

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today the Church celebrates the Presentation of the Lord. This feast day finds its origins in fourth century Jerusalem and is also known as Candlemas Day. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes, “The presentation of Jesus in the temple shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord. With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its *encounter* with the savior - the name given to this event in the Byzantine tradition. Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the ‘light to the nations’ and the ‘glory of Israel’, but also ‘a sign that is spoken against.’ The sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ’s perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had ‘prepared in the presence of all peoples.’” While Joseph and Mary presented their child Jesus to the temple in accordance with Jewish custom and tradition, including the purification of Mary and presentation of Jesus, they also reveal a new order of things, a new creation.

In Mary’s encounter with Simeon, it is revealed that the messianic nature of her son’s birth will also be identified with suffering. Simeon is described as a faithful man of prayer who is persistent in his obedience to the Father. When he places Jesus in his arms, he recognized him as the Messiah, the answer to the deep and abiding prayer of deliverance for the Jewish people. Simeon is also a prophetic voice revealing not only that Jesus is the light of the world but also a sign of contradiction in that many will rebuke and reject him. Yet, for those who come to know and believe in Jesus, they will be exalted in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The examples of Simeon and Anna are reminders to us of the power of prayer, faithfulness and fidelity in waiting “in joyful hope for coming of our savior.” Simeon and Anna teach us a great deal about patience and perseverance; by their example, even into the twilight of life, they never lost hope or faith. The experience of joy exhibited by Simeon and Anna is almost palpable; it is an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving for a long-awaited response from God.

Today is also the World Day for Consecrated Life. We remember with affection and esteem those women and men who have dedicated their lives in the service of the Kingdom through the gift and call of consecrated life. In his homily of February 2, 2018, Pope Francis offered this beautiful reflection. Let us savor these words as we reflect upon our own call of service to others according to the gifts which God has given to each of us. “How good it is for us to hold the Lord ‘in our arms’ (Lk 2:28), like Simeon. Not only in our heads and in our hearts but also ‘in our hands’, in all that we do: in prayer, at work, at the table, on the telephone, at school, with the poor, everywhere. Having the Lord ‘in our hands’ is an antidote to insular mysticism and frenetic activism, since a genuine encounter with Jesus corrects both saccharine piety and frazzled hyperactivity. Savoring the encounter with Jesus is also the remedy for the *paralysis of routine*, for it opens us up to the daily ‘havoc’ of grace. The secret to fanning the flame of our spiritual life is a willingness to allow ourselves to encounter Jesus and to be encountered by him; otherwise, we fall into a stifling life, where disgruntlement, bitterness and inevitable disappointments get the better of us. To encounter one another in Jesus as brothers and sisters, young and old, and thus to abandon the barren rhetoric of ‘the good old days’ and to silence those who believe that ‘everything is going wrong here’, if we encounter Jesus and our brothers and sisters in the everyday events of our life, our hearts will no longer be set on the past or the future but will experience the ‘today of God’ in peace with everyone.” AMEN!

--Fr. Tom