

Homily

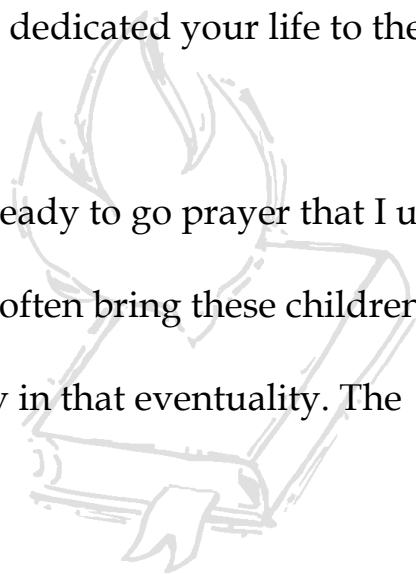
Presentation of the Lord - B

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
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Mal 3: 1-4
Ps 24: 7, 8, 9, 10
Heb 2: 14-18
Lk 2: 22-40

How many forty-day olds are in the congregation today? In the almost twenty-five years that I have been ordained a priest, I have had the honor of offering special prayers over forty day old, three year old and fifteen year old children and students whose families have asked that God play a role in their lives. If you are a member of the Hispanic community, a great number of you have probably experienced your presentation day in some Church, either here or in Mexico. For each of these folks, this day probably was very important for your parents. The parents got up in the morning, dressed you up in your best clothes, sat you in the front of Church with your family, and helped you participate in this service where you dedicated your life to the service of God.

In my presider folder I use at Mass, I have a ready to go prayer that I use for the blessing of a forty-day old child. Parents often bring these children to Mass at their whim and I keep this prayer handy in that eventuality. The



prayer I use goes like this...

S unhw dlrq#ri#E de|#73#gd|v,#

Heavenly Father,
we lift up to You
this baby (these babies) N.,
and we ask that Your blessing
fall upon him (her/ them).
As the Blessed Virgin Mary
and St. Joseph
brought Your Son,
the infant Jesus
to the temple
40 days after His birth
to present Him to You,
so we ask You to watch over
this baby (these babies) N.,
and to lead his (her/ their) parents
to live (a) Holy
and Christ-filled life (lives).

May he (she/ they) be a light(s)
to his (her/ their) families
and a glory for the Church.
Guide this baby (these babies)
to live and play joyfully
in Your Divine Love,
now and always and forever.

In the Name of the Father,
and of the Son **d**,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

S unhw dlrq#ri#E de|#73#gd|v,#

Padre del cielo,
Elevamos hacia ti
este bebido(s) N.,
y te pedimos que le des
tu bendición.
Así como la Santísima Virgen
Maria
y San José
te trajeron a Tu Hijo,
Jesús en su infancia
al templo
40 días después de su nacimiento
para presentarlo.
Te pedimos que vigiles
de este bebido(s) N.,
y que guíes a sus padres
a vivir una vida(s) santa(s)
y llena(s) de Cristo.

Que el (ella, ellos) puedan ser luz
para toda la gente en sus vidas
y gloria para sus familias.
Guía a este bebido(s)
a vivir feliz
en tu Divino Amor,
para siempre.

En el nombre del Padre,
y del Hijo **d**,
y del espíritu Santo.
Amen.

When we look at these children on their presentation day, we all look at the faces of these excited parents, and we see how proud they are of their child. But for me, I look at the face of the child, and I also see a great deal of hope and promise in their future. Here is a kid that has their whole life ahead of them. There is so much potential in their life, so much that they are capable of learning. There is so much love that their parents can offer them. I look into the faces of these kids and I see the future of our Church. And this gives me hope.

I envision this minister named Simeon, a holy and just man, who looks into the face of Jesus at his presentation. Simeon, though, does not see just the hopes and promises of this child during his presentation. Instead, Simeon sees the future of humanity, the power of God that will overcome the evil of the world. In this boy's face, Simeon sees this child growing up, preaching the word of God, and healing the sick. In this boy's face, Simeon sees a child growing up into a man who gives his life up to save a people in desperate need to see the face of God. Simeon sees the entire salvation of mankind in this boy's face, and his life

becomes fulfilled. And thus, in seeing this salvation, he offers a very important prayer in the Church:

Now, Master, you may let your servant go
in peace, according to your word,
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and glory for your people Israel.

Ahora, Señor, según tu promesa,
puedes dejar a tu siervo irse en paz.
Porque mis ojos han visto a tu Salvador,
a quien has presentado ante todos los pueblos:
luz para alumbrar a las naciones
y gloria de tu pueblo Israel.

This prayer of Simeon is recited each night by every religious minister in the world before they go to bed. This prayer is found in the Catholic Book of Prayer called The Breviary that priests and religious people pray every day in the Church. As I recite this prayer of Simeon each night, I think and pray about those families whose lives I have encountered throughout my priesthood. I think about those people who have asked for prayers during the day. I think about those people I have

visited in the hospitals and nursing homes. I think about those people to whom I have ministered, and those people who have ministered to me. And I think about all the children who are forty days old. In this prayer, I see the many faces and smiles that I see during the day. And I have hope.

In each forty-day old in this community, all of us see the potential of our future. Each child possesses the love of Christ in their heart. However, as these children grow up, not all of them reach their potential. Some children grow up learning to love; others end up in gangs or in other places that do not foster love. It is our responsibility as parents and Christians to educate and teach these children about the faith of this Church. We need to teach these kids what one particular forty day old did for us in his life in order that we could celebrate this Mass together with the hope of salvation. The Church has assembled a set of books to help us learn about our faith. As you know, we have this Catechism of the Catholic Church, which teaches us the basic rules of our faith, like the Ten Commandments, the virginity of Mary, and what

we need to do to attain eternal life. We have a book called The Code of Canon Law. We have teachings from various councils of bishops who have set forth the things we need to do in order to love and follow Christ. Most importantly, we have our bibles at home which teach us the word of God. There are many resources available to us to teach our children. But we are encouraged and challenged to teach these kids and make real the potential that they possess at the time they were presented in Church.

As I was reflecting on this theme, I celebrated the funeral of a man named Richard Sharkey, whose son Chris was the victim of an auto accident the day of the funeral. Chris and the family are doing alright but, as a result of the accident, were not able to attend the funeral Mass.

In our discussion last week about his father, Chris shared with me the wisdom imparted to them from a father who had seen his own share of grief in life but realized that Christ infinitely suffered worse than all of us, yet chose to shine that light upon us despite his own sufferings. Chris told me that his father had a motto for life that he imparted on his

children, that life was fine, despite the difficulties one might endure on this journey. I guess Richard taught his kids that if they kept their faith and endured the sufferings of this world, then they would encounter Christ at the end of their journey, where they would no longer experience suffering or tears or sadness.

Towards that end, I guess Richard kept sharing with his kids the poem first written by Richard Cardinal Cushing of New York (1895-1970), who refused to allow that light of faith to grow dim in his life. This was the poem shared by Cardinal Cushing and passed on to Richard's children, read at his funeral Mass this weekend...

There's nothing whatever the matter with me.
I'm just as healthy as I can be.
I have arthritis in both my knees.
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.

My pulse is weak and my blood is thin.
But I'm awfully well for the shape I am in.
I think my liver is out of whack and a terrible pain is in my back.

My hearing is poor my sight is dim,
most everything seems to be out of trim.
But I am awfully well for the shape I'm in.

I have arch supports for both my feet,
or I wouldn't be able to go on the street.
Sleeplessness I have night after night
and in the morning I'm just a sight.

My memory is failing, my head's in a spin.
I'm peacefully living on Aspirin.
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

The Moral is, as this tale we unfold,
that for you and me who are growing old,
It's better to say 'I'm fine' with a grin
than to let them know the shape we're in.

May we all realize that life is fine, regardless of how much we suffer,
because if we allow the light of Christ to shine within us, nothing will
separate us from the love of God (Romans 8). Let us continue to allow
that light to shine upon us, not just on Christmas day or the Christmas
season but in every day and every moment in our lives. This is our
prayer.