

Presentation of the Lord – Feast of the Lord Tuesday, 2 February 2021



Keynote: The enlightening presence of God

Prophet Malachi 3:1-4

Malachi – the messenger of God, writing sometime about 2,500 years ago has for us a surprisingly up to date message! The prophet addresses the fact that many people were cynical about religion because the evildoers always seemed to prosper. Not unlike our own time! The prophet says, *‘The Lord God says: “Look I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his Temple.”* Although Malachi would not have thought of this as a reference to the Child Jesus being presented in the Temple, Christians may have this uppermost in their minds today.

It is the purifying presence of God among the people, and the justice that God’s presence brings that is important to those who listen to Malachi’s words, *‘Who will be able to resist the Day of God’s coming? Who will remain standing when God appears? For he is like the refiner’s fire and the fuller’s alkali... God will purify the sons of Levi (children of God) and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make their offering to the Lord God as it should be made.’*

We may not understand the references to the industrial refining process, but we would do well to listen to the message. When God comes, and – who among us might be able to stand against God’s coming – there will be justice – things will change. God’s presence among the chosen people will make a lasting difference. So where do you stand?

Responsorial Psalm 23 (24) – A song of welcome as the King enters

Letter to the Hebrews 2:14-18

The writer of this letter reminds us that the Christ became like us for a purpose: *‘It was essential that God should in this way become completely like his brothers [and sisters] so he could be compassionate... a trustworthy high priest... able to atone for human sins. That is because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted.’* So on this feast we recognise in the simple Child Jesus being presented in the Temple the glory of Israel, and the saviour of the people.

Gospel according to Luke 2:22-40

There were a number of requirements laid upon Jews about making offerings in the Temple and the duty to dedicate their firstborn. But Luke while he makes references to these venerable customs may actually be saying something else.

At various points in the Lucan gospel the evangelist relates an event where Jesus is to be found in the Temple. *‘Now in Jerusalem there was man named Simeon (a name incidentally that means ‘God has heard’)... he was an upright and devout man... and prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple ...and he took the child in his arms and blessed God: “Now, master, you can let your servant go in peace just as you promised. My eyes have seen the salvation that you have prepared for all the nations to see. A light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.”* Is Luke reminding us that God is to be found among the people – in their very midst and that God’s presence will purify us too?