

Reflection for the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today, 40 days after the birth of Jesus Christ, we as a Church and as a people celebrate the *Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*. This Feast commemorates Mary and Joseph complying with the Precepts of the Law. Our Blessed Mother brings the child Jesus, her first born, to the temple for the presentation and blessing. The fact that Mary and Joseph bring the child Jesus to the Temple following the Law of Moses reminds us that Christ the Savior of the world did not come into the world to abolish the law and the prophets but rather to fulfill them. This simple act of our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph makes a profound statement, for by this act of following the Mosaic Law they are confirming that Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God is not changing the course or plan of salvation for humanity. From the beginning of time God, the Father has been reaching out to humanity and Christ coming into the world is a sign of God the Father's love and commitment to us as His children.

It is also a reminder to us that in His relationship with humanity, God the Father is constant. Our God is not a God that changes His plans, trying one thing for a time and then on a whim trying something else. Our God has had the Salvific Plan for humanity from the beginning of time this plan has been unfolding from one generation to the next. The coming of Jesus into the world His birth, His presentation in the Temple, His Baptism, His preaching, the miracles He performs, His death, and His resurrection are all a part of God the Father's Salvific Plan for humanity. All that happens in the 33 years that Jesus Christ walks this earth one like us in all things but sin does not change the Salvific Plan, these events are all a part of the plan that brings the possibility of salvation to all humanity.

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is always celebrated on February 2nd. This year it happens to be on a Sunday. This Feast marks the fact that we celebrated Christmas forty days ago. Because the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is on a Sunday, we will not celebrate the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time. Our readings this Sunday are for the Feast and not the 4th Sunday of Ordinary time. So, we do not hear of what takes place after Jesus read from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, in the Synagogue in Nazareth and said, *"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."* This was part of last week's Gospel Reading, and if the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord was not celebrated this Sunday, we would have heard how the crowd in the Synagogue reacted to the words of Jesus. At first, they were all amazed, then they started to struggle with the fact that Jesus was from Nazareth, and they just found it all too much for them. So, the crowd tried to throw him off the hill that the town is built on, but Jesus passed through their midst unharmed. What we would have seen with the Gospel Readings for the 3rd and 4th Sundays is the complete account of what takes place when Jesus returns to His hometown and preaches in the Synagogue on the Sabbath.

Well, we do not have the Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time this year, so we do not have the complete story of the events that unfolded on the Sabbath in the Synagogue at Nazareth. What we do have is on the 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time the Sunday Gospel ending with the words of Jesus Christ, *"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing,"* referring Isaiah 61: 1-2. This year the Gospel Reading of the 3rd Sunday for Ordinary Time, is followed by a Gospel that shares with us the account of our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph presenting the Baby Jesus in the Temple. This is the Gospel Reading for the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. This reading gives the account of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph following the Mosaic Law. Our Gospel readings this Sunday and last Sunday, both remind us of God's Salvific Plan for humanity a plan that has not changed from the beginning of time and will not change until the end of time.

For you and I today, living in the year 2025 this Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, reminds us that we live in the present, looking forward to the future, learning from the past. We are blessed to have over

2,000 years of history and faith in the Catholic Church to draw on, as we journey in this world looking forward to eternal salvation. It is so easy at times to want to leave the past behind and for many of us there are things we should leave in the past, to be part of our former lives and not a part of our present lives. But as a people and as individuals the past can help us in the present not just with what we should avoid but with what we should embrace. The Salvific Plan of God is found in the past, present and future.