

2 February 2025 - Presentation of the Lord in the Temple

[Mal 3:1-4; Heb 2:14-18; Lk 2:22-40](#)

Homily

Throughout the Christmas season, in our liturgical celebrations, we have celebrated the mystery of the Incarnation, that is, the fact that God wished to become one of us. Throughout the rest of the liturgical year, we celebrate the same mystery in different ways. Today, on the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, we celebrate the Incarnation as an encounter -- God's encounter with humanity, expressed symbolically in the meeting in the Temple on the fortieth day after Jesus' birth. In the Rite of Light, which preceded our Eucharistic celebration, we celebrated this same mystery of the Incarnation of God as the coming of Light into our darkness.

The religion of Israel was entirely centered on ritual worship and on the Temple of Israel, the privileged place for this worship. At the same time, the prophets called for conversion of heart, justice and love. Tensions had never been lacking between those in charge of the cult and its laws on the one hand and the prophets on the other. When Jesus appeared, the priests and doctors of the law had imposed themselves on the people, but there were no longer any prophets. The whole of Jesus' teaching will consist in showing that what his Father expects of men is not primarily cultic or ritual observance, but the practice of love, justice and mercy, in the image of his Father's attitude towards us.

That is why the Evangelist Luke includes this scene in the introduction to his Gospel (chapters 1 and 2), which we have been meditating on throughout the Christmas season. Jesus does come to the Temple with his mother and father, to fulfil a precept of the law. But it is not the priests and doctors of the Law with whom the encounter that symbolizes God's encounter with humanity takes place. They are two of Yahweh's poor. Simeon did not belong to the priestly caste. He was simply a 'just and religious man who awaited the Consolation of Israel'. Anna was a widow who had spent her whole life in the Temple praising God. Both of them had poor hearts and were able to see God, recognizing the presence of God's messenger in the child presented that day in the Temple.

This first visit of Jesus to the Temple, and the other at the age of 12, also mentioned by Luke, during which Jesus asserts his authority, will be followed by several other visits to the Temple during his public life. These were always encounters between Jesus and the people, as well as confrontations with the agents of worship and

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

the Law.

All these 'visits' by Jesus underline the radical change he brought about in the meaning of worship. Since Jesus, what is at the heart of Religion is no longer worship with all its annual, weekly and daily liturgical celebrations. What is at the heart of our religion is the living practice of the Gospel in every aspect of our daily lives: in our private, family and community lives, as well as in our work and the exercise of our civic and ecclesial responsibilities. This is where God is waiting for us and where he meets us constantly. The liturgy is the place where we continually express collectively our faith in this message of Jesus, and where we are continually transformed into an ecclesial community -- the community of those who have put their faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

We are always tempted to revert to an Old Testament mentality which leads us to think that we are good Christians if we attend Sunday Mass and observe the principal precepts of the Church, or that we are good monks if we faithfully observe all our liturgical and other rules. In reality, observing the Sunday Eucharist and all these rules is important, but as a symbolic and sacramental expression of our willingness to let the Gospel transform every moment and every corner of our daily lives. It is then, and only then, that every moment of this faithful observance becomes a moment of Encounter with God.

Armand Veilleux