

Liturgy of the Word with Children
The Presentation of the Lord
2 February 2025
Luke 2:22-40 (Shorter form Luke 2:22-32)

Catechist Background

As practising Jews, Mary and Joseph would have participated in several rituals following the birth of Jesus; two of them are mentioned in today's Gospel. For forty days after the birth of a son, a woman was considered 'unclean' (an unfortunate and misleading translation of a technical term), meaning she was exempt from public worship and not permitted to touch sacred objects. At the end of this time, she would offer a lamb or two turtledoves or pigeons if she couldn't afford a lamb, (Mary and Joseph couldn't afford one) in the Temple in Jerusalem as an offering to God (*Exodus 13:15*). Also, as their firstborn son, Jesus would have been consecrated to God. These Temple rites are the occasion for today's Gospel reading, forty days after Christmas.

Simeon and Anna who we meet in this reading spent most of their time in the Temple. They, like most Jews, had long been awaiting a saviour to free their people. Jews, like the Pharisees and the Zealots, were expecting a very different kind of saviour than the one who came. Most Jews thought a 'successful' saviour would kick out the Roman occupiers and reinstate freedom for the Jews to worship God without harassment from their pagan enemies. The Jews based this image of freedom on what they thought it had been like in the days when they had their own kings. Simeon appears to be unique in that he recognised that the true Messiah will not only benefit Israel, but pagans as well.

The feast of the Presentation of the Lord is the last feast in the year that is connected to an event in Jesus' childhood. It is a celebration of light and so in many Catholic churches lots of candles are lit on the altar for Mass that day, hence it is sometimes called "Candlemas". Some Christians therefore keep their Christmas decorations up through January and take them down at the end of Candlemas.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, create templates of candles (one per child) and provide crayons and pencils so that they can colour in their templates.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You came to call those who sin against you, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You bring light to the world, Christ have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You have come to bring all peoples back to you, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, by sending your Son to us, we can come to you. Set our hearts free to love you more. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40 (Shorter form Luke 2:22-32)

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- If you waited in the Temple for years to see the person who was going to rescue the Jewish people, what sort of person would you expect?

- Would you expect a baby or would you expect someone like a soldier or superhero?
- Most Jews at that time thought that the Saviour would only be interested in Jewish people.
 - What did Simeon say about this that was surprising?
- If you knew someone was a saviour, like a super-hero, would you want to be their friend?
- Do you think their friends and their mum would enjoy being part of that?
- Simeon tells Mary she would become very sad as she saw people treat Jesus badly. How do you think Mary felt about that?
- Do you think she was glad that Jesus grew up helping people and teaching them about God?

Response

We admire Simeon and Anna because they were some of the first people to recognise that this baby, Jesus, was going to be the most important person who ever lived.

- They realised that Jesus would save *all* people and bring everyone into God's love.
- Simeon called Jesus "a light to enlighten the world".
- What sort of things do people do which bring light to the world?
- How can you and I be "a light" in the world?
- Give out the "candle" templates to the children so that they can colour them in.
 - Ask or help them to write their name on their candle to show that they are a light to the world.
 - You could sing the song "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine" with the children.
 - Encourage the children to take their candles home, to remind them to be a light to the world.

We Believe

Relating the Creed to what you have shared with the children, ask these questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God the Father who created all good things?
- Do you believe in Jesus, God the Son, who came as a baby to save everyone in the world?
- Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who helped Anna and Simeon to recognise Jesus for who he really was and helps us today, as well?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying: 'God, Simeon and Anna prayed to you for many years, and we know you hear our prayers today, so...'

Leader: We pray for the Pope, that he may speak truthfully and clearly to the whole world, like Simeon. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people everywhere who do not know Jesus' love. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for everyone who finds it hard to keep warm this winter. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for all members of our parish, especially those like Anna, who are in their older years. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, help us to understand your love and to shine your light to the world. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**