



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Children's Liturgy of the Word

The Presentation of the Lord

Hopeful Waiting

Overview

The church rarely celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on a Sunday. February 2 commemorates when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, obeying the Law of Moses. This celebration is rich with theological significance and offers profound messages of hope.

The reading from Hebrews also offers deep hope, showing that Jesus fully shares in our human condition. He is not distant but enters into our struggles, experiencing suffering and death so that he might deliver us from fear and bondage. This reassures us that we are never alone in our trials—Christ understands and stands with us.

Simeon and Anna embody God's fulfilled hope. They had waited, praying and longing for the Messiah. Their lives, marked by suffering, were transformed by encountering Christ, the Message of Hope.

In our waiting, we can trust that God always fulfills his word. Light shines in the darkness – no matter how dark our circumstances, Christ's light overcomes all darkness.

The Feast of the Presentation is a feast of hope that our faithfulness to God will allow us to see God's light shining in our darkness. God is with us in our trials. Like Simeon and Anna, we are invited to trust, wait, and rejoice when we see Christ revealed.

Leaders Reflections Question:

- † How can you help children see God's light?
- † Where do you need help finding light?

Suggested Focus

Prepare a focus for the children's Liturgy of the Word area:
Green cloth, a Lectionary, and a candle.

Contents

Overview	1
Leaders Reflections Question:.....	2
Suggested Focus.....	2
Background	3
The Liturgy	4
Procession from the main Church	4
Welcome	4
First Reading.....	5
Responsorial Psalm	6
Second Reading.....	7
Gospel	8
Reflection:	9
The Creed	10
Prayer of the Faithful	11
Return to the church.....	11

Background

Malachi 3:1-4 Malachi announces that the Lord will come to his temple and describes him as a refiner and purifier. This prophecy foretells Jesus' presentation in the Temple¹, where he is recognized as the awaited Messiah. The imagery of refining and purifying signifies the transformative power of Christ's presence, purifying² the faithful and restoring righteousness.

Psalms 24 calls for us to open our lives to the King of Glory. In the context of the Feast, it symbolizes Jesus entering the Temple. The psalm emphasizes the majesty of the Lord, acknowledging his sovereignty and the honour due to him.

Hebrews 2:14-18 The author of Hebrews reflects on Jesus sharing in human nature, experiencing suffering and death to deliver us from the power of death and to become a merciful and faithful high priest. This underscores the significance of the Incarnation, highlighting Jesus' solidarity with humanity and His role in offering redemption.

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40 narrates the actual event of the Presentation. Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple, where they encounter Simeon and Anna. Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and proclaims him as a light for revelation to the Gentiles³ and Israel. He also foretells the suffering Mary will endure. Anna, a prophetess, gives thanks to God and speaks about Jesus to all awaiting redemption. Their recognition of Jesus emphasizes his mission as the Savior and the fulfillment of God's promises.

These readings highlight the fulfillment of prophecy, the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, and the themes of purification and redemption. They invite the faithful to reflect on Jesus' mission and the salvation Jesus brings to humanity.

¹ The Temple holds a place of great prominence in the Western world's history. No other building of the ancient world, while it stood in Jerusalem or the millennia since its final destruction, has been the focus of so much attention throughout the ages. Such attention has taken the form of the prayers and pilgrimages of the faithful, the discussions and deliberations of the postbiblical sages, and, in recent centuries, the scholarly community's incessant explorations, excavations, and expositions.

² The process by which a person unclean, according to the Levitical law, and thereby cut off from the sanctuary and the festivals, was restored to the enjoyment of all these privileges.

³ Any member of a non-Jewish nation.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

Dear children, as you listen to today's readings, think about when you have had to wait. Waiting can be difficult, but Jesus makes it worthwhile. Go with your leaders to listen to the readings and discuss their meaning.

When most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, on this day, we recall how Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, fulfilling Your law and dedicating him to your service. Grant us the grace to present ourselves to you with pure hearts, embracing your will in our lives.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

First Reading

A reading from the book of the prophet Malachi.

The Lord All-Powerful says,

"I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me.

Then suddenly, the Lord you are longing for will come to his temple.

The messenger you are eagerly looking for

will come and announce my promise to you.

Who can face him on that day?

Who will be able to stand?"

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

The word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

Responsorial Psalm

R The Lord is the king of glory!

Open the ancient gates,
So that the glorious King
may come in. **R**

Who is this glorious king?
He is our LORD,
the All-powerful! **R**

Second Reading

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

It was fitting that God,
through whom all things exist,
in bringing many to glory,
should make the source of their salvation
perfect through suffering.
For this reason
Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,
saying, "Here am I,
and the children whom God has given me."
Since the children share flesh and blood,
Jesus himself likewise shared the same things,
so that through death
he might destroy the one who has the power of death,
that is, the devil,
and free those who all their lives were held in slavery
by the fear of death.
For it is clear that Jesus did not come to help angels,
but the descendants of Abraham.
Therefore, he had to become like his brothers and sisters
in every respect,
so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest
in the service of God,
to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.
Because Jesus himself was tested by what he suffered,
he is able to help those who are being tested.
The word of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

Gospel

The children stand for the Gospel. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel, according to Luke.

The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the Law of Moses says a mother is supposed to do after her baby is born.

They took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord, just as the Law of the Lord says, "Each first-born boy belongs to the Lord."

At this time, a man named Simeon was living in Jerusalem. Simeon was a good man. He loved God and was waiting for God to save the people of Israel. God told him he would not die until he saw Christ the Lord.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to perform the rituals prescribed by the Law of Moses for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to enter the temple.

Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace because you have kept your promise according to me. With my own eyes, I have seen what you have done to save your people, and foreign nations will also see this."

There was also a prophet named Anna. She lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there, fasting and praying night and day. At that moment, she came and began to praise God and speak about the child to all who were looking for Jerusalem's redemption.

When Jesus's parents finished everything, they returned to Galilee, their town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's favour was upon him.

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims, "The Gospel of the Lord."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Glory to you, O Lord.

Reflection:

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

Leader:

What did we hear?

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is always celebrated on February 2nd. It is a special day in the Church that remembers when Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Leader:

Why Did Mary and Joseph Bring Jesus to the Temple?

According to Jewish customs of that time, parents were expected to present their firstborn son to God in the Temple. This was a way of thanking God for their child and dedicating him to the Lord. Even though Jesus is God's Son, Mary and Joseph followed these customs to show their obedience and faithfulness.

What Happened at the Temple?

While at the Temple, Mary and Joseph met two elderly and devout people named Simeon and Anna.

Simeon: The Holy Spirit had promised him that he would not die before seeing the Savior. When he saw Jesus, he was filled with joy and praised God, recognizing Jesus as the Light who would reveal God to all people.

Anna: A prophetess who spent her days praying in the Temple, Anna also recognized Jesus as the promised Savior and spoke about Him to everyone around her.

Did you know that sometimes the church calls today Candlemas?

This day is also known as Candlemas because, in many churches, candles are blessed and used in a procession. The candles represent Jesus as the Light of the World, bringing hope and guidance to everyone.

What Can We Learn from This Feast?

Obedience and Faith: Mary and Joseph followed God's laws and presented Jesus in the Temple, showing their trust in God.

Recognition of Jesus: Simeon and Anna recognized Jesus as the Savior because they were close to God through prayer.

Jesus as Light: Just as candles light up a dark room, Jesus brings light into our lives, guiding us and giving us hope.

Celebrating the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord reminds us to trust in God, recognize Jesus in our daily lives, and share Jesus' light with others.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond. In essence, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is the fulfillment of God's promises, brought by Christ, and the affirmation of faith by the devout, as a source of hope for the world.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition and conclude it with the cue for the response: we pray. All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

Leader:

As we commemorate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, let us present our prayers to God, trusting in God's infinite mercy and love. The response is: **R.** Lord, hear our prayer.

1. For the Church: May the Church, like Simeon and Anna, recognize and proclaim Christ as the light of the world, guiding all people toward salvation. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
2. For World Leaders: That government leaders may seek wisdom in God's Word and work towards justice and peace for all nations. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
3. For Families: May families, following Mary and Joseph's example, nurture their children in faith and present them to God with love and dedication. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
4. For the Elderly: That the elderly, like Simeon and Anna, may find joy and fulfillment in their faith and be recognized for their wisdom and contributions to the community. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
5. For the Sick and Suffering: That those who are ill or in distress may find comfort in Christ, the healer, and be supported by our prayers and actions. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
6. For the Faithful Departed: May those who have died behold the salvation prepared by God and rest in His eternal peace. We pray to the Lord. **R.**

Leader:

Heavenly Father, as we celebrate the Presentation of Your Son, hear our prayers and grant us the grace to live faithfully to Your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Return to the church.

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary for Masses with Children
USCCB
Adapted for children.
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