

2 February –
Presentation of the Lord A – B – C

First reading Malachi 3:1-4

The Lord God says this: Look, I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his Temple; and the angel of the covenant whom you are longing for, yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire and the fullers' alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make the offering to the Lord as it should be made. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then be welcomed by the Lord as in former days, as in the years of old.

Second reading Hebrews 2:14-18

Since all the children share the same blood and flesh, he too shared equally in it, so that by his death he could take away all the power of the devil, who had power over death, and set free all those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins. That is, because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted.

Gospel Luke 2:22-32

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: "Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel."

Meditation

This feast originated in Jerusalem in the late fourth century. It was introduced at Rome during the seventh century under its Eastern title of Hypapante or the Meeting of Jesus and Simeon. In the medieval Western Church the feast became known as the Purification of Mary, but the 1960 revision of the Roman Calendar returned to the older tradition which celebrated this day as a Feast of the Lord.

The ancient title of Meeting well expresses the meaning of this feast. Forty days after his birth, the Lord Jesus meets and is presented to the God of his ancestors in the temple. He meets Simeon and Anna, symbols of the believing people, witnesses and troubadours of this manifestation. As at his birth, a striking contrast is made between the unassuming behaviour of Jesus' parents and the glory of the event as it is perceived by other witnesses. Response in faith to God's revelation in Christ is not confined to his relatives.

Throughout Israel's history, God has shone forth upon his people in dazzling appearances of light: the luminous cloud in the temple of Solomon (1 K 8:10), the glory seen by Isaiah (Is 6:1), the

refiner's fire coming to purify the sons of Levi (Ml 3:2-3). In Christ, the light which will enlighten the Gentiles now floods the world.

In Simeon, the old age of the world welcomes in its arms the eternal youth of God. But already the shadow of the cross falls across the scene, for the darkness will refuse the light.

Israel's story could be told in terms of a series of meetings between God and his people which both reveal and veil. Abraham received three strangers into his tent (Gn 18); during the Exodus, Israel encountered its God in the tent of meeting (Ex 33:7-11); the bride of the Canticle longed to meet her beloved in order to clasp him to her heart (Sg 3:4). It is not enough to greet the guest with the cry, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mt 21:9). Like Abraham, we must prepare space for the guest in the tent of our hearts. "Prepare to meet your God, o Israel" (Am 4:12).