

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Your merciful love, O God,
we have received in the midst of your temple.
Your praise, O God, like your name,
reaches the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with saving justice.

GLORIA

Glorify to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-lasting God,
we humbly implore your majesty
that, just as your Only Begotten Son
was presented on this day in the Temple
in the substance of our flesh,
so, by your grace,
we may be presented to you with minds
made pure.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Mal 3: 1- 4

A reading from the book of Malachi

The Lord God says this: Look, I am going
to send my messenger to prepare a way
before me. And the Lord you are seeking will
suddenly enter his Temple; and the angel of
the covenant whom you are longing for, yes,
he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Who
will be able to resist the day of his coming?
Who will remain standing when he appears?
For he is like the refiner's fire and the fullers'
alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and
purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and
refine them like gold and silver, and then
they will make the offering to the Lord as it
should be made. The offering of Judah and
Jerusalem will then be welcomed by the Lord
as in former days, as in the years of old.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 23

Response:

**Who is the king of glory?
It is the Lord.**

1. O gates, lift up your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory! (R.)

2. Who is the king of glory?
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant
the Lord, the valiant in war. (R.)
3. O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory. (R.)
4. Who is he, the king of glory?
He, the Lord of armies,
he is the king of glory. (R.)

SECOND READING

Heb 2:14-18

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Hebrews

Since all the children share the same blood
and flesh, Jesus too shared equally in it,
so that by his death he could take away all
the power of the devil, who had power over
death, and set free all those who had been
held in slavery all their lives by the fear of
death. For it was not the angels that he took
to himself; he took to himself descent from
Abraham. It was essential that he should in
this way become completely like his brothers
so that he could be a compassionate and
trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able
to atone for human sins. That is, because he
has himself been through temptation he is
able to help others who are tempted.
The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

The light to enlighten the Gentiles
and give glory to Israel, your people.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 2:22-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Luke.

(For shorter form, read between > and <)

>When the day came for them to be purified
as laid down by the Law of Moses, the
parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem
to present him to the Lord – observing what
stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every
first-born male must be consecrated to
the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in
accordance with what is said in the Law of
the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young
pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a
man named Simeon. He was an upright and
devout man; he looked forward to Israel's
comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him.
It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit
that he would not see death until he had set
eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by
the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when
the parents brought in the child Jesus to do
for him what the law required, he took him
into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

"Now, Master, you can let your servant go
in peace.

just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the nations
to see,

a light to enlighten the pagans
and the glory of your people Israel." <

As the child's father and mother stood there
wondering at the things that were being said
about him, Simeon blessed them and said
to Mary his mother, "You see this child: he

is destined for the fall and for the rising of
many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is
rejected – and a sword will pierce your own
soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many
may be laid bare."

There was a prophetess also, Anna the
daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.
She was well on in her years. Her days of
girlhood over, she had been married for
seven years before becoming a widow. She
was now eighty-four years old and never left
the Temple, serving God night and day with
fasting and prayer. She came by just at that
moment and began to praise God; and she
spoke of the child to all who looked forward
to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of
the Lord required, they went back to Galilee,
to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the
child grew to maturity, and he was filled with
wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

>The Gospel of the Lord.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next three lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the offering made with exultation by your
Church

be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray,
for you willed that your Only Begotten Son
be offered to you for the life of the world
as the Lamb without blemish.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

My eyes have seen your salvation,
which you prepared in the sight of all people.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

By these gifts which we have received,
O Lord,
bring your grace to perfection within us,
and, as you fulfilled Simeon's expectation
that he would not see death
until he had been privileged to welcome the
Christ,
so may we, going forth to meet the Lord,
obtain the gift of eternal life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



A stained glass window in the Church of San Vittore Martire in Italy, depicting the Presentation of Our Lord

The opening two chapters of Luke's Gospel are called his **Infancy Narrative**. However, they are more of a theological overture to the main work than an actual history. They have also been referred to as the Gospel in miniature, as they present, often very subtly, hints of how the story of Jesus will unfold.

In the episode of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, we encounter two figures who, along with Mary and Joseph, embody all that is best in Israel. Simeon and Anna are two elderly figures endowed with the prophetic spirit. They react in a positive way to the arrival of the child. Simeon sees in Jesus not only the fulfilment of all his hopes, but also that Jesus has a universal meaning and significance for people beyond Israel. Anna is a devout woman who announces Jesus to all those who are looking for the Messiah.

But when he speaks to Mary, Simeon sounds a negative note of warning. He foretells that her child will be a source of division, a stumbling block over which many people will trip and fall. He will be a sign over which people will disagree, some will accept him, others will not. For Luke, Mary here personifies Israel, and the sword of judgment will pierce her too: she will have to decide what she believes, but for Luke she is also the model of the perfect response to God's word.

The story ends with the return of the family to Nazareth and a note about the child growing up like any other, being filled with wisdom and enjoying God's favour. ■

REFLECT

One of the greatest obstacles to understanding the message of the evangelists Luke and Matthew, when they present their versions of the conception and birth of Jesus, is sentimentality. Much of the blame for this lies with the writers of 19th-century Christmas carols. For instance, the hint from Luke that Mary wrapping Jesus in swaddling bands and laying him in a manger, probably a stone trough, is an intimation of his burial probably passes most of us by. Medieval hymns were much more conscious of the link between the crib and the cross.

It is useful to remember that when Jesus came into our world, God entrusted him to a human couple to bring him up as their own son. In the past, marriage and bringing up a family was not really regarded as a vocation in its own right, but rather a state of life for those who were not called to the priesthood or religious life. When we consider Mary and Joseph, we might think of them as being special persons in their own right and therefore worthy to be called to look after Jesus. The Gospels do not remotely suggest this. Jesus grew up as a proper human being in a proper human family. There can be no higher value placed on this state of life to which most people are called. ■

SAY

Jesus grew to maturity and God's favour was with him (Luke 2:40)

LEARN

Luke often pairs a male character with a female one, as in the case of Simeon and Anna.

The sword which will pierce Mary's soul is probably the sword of judgment, laying bare her innermost thoughts and being.

For Luke, Mary is the model disciple, who hears the word of God, meditates upon it and puts it into practice.

DO

Observe a family – perhaps your own: reflect on how this was the way in which God sent his Son into our world, with all the joy and pain involved.

