

Presentation of the Lord

One of the lovely things that we experience here at Mass is when parents present their children to us in preparation for their child's baptism. We are privileged to hear the name that they have lovingly given to their child. We hear them ask that their child be baptised into the faith community to which we belong. We listen to what their hopes are for their child. It is a moment when we remember the hopes that God has for each of us.

What we heard in today's gospel is a little bit like that. Joseph and Mary present Jesus to the community that worships in the Jerusalem Temple. We listen to the hopes that Simeon and Anna have for Jesus. We open our hearts to whatever we can learn from what we hear.

We learn first where Jesus comes from. He grew up as part of a devout Jewish family that was attentive to the law of the Lord. It was from Mary and Joseph before anyone else, that Jesus came to know what God his Father was like. It was from them that Jesus knew his Father's love for him. It was in the home of Nazareth that Jesus learnt how to pray. Does that help us to understand better how we become people of faith?

Mary and Joseph had little to offer God by way of ritual: just two turtle doves. It was the offering of the

poor. Jesus would make it clear that God has a special place in his heart for those who are poor; for those who are struggling to make ends meet. It can be hard to sense that when we are in that place ourselves.

In a few minutes we are going to commission Tom Mead to be the next president of our local St. Vincent de Paul Conference. We are privileged to belong to a parish where the St. Vincent de Paul Society is so active. On our behalf they reach out with love and respect to those who are struggling.

We notice today who was able to see and then reveal Jesus to others. Simeon is described as an upright and devout man. He was a man of hope who looked forward to Israel's comforting. We are told that the Spirit rested upon Simeon. It was under the power of the Spirit that he went to the temple. It was the Spirit that moved him to reveal Jesus to us.

Simeon's hope was fulfilled, and his life was complete when he held the child Jesus in his arms. "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." Jesus is the salvation of the world. His mission would be to reveal this salvation to the people

of Israel and then through his Church to all the nations. Jesus is the light that reveals God's love for us. He is the light that enlightens our path towards him and towards the fullness of life. At the beginning of Mass today, we were made more conscious of the light that Jesus bring to us and our world. But we know that many choose darkness over light.

Simeon tells Mary that a sword will pierce her own soul so that the secret thoughts of many will be laid bare. Mary represents the people of Israel. It will be a people divided. Some will come to faith in Jesus and form the new Israel that God desires, our ancestors in the faith. Some will reject Jesus and try to make their own way to God without the wisdom and light and love that he offers.

Many of us are saddened that this is still happening in our world today. We are still a divided people. Some of us gather in different communities of faith believing that we have found the best way to be in communion with God. Many more in our world today choose to find their own way towards God, rejecting the support of the communities into which they may have been baptised. Many others do not seem to be looking for God at all and live their lives as if God was not caring for them. We know better. We know that God looks beyond the differences that we create and is there for

everyone that He has created, sustaining their every breath. Our God sees the best in each of us and loves us wherever we are.

No matter how independent we may want to be, the reality is that we need each other to live well our life in Christ. We need others to help us to understand God. Today we see that it was not just Simeon who spoke of God, but the woman Anna needed to be heard too. She spoke as a woman of deep faith, a faith that was no doubt tested over the years and had grown strong in her old age. How many women like her do we know in our parish community here? We can thank God for them today, for the special gifts that they bring to our community and for the way that they speak to us of God's love.

Today's celebration helps us to treasure the gift of faith that we have been given. May we continue to be a community of faith that makes welcome those who present their children to us in preparation for their child's baptism. May we live our faith in such a way that young families will want to be here with us drawing life from the one was revealed as the light of our world.