

HOMILY by Fr. Anthony Davis

“The child grew in Wisdom...and the favor of God was upon him.”

February 2, 2020

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Mas 3:1-4; Heb 2:14-18; Lk 2:22-20

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is a combined feast, commemorating the Jewish practice of the purification of the mother after childbirth and the presentation of the child to God in the Temple and his buying back (redemption) from God. It is also known as the Feast of the Purification of Mary, and the Feast of Candlemas (because of the blessing and procession of candles on this day acknowledging Christ as the light of the nations).

Hence, after Jesus' birth, Mary fulfills the Jewish right of purification after childbirth. And since she could not afford the customary offering of a lamb, she gives instead two pigeons as an offering of the poor. And like all godly parents, Mary and Joseph raised their son in the fear and wisdom of God. He, in turn, was obedient to them and grew in wisdom and grace; and the favor of God was upon him.

What is the significance of Simeon's and Anna's encounter with the baby Jesus and his mother in the temple? Firstly, when Joseph and Mary presented the baby Jesus in the temple, Simeon immediately recognized this humble child of Bethlehem as the fulfillment of all the messianic prophecies, hopes, and prayers. And so, inspired by the Holy Spirit he prophesied about the child Jesus saying: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against. And you, a sword will pierce through your own soul also; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

Moreover, apart from Simeon, Anna, too, filled with the Holy Spirit, was found praying daily in the temple, and speaking prophetically to others about God's promise to send a redeemer. All this means that the Holy Spirit reveals the presence of the Lord to those who are receptive and eager to receive him. In other words, supernatural hope grows with prayer and age! Anna was pre-eminently a woman of great hope and expectation that God would fulfill all his promises. She is a model of godliness to all believers as we advance in age.

Lesson: Advancing age and the disappointments of life can easily make us cynical and hopeless if we do not have our hope rightly placed. Anna's hope in God and his promises grew with age. She never ceased to worship God in faith and to pray with hope. Thus her hope and faith in God's promises fueled her indomitable zeal and fervor in prayer and service of God's people.

Conclusion: The hope which God places within us through the gift of the Spirit enables us to persevere with confident trust in God even in the face of trials, setbacks, and challenges that may come our way. That is say, all those who, like Simeon and Anna, persevere in piety and in the service of God, no matter how insignificant their lives seem in men's eyes, become instruments the Holy Spirit uses to make Christ known to others. In other words, in His plan of redemption, God makes use of these simple souls to do much good for all mankind. Moreover, through the Holy Spirit He employs ordinary men and women with simple faith as His instruments to bear witness to Christ, His ideals and teachings, just as He used Simeon and Anna. Let us, therefore, be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within us to recognize the indwelling presence of the Lord with us and in others.