The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

The feast of the Presentation of the Lord takes place 40 days after Christmas: Feb. 2. According to Jewish law, if the firstborn child was a male, the infant would be given, or consecrated, to God. The parents would also make a sacrificial offering of either a lamb or two turtledoves. But wait … Jesus is, was, and always will be True God! Why does he need to be consecrated to himself?

This was a time of great anxiety for the Holy Family. They trusted God, "but they did not understand what he said to them … his mother kept all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:50-51). Not knowing how they should care for the Son of God, Joseph and Mary clung to the tradition of their faith and did everything according to God's Law. As such, we find them coming to the Temple to present Jesus.

Salvation Foretold

While Joseph and Mary are waiting in line to present Jesus, a very holy old man named Simeon approached them. Simeon had been promised, by the Holy Spirit, that he would not die until he saw the face of the Messiah. Having seen the baby Jesus, Simeon prayed out loud:

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go / in peace, according to your word, / for my eyes have seen your salvation, / which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, / a light for revelation to the Gentiles, / and glory for your people Israel" (Lk 2:29-32).

Simeon was filled with great joy at meeting the Redeemer. But Simeon also had an important message for Mary:

"Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you

yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2:34-35).

Simeon tells Mary that not only will Jesus suffer but she will suffer along with him. Mary is forever linked to Jesus and will experience great sorrow whenever he suffers.

To Jesus through Mary

Despite being told of the agony she would endure, Mary proceeded to present Jesus in the Temple. She was not afraid; she said yes to God. Being poor, Joseph and Mary could not afford to offer a lamb, so they offered two turtledoves instead. Yet in many ways they offered both; doves and the true Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Mary wants nothing more than for each of us to come to know and love her son, Jesus. Mary did not understand what her exact role in God's plan would be, but she chose to say yes to God and to put aside everything else.

As we celebrate the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, we are called to put aside worldly things and personal desires. We can do this by asking Mary to pray for us, that we might come to know, love and serve Jesus as she did.