

HOMILY FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD  
2 February 2025

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Part One: the readings for the day  
Part Two: reflections on the readings  
Part Three: guidelines for *lectio divina*

PART ONE: READINGS FOR THE DAY  
Lectionary: 524

Reading I Malachi 3:1-4

Thus says the Lord GOD:  
Lo, I am sending my messenger  
to prepare the way before me;  
And suddenly there will come to the temple  
the LORD whom you seek,  
And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire.  
Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.  
But who will endure the day of his coming?  
And who can stand when he appears?  
For he is like the refiner's fire,  
or like the fuller's lye.  
He will sit refining and purifying silver,  
and he will purify the sons of Levi,  
Refining them like gold or like silver  
that they may offer due sacrifice to the LORD.  
Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem  
will please the LORD,  
as in the days of old, as in years gone by.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10

R. (8) Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!  
Lift up, O gates, your lintels;  
reach up, you ancient portals,  
that the king of glory may come in!  
R. Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!  
Who is this king of glory?  
The LORD, strong and mighty,  
the LORD, mighty in battle.  
R. Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!  
Lift up, O gates, your lintels;

reach up, you ancient portals,  
that the king of glory may come in!  
R. Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!  
Who is this king of glory?  
The LORD of hosts; he is the king of glory.  
R. Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!

Reading II Hebrews 2:14-18

Since the children share in blood and flesh,  
Jesus likewise shared in them,  
that through death he might destroy the one  
who has the power of death, that is, the Devil,  
and free those who through fear of death  
had been subject to slavery all their life.  
Surely he did not help angels  
but rather the descendants of Abraham;  
therefore, he had to become like  
his brothers and sisters in every way,  
that he might be a merciful  
and faithful high priest before God  
to expiate the sins of the people.  
Because he himself was tested through what he suffered,  
he is able to help those who are being tested.

Alleluia Luke 2:32

R. Alleluia, alleluia.  
A light of revelation to the Gentiles,  
and glory for your people Israel.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22-32

When the days were completed for their purification  
according to the law of Moses,  
Mary and Joseph took Jesus up to Jerusalem  
to present him to the Lord,  
just as it is written in the law of the Lord,

*Every male that opens the womb  
shall be consecrated to the Lord,  
and to offer the sacrifice of  
a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,  
in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.*

Now there was a man in Jerusalem

whose name was Simeon.  
This man was righteous and devout,  
awaiting the consolation of Israel,  
and the Holy Spirit was upon him.  
It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit  
that he should not see death  
before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.  
He came in the Spirit into the temple;  
and when the parents brought in the child Jesus  
to perform the custom of the law in regard to him,  
he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:

“Now, Master, you may let your servant go  
in peace, according to your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples:  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and glory for your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother  
were amazed at what was said about him;  
and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

“Behold, this child is destined  
for the fall and rise of many in Israel,  
and to be a sign that will be contradicted  
-and you yourself a sword will pierce-  
so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

There was also a prophetess, Anna,  
the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.  
She was advanced in years,  
having lived seven years  
with her husband after her marriage,  
and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.  
She never left the temple,  
but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer.  
And coming forward at that very time,  
she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child  
to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.  
When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions  
of the law of the Lord,  
they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;  
and the favor of God was upon him.

#### PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READING

Today is the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Tempel and I want to tell you how happy I am to be your priest. Sometimes, I feel like Simeon when he opened his arms to hold the Holy Infant at his Presentation in the Temple long ago.

Led by the Holy Spirit, Simeon came into the Temple at the time that Mary and Joseph were presenting their newborn baby in compliance with the Law of Moses.

Simeon took the child in his arms and offered a prayer to the God of Israel:

Now, Master, you may let your servant go  
in peace, according to your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples:  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and glory for your people Israel.

We say these beautiful words at the end of evening prayer. It's called the *Nunc Dimittis* ("now you may let your servant go"). It's a good prayer for ending a long day.

As your priest, I can say that God has blessed me like he blessed Simeon. For the last forty-five years, I have come here to Saint Leo's like Simeon came into the Temple in Jerusalem. When you bring your little ones here for a *presentación*, I bless them and then everyone in church applauds because we are so happy. And when you come to have your little ones baptized, we light a candle before them to show that the Spirit of the Risen Lord now fills their soul with light and hope. When they get older, we will teach them how to confess and then welcome them to the great banquet which is the Holy Eucharist. Much later, we will gather around them as they give themselves to one another in the Sacrament of Matrimony and then we await the day when they bring their own children to be presented here in church.

In every one of these celebrations, we are re-enacting the first Presentation in the Temple.

Now, let me tell you a story.

Some years ago, I was asked to do a wedding here at Saint Leo's. The bride and groom were already married civilly. In fact, they had three kids with them. The couple married civilly because they didn't have the money for a fancy church wedding. Father Jojo told them that there was no need to pay the church a fee. Just come and Father Jim will perform the service for you.

The couple also asked Father Jojo if they could have their youngest child, a newborn, baptized as well. Father Jojo said, "Of course, Father Jim can do it at the same service."

So, I gathered with the bride and the groom and their three beautiful children: a boy, about 10 years old, looking handsome in a bowtie; a little girl, about six years old, with a charming smile and a white dress. And in addition, there was the newborn, a beautiful little girl (I think).

After the vows and the rings, but before we placed the *lasso* over the shoulders of the newlyweds, we gathered around the baptismal font with the little baby.

The baby fussed... as babies sometimes do. So, I hurried a little through the baptism. Virgilia, of course, had warmed the water in the fount, but the baby wasn't impressed.

When the baptism was complete, the mother and father (the bride and the groom) took their seats before the altar. But the baby was still fussing in the arms of her godmother as I began the offertory of the mass.

So, I went around to the mother and we had the following conversation:

Is the baby hungry?  
Si Padre, ella tiene hambre.  
Well, I guess it's time to feed the baby.  
¿Ahora Padre?

Yes, right now.

And the godmother brought the baby to her mother with the baby's blanket and mother and baby entered into their own little Holy Communion with one another as I offered the bread and the wine for the Eucharist at the altar.

I cannot tell you how happy I am to be your priest. In truth, I feel blessed like Simeon of old. For forty-five years the Holy Spirit has been leading me into this church to be with you. In your great faith, you present your children to me here at Saint Leo's. I feel like Simeon.

After that nuptial mass and the baptism of the little baby, I sat in one of the pews with the baby's older brother and sister. I told them that they must take good care of their little sister. And then the godmother placed the baby in my arms and I thought of Simeon holding the Christchild in his arms and the *Nunc Dimittis*.

Now, Master, you may let your servant go  
in peace, according to your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples:  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and glory for your people Israel.

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Hoy es la fiesta de la Presentación del Señor en el Templo y quiero decirles lo feliz que estoy de ser su sacerdote. A veces, me siento como Simeón cuando abrió sus brazos para sostener al Santo Niño en su Presentación en el Templo hace mucho tiempo.

Movido por el Espíritu Santo, Simeón entró en el Templo en el momento en que María y José presentaban a su bebé recién nacido en cumplimiento de la Ley de Moisés.

Simeón tomó al niño en sus brazos y ofreció una oración al Dios de Israel:

Señor, ya puedes dejar morir en paz a tu siervo,  
según lo que me habías prometido,

porque mis ojos han visto a tu Salvador,  
al que has preparado para bien  
de todos los pueblos;  
luz que alumbra a las naciones  
y gloria de tu pueblo, Israel”.

Decimos estas hermosas palabras al final de la oración de la tarde. Se llama Nunc Dimittis (“ahora puedes dejar ir a tu siervo”). Es una buena oración para terminar un largo día.

Como sacerdote de ustedes, puedo decir que Dios me ha bendecido como bendijo a Simeón. Durante los últimos cuarenta y cinco años, he venido aquí a San Leó como Simeón vino al Templo de Jerusalén. Cuando traen a sus pequeños para una presentación, los bendigo y luego todos en la iglesia aplauden porque estamos muy felices. Y cuando vienen a bautizar a sus pequeños, encendemos una vela ante ellos para mostrar que el Espíritu del Señor Resucitado ahora llena su alma de luz y esperanza. Cuando sean mayores, les enseñaremos a confesarse y luego les daremos la bienvenida al gran banquete que es la Sagrada Eucaristía. Mucho más tarde, nos reuniremos a su alrededor mientras se entregan el uno al otro en el Sacramento del Matrimonio y luego esperaremos el día en que traigan a sus propios hijos para ser presentados aquí en la iglesia.

En cada una de estas celebraciones, estamos recreando la primera Presentación en el Templo.

Ahora, déjenme contarles una historia.

Hace algunos años, me pidieron que celebrara una boda aquí en San Leo. Los novios ya estaban casados por civil. De hecho, tenían tres hijos. La pareja se casó por civil porque no tenían dinero para una elegante boda en la iglesia. El padre Jojo les dijo que no era necesario pagarle a la iglesia. Solo tenían que venir y el padre Jim realizaría el servicio por ustedes.

La pareja también le preguntó al padre Jojo si podían bautizar también a su hijo más pequeño, un recién nacido. El padre Jojo dijo: “Por supuesto, el padre Jim puede hacerlo en el mismo servicio”.

Entonces, me reuní con los novios y sus tres hermosos hijos: un niño, de unos 10 años, muy guapo con una pajarita; una niña, de unos seis años, con una sonrisa encantadora y un vestido blanco. Y además, estaba la recién nacida, una hermosa niña (creo).

Después de los votos y los anillos, pero antes de colocar el lazo sobre los hombros de los recién casados, nos reunimos alrededor de la pila bautismal con el pequeño bebé.

El bebé se quejaba... como a veces lo hacen los bebés. Así que me apresuré un poco con el bautismo. Doña Virgilia, por supuesto, había calentado el agua en la fuente, pero el bebé no estaba impresionado.

Cuando terminó el bautismo, la madre y el padre (la novia y el novio) tomaron asiento ante el altar. Pero el bebé todavía estaba inquieto en los brazos de su madrina cuando comencé el ofertorio de la misa.

Entonces, me acerqué a la madre y tuvimos la siguiente conversación:

¿Tiene hambre el bebé?

Si Padre, ella tiene hambre.

Bueno, supongo que es hora de alimentar al bebé.

¿Ahora Padre?

Sí, ahora mismo.

Y la madrina trajo al bebé a su madre con la manta del bebé y la madre y el bebé entraron en su propia pequeña Santa Comunión entre sí mientras yo ofrecía el pan y el vino para la Eucaristía en el altar.

No puedo decirles lo feliz que estoy de ser su sacerdote. En verdad, me siento bendecido como Simeón de antaño. Durante cuarenta y cinco años el Espíritu Santo me ha estado moviendo a esta iglesia para estar contigo. En tu gran fe, me presentas a tus hijos aquí en San Leó. Me siento como Simeón.



Después de esa misa nupcial y el bautismo del pequeño bebé, me senté en uno de los bancos con el hermano y la hermana mayores del bebé. Les dije que debían cuidar bien a su hermanita. Y luego la madrina colocó al bebé en mis brazos y pensé en Simeón sosteniendo al Niño Jesús en sus brazos y el Nunc Dimittis.

Señor, ya puedes dejar morir en paz a tu siervo,  
según lo que me habías prometido,  
porque mis ojos han visto a tu Salvador,  
al que has preparado para bien  
de todos los pueblos;  
luz que alumbra a las naciones  
y gloria de tu pueblo, Israel”.

### PART THREE: INSTRUCTIONS FOR *LECTIO DIVINA*

I suggest that you use the readings and my reflections as an opportunity for practicing *lectio divina* (“divine reading”). This is an ancient spiritual practice that started with the great monks in the Syrian and Egyptian desert back in the early days of the Church. It is really quite simple.

Step one: calm your mind (my Buddhist friends describe the mind as “a mango-tree full of chattering monkeys”). I find that paying attention to your breath for a few minutes is a practical and effective way to do this.

Step two: read the readings slowly and attentively. Savor the words as if you were tasting a great Pinot Noir. Don’t rush. You are not looking for information or instructions. You are making friends with a sacred text which will bless you abundantly if you will only open your heart to it and let it speak to you. In *lectio divina*, we are not actually “reading” the Bible. Rather, we are “listening” to the Bible as the sacred words speak to us.

Step three: repeat step two.

Step four: read the homily on the readings.

Step five: Ask yourself a few questions:

- What particular words in the readings call out to me most forcefully?
- What is going on in my life such that these words call to me so forthrightly?
- How am I being asked to change, both interiorly and exteriorly?
- In light of this *lectio divina*, how am I being invited to be of service to the world today?