

TRINITY NEWS

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple - Candlemass

The Bishop who ordained me as a Deacon and as a Priest came to the parish church where I was the rector on February 2 1989 to celebrate the Eucharist. He had been consecrated as the Bishop of Bathurst in New South Wales on February 2, the feast of the Presentation of Christ, in 1959.

He celebrated the Eucharist in his usual simple and yet clearly sacramental style. He had a clear one beat pause between words, so every word was clear and distinct. Then he gave a very brief address that I have always remembered. He spoke about Mary carrying the glory of God in her arms as she came into the Temple. He also referred to Simeon who was an old man like himself waiting for the consolations of God at the end of a long life of service. He noted that Simeon had seen something that we all wish to see, the glory of God. He had seen the words of Scripture fulfilled in the enacted promises of the greatest of his country's prophets. He could now invest all of his energy and peace of heart into every moment that was left to him.

The offering of the child prefigures the offering of Christ at the Jordan for ministry and supremely it prefigures his offering of himself at the Cross after his anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane. I have yet to see a painting of a scene in which Christ is dying at the cross and the Father of all life, Abba, standing there showing great emotion. The first article of the confession of faith that was part of our first Prayer Book says that God is without body parts or passions. We can go with the first two, but the life of Jesus of Nazareth makes us think about God without passions. The word is of course technical and it means without the kind of passions that can cause manipulation or oppression and harm to any person on earth. Christ was a person of very real passion, like unto us in everything except deliberate sin as the letter to the Hebrews reminds us.

All this in a child carried in his mother's arms? I have seen children with sadness in their eyes when they are presented for baptism, and I've seen children with huge expectation streaming out of their gaze. I have seen that sadness fulfilled in some children's lives when they were adults or even when they were very young. I have seen the expectations in other's eyes come to life vividly and with huge impact in the lives of others.

The child in Jerusalem is offered in accordance with the law of Israel. It is a law of discipline that it is tinged with loving care for humanity. I have seen a young woman on television wearing the attire of a traditional Muslim woman. Only her eyes could be seen, and they were mirrors of pain. She had been repeatedly beaten and raped by guards in prison. She would be sent to England where she hoped she would find a better life where women were treated with respect according to law. It made me wonder how anyone could be so cruel to another human being. It also made me understand the need for the Cross. We humans need a lot of encouraging when we do well, and we do need a lot of forgiving when we forget that we are human and behave worse than any other creature towards our own.

The child in Jerusalem is presented to God, and he will honour the presentation. He would go on to honour the script written in his soul and in the legend written in heaven for him. He will become the Saviour of humanity, though he himself was brought to God one day in accordance with the laws written on the heart of his people for their life. He would go on to grow in stature and in favour with God and humanity and give us all hope. That is, hope in a goal that becomes more concrete in every prayer that we utter, every act of love that we offer from our heart, and every time we turn away the offences of others with a sensitive word that does not perpetuate the rejection. This is Yeshua, the Saviour, a beautiful mind linked to a loving heart and a sturdy body on a journey that would never end.

Look into the eyes of your children and laugh at the mischief there. Look into the eyes of your children and see the promise there, and never discourage it. Mary and Joseph gave Jesus of fantastic start for a fantastic life. We can do the same for our own as we present them to God and hold them up for a blessing.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday, February 5th

- Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, February 6th

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00 a.m.,
Chapel

TO PLAN:

- March 4, Shrove Tuesday/
Pancake Supper.
- March 5, Ash Wednesday.

Readings for next Sunday:

Habakkuk 3:2-6, 17-19; Psalm 27;
I Corinthians 2:1-11 Matthew 5:13-20