

**Candlemas / IV Epiphany 2025**  
**Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish**  
**Father Craig Looney**  
***Malachi 3.1-5 St. Luke 2.22-38***

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Patience is a virtue...a phrase we often hear. Our friend, Saint Paul, tells us in his Letter to the Galatians, patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit that grows within us, along with love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. Patience is the natural result of living in accordance with the Holy Spirit.

This morning's Gospel records two significant events in the life of the Holy Family: The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple; and the Purification of Mary. According to Exodus and Leviticus...the first-born male child was brought to the Temple when he was 40-days old and dedicated to God. He was "redeemed" or "bought back" by offering two turtle doves or pigeons. This was also the time Mary went through the purification ritual required by the Law. The priest prayed over her and declared her to be clean...she could now rejoin society and attend Temple services.

The Gospel tells us there was a man named Simeon who lived in Jerusalem. Everything we know about Simeon comes from this morning's Gospel. He is described as a good and just God-fearing man. The Holy Spirit revealed to him he would not die until he had seen the Christ. Simeon was indeed a patient man.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, Simeon took him in his arms and gave thanks to God in the prayer we say at Evening Prayer called the *Nunc dimittis*: "*Now Lord, you have kept your promise and you may let your servant go in peace. With my own eyes I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all people: A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel.*" (GNB)

Easter Orthodox Christians call this day...*Hypapante...the Meeting*. It is an *epiphany...a startling appearance...fulfilling the prophecy written by Malachi almost 500 years earlier: "I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger you long to see will come and proclaim my covenant."*(GNB)

Simeon then spoke to Mary: *“The child is chosen by God for the destruction and salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God, which many people will speak against. And so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart.”* (GNB)

Simeon’s words must of troubled Mary...she did not understand what he meant. She would, however, remember Simeon’s prophetic words on a hill outside Jerusalem. The Crucifixion of Jesus is another *epiphany...a startling appearance...Mary would experience first-hand.*

Before they left the Temple to return home, Mary and Joseph would have another meeting in the Temple with a prophetess named Anna. Luke describes as “very old”. Recent scholarship suggests she was about 105 years old. She too, thanked God, and spoke about Jesus to everyone who was waiting for the Messiah to come. Anna, too, was a woman of patience.

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple and Purification of Mary is one of the oldest feasts of the Church. It was celebrated in Jerusalem as early at 380 AD. People would also bring candles from home to be blessed by the priest. They would light the candles, as a reminder Jesus is the Light of the World. Saint John reminds us in the Last Gospel the Light of the World that is Jesus can never be extinguished by darkness.

Our Liturgical observance of Candle-mas has its roots in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Germany. Just before the reading of the Gospel, blessed candles were distributed and lighted. We held the lighted candles through the reading of the Gospel and until the conclusion of the Nicene Creed, where we firmly stated our belief in the forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the dead, and Life everlasting.

We wait for the day Jesus will return in his final Epiphany...a showing...the revelation of himself to us in heaven. We wait with the same hope and expectation Saint Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians gives us the strength to build each other up...we wait for the day when all the Saints will be gathered up to meet the Lord in the air.

For now we wait with the same patience Simeon and Anna showed. It will be well worth the wait!

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