

Presentation of the Lord 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters, the story of the Presentation of the Lord Jesus in the Temple is based upon two Torah laws from the Hebrew Scriptures that Joseph and Mary followed, because they were faithful Jews; however, their meaning is still very important for us today.

The first ritual was required of the first born son, that he be consecrated to God. The Temple ritual consisted of a symbolic exchange of gifts, in which a sacrifice was offered in the redemption of the child. It was a reminder of the Passover in ancient Egypt, when a Passover Lamb was offered and its sacrificial blood was painted upon the door posts of every Jewish home, by which the Angel of Death would Passover that house. If you remember, all the Egyptian firstborn, whether children or animals were slain.

The sacrifice reminded the Jewish people that Children are a gift from God, and acknowledges that every human life ultimately belongs to God! Therefore, the child was “consecrated” to God.

The second Old Testament ritual was a sacrifice required of a couple after a mother had given birth, before they could participate in any public worship or come into the Temple precincts. The sacrifice for a poor couple was two turtle doves. It was a ritual which demonstrated the holiness of motherhood and the sacredness of life entrusted to a woman. It acknowledges that when a woman gives birth, she is participating in a mystery that touches God directly, since He is the creator and sustainer of all life, and most especially a human life- since all men and women were created in the image and likeness of God. The woman remained segregated from normal activities required of women in the home, as a sign that she had been involved in something supremely holy!

By the fact that these two rituals are preserved by the Gospel of St. Luke, reminds us that God reveres each human life as His gift and a participation in the mystery of God’s infinite power and unwearied love. God is pro-life, and the protector of each of our lives! However, God has also invited men and women in Holy

Marriage into His intimate circle of friends and collaborators. Each couple has a mission of collaboration to fulfill the plan of God in our lives!

Today, we are also celebrating the call of God to continue His saving mission. Remember, the Jewish Rituals were Temple Offerings. By His consecration in the Temple, Jesus was offering His own life as a Passover gift and sacrifice to God for us. This was a Priestly act on His part, that anticipated His ultimate priestly act on the Cross which was to be completed by His self-giving sacrifice to the Father on our behalf in His own blood! He sustains this sacrifice in the lives of Priests and Bishops out of infinite love for you! Today, you can participate in the preparation of young men for priesthood by supporting the Diocesan Seminary fund for the formation and education of our priests; after-all, they will come from these pews.

Today, in the Holy Eucharist, remember the holiness of your marriages and family. Remember the holiness of motherhood. Remember the holiness God has called each mother and father to participate in; and remember, the young men who have been called by Jesus to continue His sacrificial offering of Himself to the Father!