

Under the Influence of the Spirit

Intro. This feast of the Presentation of the Lord rarely falls on Sunday, but always on February 2. It was first celebrated in the Greek church during the fourth century and in Rome by the fifth century. It marked forty days after the Lord's birth to remember that Joseph and Mary followed the Law of Moses and presented their child at the temple to give thanks to God for his birth. In the Middle Ages, it was known as Candlemas Day and was a major celebration in which candles were blessed. Candles were an important source of light in a sometimes too dark world.

I. In this reading, Luke shows us the Lord was raised in the traditional Jewish religious customs. He did not exempt himself from the usual human life

events. Joseph and Mary didn't take their son to the local temple in *Nazareth*; but to the great temple in *Jerusalem*. In a way he started and ended his work there. The usual offering was a year-old lamb *and* either two turtledove or pigeons. Mary and Joseph offered the birds which tells us they could not afford a lamb, revealing their economic status: they were poor. It was like a second Epiphany as two prophets revealed the identity of the Lord to the world. The power of the Holy Spirit was evident. Simeon, a holy and prayer-filled man, was moved by the Spirit to go to the temple to satisfy his long-held dream of living long enough to see the Messiah. His thanksgiving is used as an evening prayer daily by sisters, brothers, and priests in the breviary and the Book of Christian Prayer available to anyone. "Now, master, you may let your servant go in peace,

according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation.” Simeon’s joy was tempered by warning Mary her heart would be pierced with pain caused by the divisive reactions to her son. One the hallmarks of Luke is he purposely included women throughout his gospel who were witnesses to the Lord’s work. Here, Anna, a holy woman is present in the temple. She recognized the presence of the Messiah and prophesied about the child. Joseph and Mary were astounded as visitors once again said incredible things about their child. At *our* “presentation” in the temple people said wonderful things about us too and about our future accomplishments and possibilities.

Concl. One translation of this gospel reads, when Simeon came to the temple he was “under the influence of the Spirit” [Sacra Pagina, Luke, p. 53].

We have been under the influence of a lot things, haven’t we? But have we *ever* been under the influence of the Spirit? Two certain moments were at our Baptism and at our Confirmation. We have epiphanies, sudden revelations – spiritual and otherwise – by which we have realized a truth about God, ourselves or the world. It is the Spirit of God opening our hearts and minds to understand something about him. Simeon and Anna were moved by God’s Spirit to come to the temple and see the Lord. That same Spirit moves us every day. This week let’s live as if someone could charge us with being “under the influence” of the Holy Spirit.

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