

HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD Year A

1. We live in a world of suffering and ultimately death, we hope in a God who is the source of life and peace
 - a. We human beings are the source of suffering and death
 - i. No matter how good and holy we want to be, we fail to have perfect love
 - ii. We cause pain for other people, not that we want to hurt others
 - iii. Put ourselves first and do not foresee the consequences of our actions
2. There is then a gulf, an abyss between our world filled with anger and pain and the glorious world of love and joy that is God's world
 - a. For some that gulf or abyss is so wide that they cannot believe in personal loving God
 - b. For many even if there is a God, He is so far away, that we may as well disregard Him, go on with daily activities as if He did not exist
 - c. For these the pain and suffering of the world is simply a given
 - i. We can scream about it, we can be stoic about it, we can try to fight it, we can try to numb ourselves
 - ii. ultimately we are doomed to suffer until death
 - d. for those who do believe in a god even the pagans we can beg God for mercy
 - i. the pagans and the Israelites of the OT try to please the God by giving Him the best they could
 - ii. For a shepherd, Giving God the gift of the firstborn lamb or a farmer the first portion of his harvest was a way of saying I want to experience some of your world God
 1. I want some blessings in this world and peace in the next life and I want to thank you for what you have given me
3. For people of Israel the firstborn son was owed to God but could be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb or doves for the poor
 - a. Today we recall this presentation and redemption of Jesus in the temple
 - b. They are going about the duty that every set of new parents were required to do by the law
4. Letter to Hebrews speaks about how Jesus had to become like his brothers and sisters
 - a. He becomes like us from the very beginning of His life
 - b. Like every ordinary Jewish child he has to be presented to God and redeemed with a sacrifice
 - c. Though he is ordinary like his brothers and sisters there is something extraordinary about Him
 - d. First we have Simeon who was promised by God that he would not die until seeing the anointed one of God
 - i. Simeon, led by the Spirit, comes into the temple and announces that this child will be the rise and fall of many
 - e. Prophetess Anna also announces that this child will be the source of redemption for Israel
 - f. After these wonders Mary and Joseph finish the rituals of the law, go home to Nazareth where Jesus grows and becomes strong, filled with Wisdom

- g. Notice the rhythms of the gospel images, Jesus is ordinary, He is one of us; yet He is something more: He is a savior, chosen by God for us; still He is one of us
5. Here we get to the essence of Christian faith
 - a. Most religions want something from God, joy, peace, blessings
 - b. Christians: God wants us to become one with Him; He does not just want to give us some nice things
 - c. He wants us to be part of Him, to see Him as He is
 6. For this to happen it is not enough that we give Him gifts, and we try to obey Him
 - a. We have to become Him
 7. Mystery of the Incarnation: God acts first to become one of us in Jesus
 - a. Jesus is like us in every way; He can be hurt, tortured and even killed
 - b. He accepts this suffering, even the suffering of doubt about Himself
 - i. Garden of Gethsemane - asks is this really what you want Father, is there another way
 - c. Jesus gives Himself as the perfect sacrifice – in Him God and human are one
 - d. His gift to God becomes the source of life first in the Resurrection, then the gift of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of the Church
 8. In Baptism the sinful side of us is washed away and we are reborn into Christ a child of God
 - a. In the Eucharist, as we celebrate Mass, we are joined to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross
 - b. In that sacrifice He gives us Himself as food so that we become part of His Body and Blood
 - c. By being joined to his Body we are his Body, presented to God as a glorious gift
 9. Though these are real things happening to us, the one step left for us is faith
 - a. For them to be real to us, we have to believe they are happening
 - b. God is inviting us to be His children, but He will not violate our freedom
 - c. He waits for us to let go of our resistance, to believe that He truly can love us so much as to make us one with Him
 - d. Faith is hard, it means letting go of the certainties of this world and trusting in the wonder of a world we cannot see
 - e. Jesus is the invitation to a new world, He wants to present each of us to His Father
 - f. Will we say yes.