

The Presentation of the Lord (Feast of “Candlemas,” February 2)

Feast of “Candlemas”

1. Ancient Feast: also known as “the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary”
2. Candlemas: solemn blessing of and procession with candles
3. The Temple: “light” of “revelation” comes into the Temple

Malachi 3:1-4—The LORD Comes to His Temple

1. “The LORD” (Hebrew *Yhwh*): will “come to his temple” (Mal 3:1)

Psalm 24—The Lord Comes to the Temple

1. Temple Doors: open the “doors/gates” to “the King of glory” (24:9)

Hebrews 2:14-18—Christ the Faithful High Priest

1. High Priest: Jesus was “made like his brethren in every respect” (Heb 2:17)

Luke 2:22-40—The Presentation in the Temple

1. Purification:
 - a. 40 Days: time of “purification” (Greek *katharismos*) (Lev 12:6)
 - b. Firstborn Son: “ransom” offered (cf. Exod 13:2, 12; Num 18:15-16)
 - c. Two Turtledoves: “if she cannot afford a lamb...” (Lev 12:8)
2. Simeon: Jewish prophet; “Consolation of Israel” = fulfilment of Jewish prophecies
3. Nunc Dimittis: “Now allow your servant...” (Luke 2:29-32)
 - a. Fulfillment: “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace..”
 - b. Salvation: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation”
 - c. Light: “light” (Greek *phōs*) of “revelation” to all (Israel and Gentiles)
4. Prophecy to Mary:
 - a. Division: “the fall and rising of many”
 - b. Cross: “a sword will pierce through your own soul..”
 - c. Revelation: that “thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed...”
5. Anna: Israelite prophetess (represents the northern kingdom?)
 - a. Israelite: “tribe of Asher” (Luke 3:36; cf. 2 Kings 15-17)
 - b. Consecrated Widow: “did not depart from the temple” (Luke 3:37)
 - c. Thanksgiving: for “the redemption of Jerusalem”

The Living Tradition

Venerable Bede: [T]he solemnity we celebrate today... is dedicated especially to the humility of our Lord and Savior, along with that of his inviolate mother. [The reading] explains that they owed nothing to the law made themselves subject to the fulfillment of its legal decrees in everything... [A]s our Lord and Savior, who in his divinity was the one who gave the law, when he appeared as a human being, willed to be “under the law, that he might redeem those who were

under the law...” –so too his blessed mother, who by a singular privilege was above the law, nevertheless did not shun being made subject to the principles of the law for the sake of showing [us] an example of humility... (Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels* 1.18; trans. L. T. Marin and D. Hurst, OSB, p. 179-80)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (The Presentation of the Lord, Year A)

1. What are the origins of the Presentation of the Lord? What are two other names for this Solemnity? What do they mean?

2. What exactly are Simeon and Anna waiting for? How is Jesus’ presentation in the Temple the fulfillment of Prophecy?

3. Why do Jesus and Mary have to go to the Temple and offer sacrifice if they are without sin?

For Further Study

1. The Mystery of Epiphany (CCC 528).
2. Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Volume 3 (pp. 89-119).