

## **HOMILY for the FEAST of the PRESENTATION of the LORD**

This Sunday's Gospel tells us about the meeting of the Holy Family with the two prophets in the Jerusalem Temple. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A little boy was visiting his grandparents' church. As they left, the minister asked the family how they had liked the service. Before the grandparents could speak, the boy blurted out, "I liked the music, but the commercial was too long!"

Anyway, this Sunday the Church calls us to celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. This feast is based on today's Gospel & sometimes called Candlemas. Basically this feast is about blessing of the candles for the daily usage at home & church & continuing the Holy Family's tradition of presenting their newborn child to God. Other than that, there is not significant history about this feast.

The beginning of today's Gospel gives us a good summary of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Evidently the Jewish Law required every first-born male to be consecrated to the Lord with an offering of a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. The Holy Family wanted to follow that tradition & brought Jesus to Jerusalem Temple to offer Him to the Lord along with some ceremonial sacrifices. The first spiritual lesson that this feast teaches us is the importance of following the Laws of the Lord & keeping our Tradition. If the Holy Family, which has all the reasons to be exempted from religious laws, was humble enough to follow all the Jewish Laws & Tradition, we should do the same. Unfortunately, we are living in a time that people do not have any respect or consideration for Laws & Order. They think that Laws & Rules apply to someone else but them. They consider themselves above the Laws & despise Tradition. They do not fear the consequences of lawbreaking or have any concern about setting a bad example for future generations.

If the Holy Family had set a good example of following the Laws & respecting Tradition, we should follow in their footsteps & obey the Laws & Tradition of our community. We should imitate their example & try to follow the Laws & respect Tradition as Jesus did by paying His required tax portion. Otherwise, we will create more chaos in our community & lack respect for Tradition. That is why I have usually told my Parish Staff, wherever I have been assigned to, that the Parish Rules apply to them, the community, & me as well. I cannot make an exception for myself or put myself above the Rules. If Monday is the deadline for putting something on the Church Bulletin of the following weekend, that rule would apply to the Parish Staff, the community, & me also. When we follow the Laws & respect Tradition like the Holy Family did, we will surely have a peaceful & caring community.

The second spiritual lesson that this Sunday's Gospel could offer us is the fulfillment of the prophecies about Jesus. A just prophet named Simeon who was told that he would not die before seeing the Anointed of the Lord was around Jerusalem Temple at the time that the Holy Family came in. As I said in my last Sunday's Homily, there is no such things as coincidences. For the Holy Spirit has always worked behind the scene to make something happen. That is exactly what happened with the meeting between Prophet Simeon & the Holy Family. Here is how today's Gospel describes it, "...It was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not experience death until he had seen the Anointed of the Lord. He came to the Temple now, inspired by the Holy Spirit; & when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for Him

the customary ritual of the Law, he took Him in his arms & blessed God in these words: ‘Now Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace; you have fulfilled your word. For my eyes have witnessed your saving deed displayed for all the peoples to see: A revealing light to the Gentiles, the glory of your people Israel.’” As you can see, Simeon was led to the Temple at the same time with the Holy Family by the Holy Spirit. That meeting did not happen by accident. The Holy Spirit set it up & caused it to turn out that way. In fact, the Holy Spirit helped fulfill his dream & make it come true. He was so happy to meet Jesus the Messiah that he could die in peace after that.

After having his dream come true, Simeon attempted to make a new prophecy about Jesus & His mother: “...This child is destined to be the downfall & the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed; & you [Mary] shall be pierced with a sword so that the thoughts of many hearts may be laid bare.” In other words, Simeon predicted that Jesus would be the lightning rod for the world. He would challenge sinners & evildoers & hold them accountable for their actions. However, He would defend the lowly & reward the righteous. Meanwhile, Simeon warned that Mary would suffer a painful wound to help open the hearts of many people. As we might know, that wound would be the suffering & death of her Son Jesus. But, her suffering & His death would ultimately open the hearts of many people to the truth & the Kingdom of God.

Another prophetess named Anna also testified to the fulfillment of the prophecies about Jesus. Like Simeon, the Holy Spirit led her to the Temple at the same time with the Holy Family. She re-affirmed what Simeon said about Jesus. Here is what today’s Gospel says about her: “...She was constantly in the Temple, worshiping day & night in fasting & prayer. Coming on the scene at the moment, she gave thanks to God & talked about the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.” So, Prophetess Anna told everyone in the Temple that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who would bring salvation to Israel.

My dear brothers & sisters, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord reminded us what the Holy Family did with their newborn son according to the Jewish Tradition. It also showed us the testimony of two prophets about Jesus as the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. As His disciples, we should follow the example of the Holy Family & continue to dedicate our children & grandchildren to God in this church for their protection & guidance.