**Morning Praise @ Home 2nd February 2025**

**Presentation of Christ in the temple**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 2:22 – 40

### Reflection from Ruth

Have you ever felt too old for the things that are happening around you?

I certainly have. As I have been on my ordination journey I have at times felt overwhelmed, stressed, and just too old. But then something will happen, and I will be filled with energy and enthusiasm for this next stage of my life.

In our reading today we hear about two of the oldest characters in the New Testament, Simeon and Anna. We don’t actually know how old Simeon was, but from his words, we gather that he had been waiting a long time. We are told Anna was very old. If you add up what we are told here, she must have been at least 90, which at that time was an incredible age.

In his February 2014 homily on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Pope Francis asked us to consider Anna and Simeon as senior citizen prophets. This older woman and man have just met the new parents Mary and Joseph bringing their baby Jesus to the Temple. “It is a meeting between young people who are full of joy in observing the Law of the Lord, and the elderly who are filled with joy for the action of the Holy Spirit,” Pope Francis preached. “It is a unique encounter between observance and prophecy, where young people are the observers and the elderly are prophetic!” Pope Francis frequently talks about the gift that older women and men are to their communities. They are not to be thrown away but cherished as valued members.

The scene is recounted only in Luke 2:25-38, which is the gospel passage read on February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, or Candlemas as it is now called. Joseph and Mary, following Jewish law, take Jesus to the Temple to be consecrated to Yahweh’s service as their first-born son. They bring the prescribed sacrifice of a pair of young pigeons or turtle doves. God had told Simeon that he’d live to see the Messiah. Luke describes Simeon as “righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” As soon as Simeon caught sight of them, he realized that Jesus was the promised Messiah. In a lovely scene this old man cuddled that tiny baby in his arms. He looked up to God and said, “Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation.” And of course we recognise these words as the Benedictus which have brought comfort to so many people for hundreds of years.

So was Simeon literally asking God to strike him dead? He may be old, but I don’t think he is expecting that he is going to go home and breathe his last. It is more likely he is saying that he feels as if he has done his part. He has kept the faith. He has prayed for the consolation he has hoped for. But now it seems that he is tired, and he is done.

So, Simeon has clearly decided that he has finished contributing. And I can totally appreciate how he feels. In all my time in the church, I have known so many people who have given so much for the work of the church over the years. And then they look up and, like Simeon in this passage, see that there is big change coming on the horizon. They appreciate the change, maybe even welcome it, but they also aren’t ready to deal with it directly. They step down and they look to others to carry on.

And clearly this is sometimes the right decision. We must always honour anyone who has given long and faithful service. And of course, sometimes their decision to step down can empower someone else to step up. Sometimes that is how we find the new leadership that we need. And God will continue to bless those people in a different way because they have had the wisdom to know when it is time to let go.

But at the same time, Anna has just had the same insight that Simeon has. She recognizes with clarity that this little child is the fulfilment of all her hopes and dreams. But Anna, despite having all the same reasons as Simeon to give up and retire, doesn’t react like that at all. Instead of prompting her to quit, the sight of Jesus spurs her to action. She **“***began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”*

Simeon was overwhelmed by the change that the coming of the Messiah had brought – overwhelmed in a good way, but it still caused him to withdraw. But for Anna, it energized her, she ran about telling everyone in the crowded temple courtyard about the amazing thing that God was now doing.

And for all the Simeons and all the Annas we can be thankful

We are all thankful for such faithful service and when people come to the point when they feel the need to step down because they can’t manage the next step in change, let us celebrate them with joy.

## And we thank God for the many Annas – both men and women – that God has sent us. They are energized by the new thing that God is doing among us. They can’t wait to tell everyone about it either. And yes, they might have been hanging around the temple for many years and they are so very used to the way that things have always been done. But they aren’t afraid of the new thing that God is doing among us.

We may all come to the point in our lives when we have to choose between being Simeon or Anna.

And that is the critical thing to remember - we can feel too old but suddenly be energised for God’s new thing. But if we feel too old, too tired, the very worst thing we can do is try to hang on - and God will bless us in the letting go.

But if we feel the energy and enthusiasm of the new thing, no matter how old we are, God will have work for us. **Amen**

### Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Philip**

Father God we want to thank you for all the good things you have given to us.

Our family, our friends, our homes, our games, our pets, the beautiful countryside.

We thank you for all the things we are able to do and to experience. For adventures, for surprises, for holidays.

For those of us who are older, we also thank you for all the things we have been able to learn during our lives – through teaching, through study, through experiences. Not all of these will have been enjoyable; some will have caused us much suffering – but Father God we still thank you that you have been alongside us throughout, even when we struggled to see or hear you. Or when we turned away.

Father God we thank you for sending us your son, Jesus. We thank you that we have the opportunity to see him in our own lives and to see his work in the lives of others.

We thank you that we can know him, that our eyes can also see our salvation through Jesus; that he can be a light to the whole world.

Father we ask for that light to shine bright in this troubled world.

We ask that as Jesus, who was brought before the temple as a child, we might grow strong in wisdom and that the love and grace of God might be with us all.

We pray for the church; for empathy and understanding from our leaders. For all those who have been failed when they should have been kept safe. We pray for ourselves, and for the Church in which we all serve, that the light of Christ will shine in the darkness and we shall all become more like him.

We pray for the local community, for those who lead us in politics, religion, teaching, or any other capacity. Give them strength for their tasks, patience, and understanding; and guide them in their work.

Father we ask that you be close by us in the coming week. Keep us mindful of the example you gave to us, help us to be more like you and to follow your example and not the example of those who are driven by power and influence, wealth and greed.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**