

REFLECTION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

On this day, we remember the episode recounted by St. Luke in his Gospel of the story of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem. It was part of Jewish law that infants, forty days after their birth, should be brought to the Temple to be offered to the Lord. This ceremony was one of purification for the mother and the offering of the child to the Lord, as an affirmation that life was a gift from God.

Jesus wanted to take part in the rites of his people and so he too was taken to the Temple, forty days after his birth. There, he was presented to the Lord, but *also* to the people who were waiting for the Savior to arrive. This humanity, awaiting the coming of the Messiah, is represented by two "old men", who contrast with Jesus and his family. With Jesus comes the new time; and the New Covenant is made. The new People of God, awaited and announced by the old man, are born. These two old men therefore represent the ancient People of God, who for centuries have lived waiting for the arrival of their liberator, the Messiah announced by the prophets. An example of this announcement is the first reading, where we read Malachi's prophecy: *"I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his Temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."* In Jesus, the promises made by God to Abraham and his descendants are fulfilled. God has visited his people.

Meanwhile, the elderly Simeon praises the Lord *"for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people of Israel"*. And, turning to Mary, he continues: *"This Child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed – and a sword will pierce through your own soul."*

Likewise, the elderly Anna, a prophetess, representing the woman who, alongside the man, lives waiting for the Savior, praises God and announces that Child as the awaited Messiah to all those who were waiting for the liberation of Jerusalem. In Luke, the woman is always present alongside the man, living and announcing God's mysteries of salvation. Men and women are called to take Jesus into their arms and welcome him into their hearts, letting themselves be enlightened by him and becoming witnesses to his Good News for the salvation of the world.

Jesus came to us, as the second reading tells us, becoming one of us. *"Likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death"*

were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Let us allow the light of Christ to enlighten us, to guide us in God's ways, to free us from the darkness of error and sin, so that we may reach full Life, life in God's love. Let us also be light to the world. Like the old man Simeon and the prophetess Anna, let us present Jesus Christ to the world, in his frailty, in his love, in his self-giving for us. Let us place our hope in Christ and may he always be the light of our lives. Let us learn from Mary to take Jesus with us and present him to the world.

Amen.