

The Joyful Mysteries
Saturday 16th May 2020
Fourth Joyful Mystery: The Presentation



***'And when the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, they took him (Jesus) up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord.'* (Lk 2:22-28)**

Waiting. Waiting...

More Waiting...

Waiting patiently...Waiting for ages...

Still waiting...Waiting...

Since the Covid-19 lockdown, how many of us have found ourselves waiting more than usual?

Waiting in the supermarket queue; waiting outside the post office and bank; waiting for the Amazon delivery; waiting for the email; waiting for the phone; waiting for the news update? Are we more patient now? Does waiting bother us? Is it all worth the wait?



It is this 'waiting' that draws us into today's Joyful Mystery of the Presentation. We meet two people in St. Luke's account of the Presentation:

'Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon...It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord...' (Lk 2:25-26)
'There was a prophetess also, Anna...She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over...' (Lk 2:36)

Anna and Simeon are described as being elderly, advanced in years and preparing for death. Most artistic depictions show the age of these two Holy people in their greying hair and stooped postures.



It would be wrong to see Simeon and Anna as simply old and aged, as being part of a bygone era, a past generation. They have so much wisdom to teach us because of their advanced years and their life experience. The sense of 'Waiting' is not inconvenient for these two, it is not a burden, but instead a grace filled space of time. In the preparation of waiting they have been shaped and moulded by God and so are able to recognise Him immediately.

A good image to illustrate this is the athlete. A person does not turn up at the race track one day, out of the blue, and launch into a gold winning sprint. No. They go into strict training and practice over a substantial amount of time. Think of those who begin preparing for the Olympics years in advance. The athlete is strict in their training regime from exercise to diet. They begin to learn over time what their strengths and weaknesses are. They study the form of their competition and soon begin to plan what techniques they can use in winning the race. The life of the athlete, their every moment, their every minute and their every second is focussed quite simply on the finishing line.

Anna and Simeon are spiritual athletes. Their whole life has been a training programme focused on God. Through prayer, fasting, worship, meditating on the Scriptures, living the commandments of love, mercy and forgiveness; these have all been aspects of their exercise regime. On the day when a small family approach the precincts of the Temple in Jerusalem, Anna and Simeon, see the finishing line, the goal that their lives of waiting and patience has been preparing for. St. Luke records the joy of these two athletes when they see their prize, when they see the Christ Child.

***'Simeon said 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace,
just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the nations to see,
a light to enlighten the pagans
and the glory of your people Israel.'* (Lk 2:29-32)**

***'She [Anna] came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.'* (Lk 2:38)**

Waiting can be tedious and frustrating, even at the best of times. However, in our spiritual lives when the Lord can appear to be silent and unresponsive in answering prayer, then we fall into the trap of our faith beginning to wane. Anna and Simeon teach us not to walk down this road of being disheartened. In the gift of their old age they show us the importance of persevering and waiting because the Lord is present, He is attentive and He always keeps His promises.

There is a lovely image from the letter of St. James in the New Testament about waiting and how in waiting we see it's fruits.

***'Now be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has the autumn rains and the spring rains! You too have to be patient; do not loose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon.'* (Jm 5:7-8)**

The question for us is this: Will we recognise the Lord when he comes? If we become so engrossed in our frustrations about waiting and the inconvenience it causes to our egos and pride then we are distracted. If we are distracted then our eyes are not on the goal, the finishing line of our life who is God and God alone. Anna and Simeon are two spiritual athletes who were not distracted but patiently vigilant and attentively waiting for the coming of the Lord. We know this because we first meet them in the Temple of Jerusalem, the place of prayer and worship. Because they were expectantly waiting in the spirit of trust and hope they recognised the Messiah in the tiny bundle of swaddling clothes held tenderly by a mother.

First Single Bead: Our Father

This prayer that Jesus taught us has the words: *'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'* The practice of waiting and patience is obvious. We are praying for that time when the Kingdom of God will come. When and at what time and date we do not know, but we are patient and we wait because come it will. Let us ask the intercession of Anna and Simeon to help us in our vigilance for the coming of the Lord and His Kingdom. When He does return may He find us ready and alert.

Ten Beads: Hail Mary for each one

On the day of the Presentation, the outside world took little notice of the mother and baby entering the Temple area. It was only the expectant eyes, the eyes of faith that gave Anna and Simeon hope and joy in the unremarkable everyday sight of parent and child. Let us ask Our Blessed Mother to pray for us that we may never loose heart and become distracted in our faith and prayers. May she be that beacon of light that helps guide and keep our sight on the Lord at all times.

Single Bead: Glory be

As we praise the Holy Trinity in the Glory Be let us be humbled. Humbled because God came to Anna and Simeon, as he comes to us each and every day, not in a triumphant procession, a large bustling entourage but in the simplicity of a young mum called Mary, carrying a tiny baby, embraced by Joseph an attentive father.

Tomorrow we will meditate on the fifth Joyful Mystery, The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.

God Bless and keep praying.

Fr. O'Brien