

# THE EMMAUS SERIES

## The Presentation of the Lord

Malachi 3:1-4

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-40

### ***The Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his temple***

The coming of the child Jesus to the temple to be presented to God according to the Law of Moses took place forty days after his birth. Today's feast day echoes themes of our Christmas celebration. Traditionally it has been a festival of light, with processions of blessed candles. The coming of Spring in the northern hemisphere provided a symbolic setting for recalling the appearing of the Light of the World.

The gospel reading from Luke's Infancy Narrative is a masterpiece, an apparently simple account that weaves together several themes that are fundamental to the gospel story he is about to tell. What a contrast between the prophet Malachi's description of the Lord coming to his temple and the scene sketched by Luke – in which all the characters are from the anawim, the poor and humble ones of God's people to whom first and foremost the messianic blessings were promised. Luke underlines the fact that the Holy Family made the presentation in fulfilment of the Law of Moses. Until his "hour" had come, Jesus himself was a faithful observer of the Law, the God-given prelude and foreshadowing to which he would bring fulfilment. He was truly one with us in the life we lead, as the reading from Hebrews reminds us: "because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help those who are tempted". Luke includes a moving detail, pointing to the fact that Joseph and Mary were not well off. The offering prescribed, in Leviticus 12, was a lamb; the pair of birds was the offering of those who could not afford the lamb.

The meeting with Simeon and Anna introduced the dimension of prophecy; Simeon gave God thanks and praise – echoing the phrases used by the prophets of old he declared what they foretold was being fulfilled: "a light to enlighten the pagans, and the glory of your people."

It is Mary that is at the centre of Luke's Infancy Narrative. He closes the scene with the mysterious prophecy of Simeon pointing to Mary's place in this work of God. Christian history was to bring a remarkable fulfilment of Simeon's words to the humble mother of Jesus.

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