

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord



Stepping out of the darkness and into the light is an act that takes place when we willingly surrender ourselves (and our egos) to God. In the beginning, this simply means being open to what is suggested to us by our peers and others in recovery who have found freedom from the family spiritual disease of addiction. Becoming honest with ourselves, God, and others becomes a new way of life as we break through denial and begin the process of self-discovery.

Encountering the truth that our response to our loved one's addiction has brought personal and familial consequences brings the necessary amount of motivation to continue on the journey. We find that our cross seems to lighten when we relate to the experience of others and share what's really going on with us. We learn that the presence of addiction in our family is not a referendum on our character, nor does it diminish our status as a beloved child of God.

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, which honors the day when Jesus was ceremonially "presented" to God in the Temple in Jerusalem. For centuries, this feast day has been associated with light and the blessing of candles. The light that began to grow at Christmas is now 40 days old and is a light for everyone – man and woman, old and young, rich and poor, clergy and laypeople, addicted and non-addicted.

This Sunday's Gospel reading shares the vision of two people, Simeon and Anna, who represent the powerless and those, like us, who are totally dependent on a power greater than themselves. The light of Christ reveals hope, which is confirmed in Sunday's second reading:

*[Jesus] had to become like his brothers and sisters
in every way,
that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest
before God
to expiate the sins of the people.
Because he himself was tested through what he
suffered,
he is able to help those who are being tested.*

God, who breathed life into the world and crafted each of us, takes an active role in our recovery. Jesus Christ, through His life, death, and resurrection, takes the burden of this transformation away from us and simply asks that we abandon our nets and follow Him.

In many ways, there is a temptation to think that we need to get our house in order before we come to Him for help. While it is true that God asks us to pick up the shovel while He moves mountains, our experience reminds us that we are powerless and need Him to be a part of the entire process.

Those who have found a personal relationship with Christ have done so in a way that maintains honesty through prayer. If we want to fill ourselves with more of Him, we will need to empty ourselves of expectations and assumptions we've held prior to starting this journey.

There is an unusual amount of grace provided to us when we open the doors of honesty, humility, and self-discovery, and Jesus goes to great lengths to grant us freedom, one day at a time. Often, we need to see someone model it first. We can turn to Scripture and the stories of others to see God being made known to us, just as His presentation in the Temple fulfilled the hope of those awaiting His light.

Reflection Questions

- How have your pride and ego gotten in the way of seeking help from God and others? What changed that prompted you to reach out for help?
- What value have you found in showing others who are new to recovery or who still suffer how you've been able to find help?
- What is keeping you from reaching out to others in recovery and connecting with your fellows in an honest way?

Last Call for Living the Steps

*Join the Catholic in Recovery community
as we journey together through the Twelve Steps*

- Beginning January 30, gatherings will take place via Zoom Thursdays at 8:00p ET/ 5:00p PT for 22 weeks
- Work through the Twelve Steps of recovery integrating Catholic faith using *The Catholic in Recovery Workbook*
- Small group breakouts based on addiction type and gender
- Visit catholicinrecovery.com/livingthesteps to learn more and register

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10

Second Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40