they are aware of the real possibility that a sword of sorrow might pierce their hearts, just as Simeon prophesied would happen to Mary. So today is a good day to pray for parents who are feeling the pain of that sword in their hearts right now. Maybe you are one of them.

Then there is Anna, who is eighty-four years old. She has seen it all, including the death of her husband and perhaps even one or more of her children. She lived in a time when her nation was occupied by Roman soldiers. There was political corruption, unjust taxation, payoffs, embezzlements, with greed and immorality all over the place.

And still, there was Anna: the faithful, holy woman who fasted and prayed in the Temple every day for her people and her nation.

Today is a day to think of and to thank God for the Annas of this world. They see it all, they feel it deeply, but they still remain faithful. They do not avoid the public arena but they try to make it better. They do not flee the Church but stay in it, praying and working for its purification and renewal. They are our hope, our anchors, our solid faithful ones. Let us notice and remember the Annas of our world.

And then there is elderly Simeon. He is a man on a mission, always watching, always searching, always hoping that he will not die until somewhere, somehow, sometime he will see the face of the Lord – as the Holy Spirit had promised him earlier in his life.

Simeon is like the elderly facing the prospect of death and wondering if they will be seeing the face of the Lord very soon. Simeon is like the parent who has lost a child and who wonders if God really is still near. Like the friend at the side of someone in memory care. Like the person being crushed with the weight of loneliness and depression. Like the husband or wife hoping for the recovery of their spouse, or for the restoration and healing of their marriage.

That is why Simeon is so compelling. Throughout his life he struggled and searched, prayed and pleaded for some sign of God's presence. He did not want to die until he had a glimpse of the Lord's face.

In today's Gospel Simeon received that sign when he took the Baby Jesus into his arms and blessed God, saying – or perhaps even singing: "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."

I love this Gospel because it is my story and it is your story. But more than that, it is the Word of God, and it gives us hope.

God will honor His promises. Those who are faithful to Him will see His face one day.

And we will sing again. Our lives will supply the melody. The Gospel has already supplied the words: "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."

And may God be praised for all of the Marys and Josephs, for all of the Annas and Simeons in our world, in our parish families and

communities, and in the lives that you and I are graced to live right here, and right now.