

Related topics

For further study:

Manifestation; christology; missiology; evangelisation; ecumenism

Closing Prayer

Inspired by your Spirit, Lord,
we gather in your temple to welcome your Son.

Enlighten our minds
and lay bare our inmost thoughts.
Purify your people, and make us obedient
to the demands of your law,
so that we may mature in wisdom
and grow to full stature in your grace.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Presentation of the Lord²

CPL • LBC Year A Presentation of Christ.odt • 2022-11-03

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.

Lectionary-based Catechesis • Year A

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Candlemas • 2 February (or Sunday between 28 January and 3 February)

Principal Service readings

Malachi 3.1-5	Suddenly the Lord will come to his temple
Psalm 24.[1-6]7-10	Lift up your heads, O gates, and the king of glory shall enter
Hebrews 2.14-18	Christ shared equally in human nature
Luke 2.22-40	The Presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The Presentation of the infant Jesus

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Luke 2.22-40 NRSV'

Comments and Questions

The Presentation of Christ marks the end of the Epiphany season. 'Epiphany' means 'manifestation' or 'appearing', and indicates the main feature of this feast. A general dictionary definition of 'Epiphany' is: 'a moment of sudden and great revelation or realisation. Throughout the season the church reflects on various 'manifestations' or 'revelations', coming back at the end of the season to this infancy story.

In Luke's story we see the Messiah emerging from a family and social world embedded in the cultural and religious customs of the people of Israel. His parents observe the laws – circumcision, purification, and presentation. In the presentation, the first-born is dedicated to the Lord, within the setting of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The special role of the child is also defined by the meeting with Simeon, who is an elderly and reliable prophetic witness. His actions and words together enact Luke's distinctive prophecy-fulfilment pattern. Simeon is awaiting the 'consolation' of Israel, and it has revealed to him that he

will not die until he has seen the Messiah. He takes the child in his arms and praises God for keeping his word, showing that he considers the child to be the consolation.

Simeon's song of praise has been used by the church as a canticle, the *Nunc dimittis*, down the ages. Simeon continues, though, with words of warning, as he addresses Mary: 'and a sword will pierce your own soul too' (2.35). The revelation of Jesus will not be obvious to all, nor accepted by all. Jesus will be a sign of contradiction, and will create division among the people.

Anna is labelled as a prophetess, but we are not told anything she says (2.36)! It is Luke's habit to pair a female character with a male character even when, as in this case, her testimony adds nothing specific to what has already been established.

The positive and the negative set the scene for what is to follow in Luke's gospel.

Quotations

1

For our sake He was presented to the Lord that we may learn to offer ourselves to God.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1225–1274

2

So Mary and Joseph offer the sacrifice prescribed for those unable to afford a lamb (Leviticus 12.8), but they have brought with them the Lamb of God (John 1.29-30). For John, this is the Passover lamb, whose blood marks God's people for liberation. Luke's treatment will suggest that this firstborn child is offered to ransom all of God's later children (Hebrews 1.2 and 1.6; also Romans 8.29, Colossians 1.15 and 18). Simeon now makes his entry, his greeting confirming that the child is a sign of salvation, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2.32; Isaiah 49.5-6). Perhaps Luke allows himself a little wordplay, associating Simeon's name (Greek: Sumeōn) with the Greek word for "sign" (sēmeion).

Bridget Nichols, *Church Times* 26 January 2015

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