

**OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH  
HOMILY FOR THE 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD  
2<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2014**

*Deut 30.19* See I set before you on this day life and good, or evil and death. Therefore choose life that you and your descendants may live, loving God, listening to his voice, and being one with him.

Today we celebrate the feast of the presentation of the Lord. This is the fourth joyful mystery of the rosary. (The Joyful mysteries are The Annunciation; The Visitation; The Nativity; The Presentation; The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple). Traditionally today is also known as Candlemass; candles are blessed to represent Jesus being the light of the nations. It's a great day.

We all have the choice to be passive in life and just let things happen and run their course, or we can make the choice to actively influence our lives. I'll come back to this later, but for now whilst we are at Mass today let's really try to involve ourselves and be joyful at this occasion. Don't go to sleep!

Malachi prophesises that God is going to send his messenger to prepare the way, (and the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his temple.) With history, we know this relates to John the Baptist, who prepared the way in Jesus time. There is a parallel for us that by our baptism, as Father alluded to last week, we are all baptised priest prophet and king. So we all individually have a duty to prepare the way for Jesus to enter the lives of others: family friends and strangers. It is not the job of the ordained, it is yours and mine.

I was blessed the other week to have a day away with a group of people looking at responses to a conference on *Evangelii Gaudium*....The Joy of the Gospel. The Pope is following up Jesus' command and is asking all of us to proclaim the Gospel in today's world. There was one comment that really struck a chord. Someone wrote "If everything we do and put energy into doesn't do something to bring the Lord into people's lives, then why are we doing it?"

Mary and Joseph give a great example of this. In Jewish culture the first born child belonged to God and the parents symbolically buy him back through their offering. How intriguing, here we have Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus in the temple, God is being presented to God! Why on earth would that be? ....

Well, there are several lessons here.

It demonstrates that Mary and Joseph are people who obey God's laws. It's an example for us. Give to God what belongs to God and obey his laws. (Summed up in the law of love)

Also, God made man, in the form of Jesus, enters his temple. God presents himself to those who were really searching for him. There's a message for today, God will show himself to us if we look. Equally some people are searching; they just need Jesus to be presented to them.

Now, Simeon, an upright man not a priest, and Anna a prophetess and a widow, dedicated themselves to prayer. Their prayer affected their spirit so that they recognised Jesus was the Son of God – this is a reminder that prayer and contemplation have great value. Although God might hit us like a thunderbolt, we are much more likely to recognise an encounter with him if we are backed up by prayer.

NB role of those housebound is essential to the church. So visit them and remind and encourage them of this value and calling of God in their situation.

Let's come back to Simeon. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would see the Christ before he died. Prompted by the Holy Spirit he came to the temple – what if Simeon hadn't been listening? What he would have missed out on and his message to Mary. So, I wonder what we keep missing out on because we don't listen.

And we heard Simeon's beautiful song, which is known as the *Nunc Dimittis* from its opening words in Latin, reveals Christ as the Messiah and a light to enlighten the nations. Simeon says, "Now your servant can go in peace" – how lovely to go to sleep in such certainty.

And Anna also "came by at that moment". She was also listening to the Holy Spirit. She began to praise God and spoke of the child to everyone. I know some of you here don't like to hear this; I'm coming back to our choices. Jesus didn't die so we could be passive – he wants us to actively choose to tell people about him. It's not just father's job. In Jesus being presented in the temple he moves out and embraces God's people and then encircles the others (as per Simeon).

Likewise in Mass Jesus is embracing us, and then to encircle others he asks us to do that for him.

With this in mind, that Jesus embraces us, I'd like to address a practical issue that exists today. Mary and Joseph presented Jesus together. But in many families today either there is a single parent or only one is Christian or Catholic. This puts an onus/responsibility on all of us. We are one family in Christ so if we know of such families, we have a duty to give them support. Make them know we are one family. Also, to any such parents, you must let people here know if you would like help. I have heard people say I don't come any more because no-one realised when I wasn't there. Whilst very sad, unless we also make ourselves known, join a group or come into the hall for coffee – how can others know that we need help or feeling alone? Be active, not passive.

Another simple demonstration of this active family love is seen every week as people help each other come to Mass and support each other walking up for communion.

A final point, our modern world says we should let our children make their own choices in life. But how can we choose if we don't know what is on offer. Jesus had no say in being circumcised and brought up in the Jewish faith. So God has set us an example. We wouldn't let our 5-12yr

olds choose whether or not to go to school. So why would a caring parent let such a young child choose whether or not to learn about God? It's even more important to bring our children up with our faith. Baptise them and guide them and bring them to church. Only then later on in life can they make a true choice, because they know in some way the choices being offered. I suspect every parent experiences the pain of children seeming to reject their beliefs; but we still have the knowledge, and therefore hope that the seed of God's Spirit is in them.

Have you decided to do something during our mission? I know work and family take time, but we all can pray, and most of us can find some time to join in something. I do not wish to make anyone feel any guilt, however, I do wish to challenge.

Are you going to be passive and let life pass by? Or are you going to be active, and help yourself and others. This includes prayer and witness. We can seek God – or miss him. We can listen to him – or miss him. We can show him to others – or allow them to miss him.

**Rev Jonathan de Kretser**