

The Presentation of Our Lord Into the Temple

Explaining the Gospel Reading
Luke 2:22-40



The fortieth day after His birth, the All-Holy Virgin brought her Divine Son into the Temple of Jerusalem, in accordance with the Law, to dedicate Him to God and to purify herself. "Consecrate to me every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites both of man and beast, for it belongs to me" (Exodus 13:2). "Tell the Israelites: when a woman has conceived and gives birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness as at her menstrual period. On the eighth day, the flesh of the boy's foreskin shall be circumcised, and then she shall spend thirty-three days more in becoming purified of her blood; she shall not touch anything sacred nor enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled. If she gives birth to a girl, for fourteen days she shall be as unclean as at her menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty-six days in becoming purified of her blood. When the days of her purification for a son or for a daughter are fulfilled, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent a yearling lamb for a holocaust and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. The priest shall offer them up before the Lord to make atonement for her, and thus she will be clean again after her flow of blood. Such is the law for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl child" (Leviticus 12:2-7). Even though neither the one nor the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver did not, in any way, want to transgress His own Law whom He had given through Moses, His servant and prophet.

At that time, the high-priest Zacharias, the father of John the Forerunner [Precursor], was on duty in the Temple ["serving as a priest before God in the order of his division" St. Luke 1:8]. Zacharias placed the Virgin, not in the temple area reserved for women but rather in the area reserved for virgins. On this occasion, two unusual persons appeared in the Temple: the Elder Simeon and Anna, the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous Simeon took the Messiah in his arms and said: "*Now, Master, You may let Your servant go in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation*" (St. Luke 2: 29-30). Simeon also spoke the following words about the Christ-child: "*Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel*" (St. Luke 2:34).

Then Anna, who from her youth served God in the Temple by fasting and prayers, recognized the Messiah and glorified God and proclaimed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem about the coming of the long-awaited One. The Pharisees present in the Temple, who having seen and heard all, became angry with Zacharias because he placed the Virgin Mary in the area reserved for virgins and reported this to King Herod. Convinced that this is the new king about whom the Magi from the east spoke, Herod immediately sent his soldiers to kill Jesus. In the meantime the Holy Family had already left the city and set out for Egypt under the guidance of an angel of God. The Feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple was celebrated from earliest times but the solemn celebration of this day was established in the year 544 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Justinian.



Excerpts of Fr. Peter's Sermon, Feb. 2, 2014

What are you waiting for?

All of us have heard the expression, *What are you waiting for?* Its underlying meaning is one of inaction and therefore negative. It implies a person simply waiting around for the life he truly wants. Can a person actually stop his life and sit passively by waiting for a better one?

It's sad but many do simply sit in self-pity and cry: "I'm waiting for love." "I'm waiting for a promotion." "I'm waiting for some extra money." "I'm waiting for my big chance." "I'm waiting for the stars to align." "I'm waiting for the children to move out." "I'm waiting for a better life."

Part of this notion stems from a desperate hope to live a better life than the current one, and to be chosen for something uniquely special without really having to do anything to be granted such privilege.

A common example of this is when you hear people say that once they win the lotto, they'll have the life they've always wanted.

My dear brothers and sisters, waiting for something to happen that you have no control over or for something that has a tiny probability of happening justify passivity and thus sets you up for failure.

To those of you who ask yourselves *What am I waiting for?* I direct your attention to a person named Simeon, a man who was waiting for something extraordinary to happen in his life. Simeon was a just and devout person and although he waited for one specific request, he did so with patience and with the hope of a unique encounter. There was no desperate hope in his life for he was blessed to have the Spirit of God rest upon him and he fully trusted that in time the Lord's promise would be revealed. Being righteous, the Lord granted his wish to see the Lord's Christ before encountering his own death.

On February 2, exactly forty days after the birth of Christ, Simeon walking through the temple in Jerusalem saw Joseph with Mary bringing her son Jesus for the forty day blessing as was the Jewish custom according to the Law (*see remarks above*). Seeing this beautiful Infant, He ran toward the family and excitedly took the baby Jesus in his hands and thanked God profusely. Simeon, looking upon the Infant and knowing that this Babe was God in the flesh, praised God and asked that his departure from this life be one of peace since his eyes had seen salvation in Jesus. [Luke 2:22-35]

What is the difference in *what you are waiting for* and *what Simeon was waiting for*? His waiting was not based on false hope and most assuredly his life was not suddenly changed by a single unique occurrence. Rather his life was completely fulfilled, not by a chance occurrence, but rather by the Person to whom he always praised. Simeon never sat passively watching his life flash by. He never pitied himself crying, *Woe is me!* But rather he lived his life in fulfilment of God's promise. The most important point for us is Simeon's declaration that Jesus is to be the means of salvation for all people and on that conviction and statement of faith rests Jesus' ministry and His mission to the Church.

St. Simeon, whose memory the Church celebrates on February 3, the day after Christ's Entry Into the Temple (40 Day Blessing, February 2), is a model of constant vigil and an active living faith in Christ. His life is an example to help us answer the question, *What are you waiting for?*