

# Sunday Homily

## PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

30 JANUARY 2022

YEAR C

“For my eyes have seen your salvation.”

Luke 2:30

### Illustration

Kinetic energy grabs all the headlines. When anyone *does* something, they use kinetic energy. Kinetic energy runs and jumps and comes up with brilliant ideas.

However, before you can run or jump, you have to store potential energy in your muscles by taking in food.

Behind every action there is a story of how the potential energy was produced which made the action possible. These stories can be simple: in order for an arrow to fly, an archer has to store potential energy in the bowstring by pulling it back. But these stories can also be complex: when someone gets a degree, a lifetime of education has been needed in order to put that scroll in their possession.

### Gospel Teaching

The presentation of Jesus at the Temple is another of these stories. Five people meet and there is an explosion of kinetic energy. But the passage is actually pregnant with the language of potential: consecration; waiting; promise; preparation; destiny. All five people are in the Temple for a purpose.

Let's look at all five, beginning with Jesus. He is a baby and also the Son of God. This is surely the most powerful example of potential that has ever existed. For baby Jesus speaks not just of his own future but of the rise and fall of many. Certainly Israel's potential to be glorious again lies stored in this baby, along with the chance of salvation for all people everywhere.

Joseph and Mary have brought this unique baby to begin the unfolding of his potential by consecrating him to God. His will and God's will are to be one. All that is needed now is for someone to recognise the potential for the energy to be released. That someone is Simeon.

Simeon is usually portrayed as an old man, but Luke doesn't mention his age. He is simply a devout and righteous man. He has become old in our minds by association with the aged prophetess Anna and because he was promised he wouldn't see death before seeing the Messiah.

It is surely more exciting to see Simeon as a man in the prime of life, his greatest triumphs still ahead of him, who is so devout that he has allowed himself to be

enlisted into God's service. He will not be free to carry on with his life, as it were, until he has performed the vital and sacred task of recognising the Messiah. Picture Simeon with this one thing in mind as he tries to pursue his education and then his career: looking closely at every successful, important person he meets and asking himself, "Is this the one?"

Then one day the Spirit urges him into the Temple courts and suddenly Simeon finds the Messiah in the last place he would have expected: in his arms. Simeon bursts into song. His opening line quotes words which were spoken when a Roman master released a slave. Far from dying, Simeon is now free to live out the full potential of his devout life. And yes, he probably did begin by dancing round the Temple with God in his arms!

Anna is different. An old prophetess always in the Temple, she is a professional when it comes to recognising potential, so it's no great surprise when she supports Simeon's discovery.

Luke concludes by referring to the continued development of Jesus' potential, as he stores up wisdom and grace to be used on the journey to Calvary that awaits him.

## Application

Are we fulfilling our potential as servants of God? Do we feel we have a part to play in the almighty purposes of the Lord? Or are we frittering away our divine energy, all the precious grace he has invested in us?

How are we to know? How can we recognise our divine potential? Simeon and Anna show us the way. Simeon is devout and righteous; and Anna spends her life in prayer. To see as these two people saw, we too need to wait upon God in prayer.

As Joseph and Mary consecrated their child to the Lord, so we should consecrate a time every day to an encounter with God in the temple of our hearts. By doing so, we begin to align our wills with God's will and so allow God's plans for us to unfold. Grandiose or humble, these plans will be worth singing about.