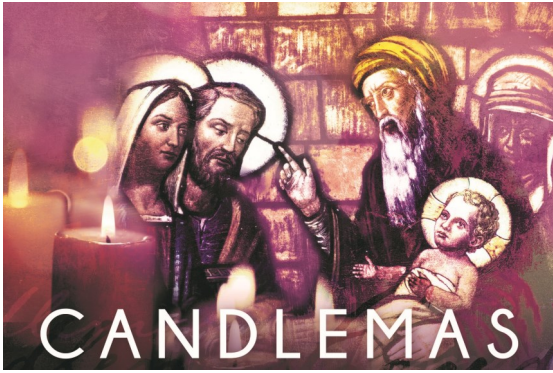


FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Every year on February 2nd the Church celebrates an ancient feast known today as the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. We celebrate and remember Jesus being presented in the temple when He was a baby by Joseph and Mary. Another name for this feast is Candlemas, the Mass of candles. It was on this feast that the custom of a solemn blessing of candles would symbolize the *light of the world coming into the world* through Christ and His birth.

We hear in the 1st Reading for this feast from the Book of the Prophet Malachi. It contains a very important prophecy; in the future, before the day of judgment, the Lord Himself is going to come to the temple. Listen to what it says, “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.” This reading does not say anything about the coming of the Messiah. It does not say anything about the coming of a king. What the 1st Reading tells us is that in the future, God Himself will come to the temple in Jerusalem; God is going to visit His people by visiting the temple and this will usher in the time of salvation.

It is hard to describe just how significant this event would be for the Jewish people. Recall in the time of Solomon, in 1 Kings 8, Solomon built the temple and after, the great glory cloud came down into the temple as a sign of God’s presence. In the book of Ezekiel, written is the fact that when the temple was destroyed in 587 BC, before the Babylonians came to destroy the temple, the presence of the Lord departed from the temple. According to Ezekiel, the glory of the Lord departed from the temple before it was destroyed. The temple was rebuilt after the Babylonian Exile, but what does not return in the second temple is the glory cloud, the visible sign of God’s presence.

It is important to remember that, up to this point, Christ has not entered the temple in Jerusalem. He was conceived in Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem. And, because of the prophecy in the 1st Reading, the Jewish people were still waiting for God to come to His temple. When Mary and Joseph, in obedience to the law of Moses, bring the baby Jesus up to the temple, they thereby fulfill the prophecy of the consolation of Jerusalem, the redemption of Jerusalem, and the coming of the Lord to the temple. Therefore, what we celebrate on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord is the fulfillment of the prophecy of God Himself coming to the temple in Jerusalem.

The psalm for today reveals that this is good news for us. It says, “Lift up, O gates, your lintels; reach up, you ancient portals, that the king of glory may come in! Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!” How does the Lord come to His house? As a little baby, as an infant. He is the humble child of two humble, poor parents. They cannot even afford to buy a lamb as the sacrifice, which was the required offering, and must get the sacrifice of the poor, the sacrifice of the needy, the sacrifice of the turtledoves. Are we afraid to show our poverty, our neediness, our sins, to the Lord, the King of Glory? Let this feast help us not to be afraid to show our poverty to the humble Lord and His humble family. Instead, let us rejoice that the all-powerful God has again revealed His love and care for us by humbling Himself yet again on this feast.

Peace,