

## Homily - meeting of our Lord in the temple.

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Psalms 85:8 - 13, Exodus 12:51-13:16, Hebrews 7:7 - 17, Luke 2:22 - 40

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### **Theme:**

### **Epiphany/Theophany**

### **Introduction:**

Today, we commemorate the meeting of our Lord in the temple, which occurs 40 days after Jesus' birth on February 2. This event marks the final celebration of Jesus' "coming into the world" in the liturgical calendar. The tradition of this celebration was established after the Christmas observance, which was traditionally celebrated on January 6 until the 4th century. As a result, February 2 is recognized by most Christian traditions. In some traditions, there is a focus on blessing candles and holding a candle procession, with "Candlemas" being one name used for today. (If you would like to learn more about the date of Christmas and the differences between the Gregorian and Julian calendars, please feel free to talk to me another time.)

While the meeting of our Lord in the temple might seem like a "minor" event in the liturgical year, its significance should not be underestimated. This encounter serves as a historical touchpoint that reconciles the Old and New Testaments—and, in a broader sense, the past (history) and the future (the new).

**Thesis: Jesus the Christ - reconciles the old and the new**

## **Transition & Question:**

Last week, I talked about how Christ reconciles the idea of withdrawing from the world with engaging in it. As his body, we have the ability to withdraw from the world in moderation while also engaging with it appropriately. This principle applies to our relationship with both the past and the future. We can spend too much time reminiscing about the "good ol' days" or we can invest too much of our focus on the future, neglecting what is right in front of us. However, on our own, we cannot exist fully in both places at the same time.

## **Intro extended**

Have you ever noticed that it can be challenging to communicate effectively across generations? It's not just that different generations have distinct perspectives on the world. Even when speaking the same language, like English, generations often use different terminology.

For instance, words and phrases such as "that's lit," "sus," "goated," or "dope," commonly used by a 14-year-old today, are unlikely to be understood by a Baby Boomer, and the same goes for older expressions that might confuse younger people. This creates a divide between old and new perspectives, unless time is given to understand each other is given.

Although old and new may seem irreconcilable from a worldly standpoint, Christ is in the process of reconciling all things. So how is history reconciled with the future? How do we go back to the future?

**1. History, the old, comes to us by way of succession, it is what is being handed down.**

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In one sense, your physical body represents the ancestral DNA passed down through generations since Adam and Eve. Your body is a product of history. You have been endowed with a specific makeup, and throughout your life, you will contribute to that makeup for future generations based on the choices you make. Spiritual and physical history flows continuously through you. You are born (baptism), you grow (chrismation), you mature (through marriage and confession), and you grow old (unction), hopefully gaining wisdom along the way.

There is no escaping history and the passage of time. While our hearts and minds may remain youthful, our bodies inevitably age. Just like righteous Simeon and Anna the prophetess, even the temple cannot protect us from physical decay. Our bodies deteriorate as a consequence of the Fall. The temple crumbles as it were.

The wages of sin is death. We must bear our burdens—quite literally—in our bodies. This is not always due to what we have done or failed to do, but can be attributed to history gone wrong encoded in our DNA and in our environment. Sin is significant because it remains in history, it is physically stored in our bodies (stress, sickness etc) and on our own, we cannot magically rid ourselves of it.

Unlike some popular theological views, it is important to understand that simply confessing belief in the Holy Trinity does not mean that the consequences of sin—both ours and that of our ancestors—magically disappear. Instead, it means that the *power* of sin and death has been overcome. With Christ, sin does not lead to eternal condemnation. Christ can heal and reconcile what is old in time; he does so directly and effectively in a person who remains open to him and lives in humility. However, it's not as if this process is magical; we still have to bear the cross created by our and others sins, but it is not unto condemnation.

The good news is that in Christ, the sinful events from the past, which have accumulated throughout history and corrupted our bodies and souls, can be healed and reconciled. In the light of Christ, the old is redeemed and fulfilled for its intended purpose. To depart in peace in Christ is to be born into eternal life, receiving an incorruptible body, a temple that will stand the test of time.

## **2. The future comes to us by way of anticipation.**

Naturally, the young often look to the future. It is said that the future belongs to the young. That may be true if we view the future from a time axis kind of concept. The thing to note about the future is that it is already here in the moment you anticipate it. The future comes to us by way of anticipation. It is incorporated in the present in the moment we think about it. We form a thought of what may be in the future, and that very thought is something new. Something new is born into history. As we anticipate Christ's return, he does return in our hearts right now in a mystery. Anna and Simeon have been anticipating the coming of Christ essentially for their whole lives and in doing so they now recognize him when he is presented.

## **3. Jesus - reconciling the old and the new.**

When Jesus is presented in the temple today it is the touch point, the present moment in time, when the reconciliation of the Old and the New Testament is being revealed. It is a moment in time gathering and reconciling all past and future moments in time. It reveals the reconciliation of history and the future into the present moment. God presents himself in present tense. I AM. Time, the Old and the new, is fulfilled and reconciled in Christ.

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When Christ is being presented as the perfect Lamb, a Lamb without any ancestral blemish, as Christ is born from above, he takes on the wages of death and sin on our behalf and reconciles us to God. The presentation of the Lord in the temple is the prophetic icon of what is about to take place on Good Friday. Sin has serious consequences and does not magically disappear. History gone bad requires a sacrifice to be reconciled. Not because God is vengeful, no, but because we are. It is we who often do not know how to forgive and reconcile the history of the past. We hold on to the past or we escape into thinking about the future.

### **Conclusion:**

Reconciliation takes time. That is indeed why God gives time to us. Forgiveness is rarely momentary and transactional. It can take a lifetime to even discover all the ways we've hurt others and been hurt ourselves by others. History is a great record keeper. But when Christ enters the temple, that is when Christ with the Holy Spirit enters our heart, (*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God, 1 Cor 6:19*) he shows us the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. He reveals that the old and the new can be reconciled. He reveals that proper remembrance and true anticipation are good. He shows that something new and good can be born out of an old wound. He shows us that by presenting himself in the temple, to the old; to Simeon and Anna he keeps what is good from the past and reconciles that which is not, by letting himself be offered as an innocent lamb. He counters the legal argument of an eye for an eye, of holding on to history that should be laid to rest, with love. His sacrifice of love allows new life to spring forth and in that history receives its purpose.

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In light of that it is important that we at all times, but maybe in particular when we eventually are laid to rest, pray for this peace and reconciliation for each other. That in facing death, the result of history gone bad, we help each other in prayer, intercession, to recognize and encounter Christ in the temple, our heart, today. Because we don't know the hour.

*NOW, let your servant depart in peace, according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of ALL people. A light of revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*