

Homily. Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Based on the readings for 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.A. 1/2 February 2020.

Historically, this Feast honours the old Mosaic Law which demanded that a new born Jew be presented and dedicated to the Lord 40 days after their birth. As practicing Jews of their time, Mary and Joseph obeyed this law.

What happened in the Jerusalem Temple that day tells us about the meaning of Jesus and of his destiny for all of us. Two older people noted for their prayerfulness and wisdom came across the holy but poor family in the Temple forecourt. They saw beyond the baby into His purpose for us and for humankind. Simeon recognised Him as the long promised and awaited light for the pagans and the glory of God's people, Israel. 84 year old Anna, a prophetess of God's word, proclaimed him to all and sundry to be the one who would save Jerusalem and its people, delivering them from their bondage and oppression.

Over the centuries candles came to be associated with this Feast, a reminder to us of the light that Jesus wants to bring into our lives. It's this that led me to make use of the readings of Ordinary Time for this Feast, for what better light could we hope to see and receive than that which is offered in the Beatitudes? The Holy Family, and holy Simeon and Anna, had nothing but the light of the old law of Moses to guide them on their journey of faith through this world. Even so, that light was enough for them to see and boldly announce the arrival of the light for all the nations. We, however, enjoy the gift of a stronger and clearer light, found in the teachings and example of Jesus Himself. Like Moses centuries before,

Jesus climbed a hill, but He did not do so alone as Moses had done leaving the desert people far below. Jesus took His disciples with Him up that Galilee hillside with the crowds follow in their path. Moses had to cover his face to speak with God so as not be destroyed by the intensity of God's light and power. In Jesus we have the Word of God Himself totally accessible to us now as one of us, speaking in our language God's new law that builds upon and completes all laws. The commandments of Mt. Sinai were lists of what to do and not do, invoking fear and terrible punishments if people broke those prohibitions. The 9 Beatitudes are words of blessing and happiness, opening up 3 chapters of teaching that leads us along the way of God's light, into love. Lastly, the old law and covenant laid down what not to do without empowering us to do what we should. The Beatitudes invite us to hear them with openness, wonder and humility, trusting the working of God's grace to fulfil their promise in us.

In the Jerusalem Temple on Presentation day Simeon took the child from Mary and Joseph holding Jesus in his arms. He saw that their child belonged to everyone no matter their race, nationality or creed. Simeon knew that after this he could go to his death in peace. Anna, too, had her lifelong dream come true. Her years of prayer and service allowed her the insight to see with her 84 year old eyes God's presence delivering us from oppression, saving and setting people free. The Beatitudes begin the announcement of our freedom from the mouth of God with us. They are our law, our way of living today with grace, mercy, justice and peace.