

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.’

As the child’s father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.’

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God’s favour was with him.

### ■ The Gospel of the Lord.

Shorter form: 2: 22-32

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# Reflections on the Gospel



THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD / A

# THE SAVING WORD

02 FEBRUARY 2020

## THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

According to the Jewish law (Exodus 13:1; 13:11-16), all first-born males, animal and human, belonged to the Lord and had to be ‘redeemed,’ that is, bought back from the Lord through a sum paid to the Temple. Accordingly, as told in the Gospel, Mary and Joseph bring their first-born Child to the Temple to ‘buy’ him back from God with the simple offering prescribed for the poor.

Led by the Spirit, however, the holy old man Simeon recognises in the child, One who belongs to God in a unique way: one who is, in fact, the supreme gift of God to Israel and to the world as a whole.

Simeon has longed for this moment. He will not live to see the salvation that the child will bring. But he can ‘depart in peace’. He knows that the God who is fulfilling the ancient promises to his people, will also be faithful to him.

Simeon is thus the patron of the elderly who do not fret or worry about how their life has gone but simply entrust it to the mercy and faithfulness of God who understands, forgives, and heals all things.

A word for Mary too. She too will have to let go of her child, surrender him to the difficult messianic role that lies before him. Conflict and pain will not be absent, neither from her nor from him. In this too she is the patron of all mothers—all parents in fact—who must surrender the children they have nurtured to the adult lives that lie before them.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

## FIRST READING

Mal 3:1–4

A reading from the prophet Malachi

*The Lord whom you seek will come to his temple.*

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.

■ The word of the Lord.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 23:7–10. R. v. 8

**R. Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!**

1. O gates, lift up your heads; / grow higher, ancient doors. / Let him enter, the king of glory! **R.**

2. Who is the king of glory? / The Lord, the mighty, the valiant, / the Lord, the valiant in war. **R.**

3. O gates, lift high your heads; / grow higher, ancient doors. / Let him enter, the king of glory! **R.**

4. Who is he, the king of glory? / He, the Lord or armies, / he is the king of glory. **R.**

## SECOND READING

Heb 2:14–18

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

*He had to be made like us in all things.*

Since all the children share the same blood and flesh, Jesus 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.

■ The word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 2:32

**Alleluia, alleluia! / This is the light of revelation to the nations, / and the glory of your people, Israel. / Alleluia!**

## GOSPEL

Lk 2:22–40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

*My eyes have seen your saving power.*

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 turtledoves 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