

The Presentation of the Lord
1st Homily Given By: Deacon James Windon
February 2, 2020 (The day after his Ordination)
(Malachi 3: 1-4) (Hebrews 2: 14-18) (Luke 2: 22-40)

Good morning brothers and sisters:

What a blockbuster season we have had! In the last 40 days, we have celebrated:

- The Birth of Jesus (Christmas)
- The Feast of St. Stephen, the 1st Martyr (and one of the first Deacons)
- The Feast of the Holy Innocents (Martyrs)
- The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph
- The Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God
- The Epiphany of the Lord
- The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
- And today, The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

40 days from Christmas until today...a number that comes up often in the Scriptures. How exciting! How busy! How beautiful our Church has been. Hollywood has nothing on us. Even Star Wars can't top our star-studded series.

Today's Gospel is another explosion of Good News, with so much happening. We have Mary and Joseph traveling to the Temple to present the baby Jesus to the Lord. We have Simeon's Prayer, answered (finally) in the Temple when he recognized this baby as the Messiah. What a grace-filled moment it was to hold Jesus in his arms.

We also have the prophetess Anna, who never left the Temple. She recognized the baby Jesus also, in the Temple.

What if they had not been in the Temple?

The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple is found in the Gospel of Luke, which we just heard. We see throughout Luke's Gospel that he is keenly interested in the Temple and what goes on there. In fact, his Gospel begins in the Temple with the story of Zechariah encountering an angel in the Temple, and ended in the Temple with the disciples going to the Temple and continually praising God.

Everything in the Gospel is there on purpose. There are no accidents. This tells me that the Temple must be an important place. Why was the Temple so important to ancient Israel? The Temple was, practically, in a literal sense, the place of God.

Jesus changed this. Jesus, through His death and resurrection, became the new and everlasting Temple...a Temple that cannot be destroyed...a living Temple that came down from Heaven to dwell among us. Through our baptism we – you and I – became Temples of the Holy Spirit. How important is the Temple now?

Our Temple has the eternal flame of the Holy Spirit that burns brightly, but is not always visible to us or others. How is that possible?

During every Mass, every time we come to Church, we encounter Jesus. We welcome Him into our hearts, our Temple, and our light is bright. We leave and go out into the world. During our daily lives, our Temple is attacked constantly. The forces of evil are like a hurricane, causing windows and doors in our Temple to close and block the light. Some of the attacks are deception, such as allowing the world to tell us that money and popularity will make us happy. For most of us, we endure these attacks all week until our light is difficult to see and feel because of the damage done to our Temple. What do we do?

We do what we are doing today. We come back to this Temple to renew our connection to Jesus. We come to this table to, once again, have our Temple opened and renewed. When we receive Holy Communion, we take the role of Simeon who was privileged to hold the Lord's anointed in his arms, but we receive Him, not into our arms as did Simeon of old, but into our bodies...into our hearts, and into our souls—or as the Fathers of the Church would say, in this sacramental encounter, the body is fed and the soul is nourished—we receive Him—so that He may bring His light into even the most hidden recesses of our lives as He becomes more intimate to us than we are to ourselves, and so that He may dispel whatever darkness lies hidden there—even the remnants of anger, lust, gossip, envy, and unnecessary self-doubt which will be put to flight by the light of Christ. Remember, Jesus is a trained carpenter...He can fix it. Once again, our hearts, our Temples, are filled with love, and Jesus, in us, is visible to those we encounter.

Want proof? Okay, think about this. Some of you will smile immediately as you get it. As you leave Church today, you drive home. You see a car on the side of the road with the driver struggling to change a flat tire. Today you will notice the driver, say a prayer for the driver, and may be tempted to stop and help. Fast-forward to Friday...a long week, tired, frustrated, and anxious to get home. Same driver, same flat tire. This time, you might not even notice the driver. This time, you might not be tempted to pray. This time, you face forward, drive by, and continue your quest for home. What changed?

Now the circumstances may be different, or the encounters may be different. For example, when you go home today, your 12-year-old child or grandchild asks you to watch a movie with them, or to play a game, or to go for a walk. Today, you will do it. Today, you will find the time to spend with your child...with your family. What about Thursday night of the same week, when you get home, tired and wounded from all the attacks of the world? Our busy schedules, the media, all the bad things that are being said, back and forth between people, and the news that tells of all the gloom and doom of society have taken their toll – all these attacks that go against what Jesus tells us. That Thursday evening, that same child, that same family member, asks you to spend time with them. Your response is usually different. That is because your Temple, the light in your Temple, is not as visible as when you returned home Sunday after your encounter with Jesus...when you reconnected with Him right here.

My brothers and sisters, I beseech you. I have proven to you and I have shown you the importance of the Temple. This is our central location where we encounter Jesus on a personal level...on a spiritual level. We've seen Him, we feel Him, right here. I beg of you, return often. I ask you, please allow Jesus to repair your Temple so that you may go forth into the world, letting Jesus be seen in you, and so that you can see Jesus in others.

Let your candle burn bright.

May God bless each and every one of you.