**Malachi 3: 1-5; Psalm 24: 7-end; Hebrew 2:14-end; Luke 2: 22-40**

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Today’s gospel passage is about the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. We read this fascinating story and meditate upon this again and again as we find clues on how to see God and experience Him in our everyday life. Today this story invites us to meet the infant Jesus who was brought to the temple according to the Jewish religious custom. It was forty days after the birth of Jesus.

According to the religious tradition, Jesus was circumcised and named after reaching his 8th day. And 32 days later he was brought to the temple in order to be consecrated to the Lord. The one more reason Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus went to the Temple on the 40th day, because Mary had to perform the ritual of purification after the childbirth. The usual temple offering in that circumstance was a lamb, but being poor, all Mary and Joseph could afford was two pigeons. When they reached the temple they were warmly welcomed, acknowledged and spiritually inspired by two people. They were not priests, not royal family members, not Pharisees, not representatives of Roman authorities. But just two relatively unknown people; Simeon and Anna. Their eyes fixed on only one thing, the new-born king. Bible says, they were righteous and God-fearing people whom God sent as witnesses.

Simeon had kept a high standard of rectitude. His righteous position was well supported by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit rested upon him always. Among the Old Testament prophets, the Holy Spirit came upon prophets and others to accomplish particular tasks for the Lord. On the other hand, the New Testament reveals that the Holy Spirit dwells permanently within God-fearing people, rather than sporadically for particular tasks. Since he was always guided by the Holy Spirit, he has been anticipating this day in the temple for some time. St. Luke recorded that Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Simeon was eagerly looking forward to the redemption of people who live in darkness, religious fanaticism, social and economic divide, and he was waiting for the coming of Messiah and His kingdom. On this particular day, God’s spirit guides him to the temple where he meets the infant Jesus and his parents. He recognised them, among all those people. He recognised the infant Jesus. He took the baby in his arms and praised God. What a joyous moment it was! If you've ever just witnessed an answer to prayer, then you know something of the joy that Simeon feels welling up within him.

It was indeed a great moment for Mary and Joseph. Their hearts and minds overwhelmed by joy and pleasure. But that joyous moment was broken by the prophetic words of Simeon. After blessed the child he said to Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” His words consist of two images, an image of a peace maker and an image of the pain of a peace maker. We will meditate upon them in the next few weeks.

The second relatively unknown person in this story is Anna. She was a widow. She was married for seven years and then her husband died. She must have experienced lot of struggles and pains. Such experiences can make us bitter and resentful or such experiences can make us kinder, softer and more sympathetic. Anna is now 84 years old, and has spent much of her time in the temple, worshipping God with fasting and prayer. She never left the temple. She practically lives in the Women's Court of the Temple, day and night. And she is a prophetess, a female prophet.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Anna recognised the infant Jesus, and began to praise God and speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Both Simeon and Anna had a good relationship with God, Simon was a righteous and devout man and Anna lived in the temple, she prayed with others and she prayed alone. They shone a light in the dark place. What an example to each one of us, to worship together, to pray together, and to pray alone to have a good relationship with our Father in heaven.

In Simeon and Anna, we meet God’s faithful disciples who are spiritually connected with God’s marvellous fellowship. And here we understand that God uses such faithful disciples to announce the coming of his kingdom on earth. In Simeon and Anna, we meet people who also understand that in announcing the kingdom of God, the images of the cradle (infant Jesus in the cradle) and the cross (Jesus on the cross) must not be ignored.

We must know that in Christian life, we have amazing experience of cradle, which provides us joy, peace and harmony. We are called to create this experience by putting the cross of our Saviour in our hearts. The cradle became cross to purify our life. In the Old Testament passage the Prophet Malachi says that purification is necessary to endure the day of God’s judgement as His chosen people are disobedient to God. Malachi says that God will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify his people and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to him in righteousness. In order to purify their life and our life the cradle of infant Jesus became the cross.

The Messiah came to purify our life, but not the way people expected. Some left their boats and nets, families, their business and followed him. Some rejected him. Some opposed him. But when he inaugurated his kingdom, the lame danced, the blind saw, the lepers cleansed, and the poor got new hope for a better life, and the fear of death was defeated.

In Simeon and Anna, we can hear God’s call; a call from the Most High to see the Lord in the temple life and everyday life. Let us give our life to God to be guided always by his spirit. As Simeon and Anna did, let us stretch out our hands to receive the images of the infant Jesus in the Cradle and the redeemer Christ on the Cross.

As we come forward in a few minutes and hold out our hands to receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, may we take the image of cradle and cross of Christ into our hearts to overcome the darkness in us; and as we go out may the Holy Spirit guide us to manifest these images in our community. **Amen.**