

Homily
February 2, 2025
The Presentation of the Lord
26:58 – 39:56

Have you ever noticed that some authors, when they write a novel or a mystery, they sprinkle little clues of something that is yet to come or some connection? I really enjoy that. Over the years, I've read a lot and it's so much fun to, "Oh! I think that's going to be..." And when it is, "Yay!" And when it's not, "Ohhh!"

It also happens in movies, right? And I would suggest one movie, "The Usual Suspects." There are clues throughout, but I'm not going to spoil it for you.

I want you to keep that in mind for a moment because what we're celebrating today and the Word we have heard and the connections to us, sometimes are hidden in what we are experiencing, or what we are hearing.

Does it feel like we're back in Christmas? Yeah. It also feels like Palm Sunday, all at the same time. "Who is the King of Glory? It is the Lord!" Well, there's a reason for that. This particular day has many connections. But especially the connection to the infancy narratives. Matthew has one version and Luke has another. And they stretch for a while, three chapters each.

Matthew is centered around the person of Joseph. Joseph is the one who is a dreamer, who receives in a dream the message to, "Take Mary as your wife. It's going to be all right." It is in this infancy narrative that the Magi come to reveal the kingship. But also, because it is connected to later in the Gospel – the Sermon on the Mount, the Giver of the Law, the renewal of the Law. It's Jesus as the new Moses. The Law-giver.

And then, of course, there is the flight into Egypt, the return and other details. That's Matthew, centered around Joseph, which connects to the Exodus experience.

Prior to the Exodus experience there is Joseph – the dreamer, the guy with the technicolor coat in the musical. This dreamer was sold into slavery into Egypt, but became,

through the power of God, one who helped to redeem the People Israel and carry them forth from slavery.

Then, there's Luke's Infancy Narrative. It begins with that wonderful statement about why he's writing this Gospel. And then he begins to tell the story. First of Zechariah and Elizabeth and the promise given to her that she would have a child, reminiscent of other women in the Old Testament, such as Hannah, in I Samuel, who wanted a child very badly.

The promise is fulfilled. Not without some bumps. You know, Zechariah doubts and he ends up being mute.

And then, Mary is told by Gabriel that she will be the mother of the Lord. And she says, "Yes." Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, which is the root of the Hail Mary. The child is born, shepherds come to visit – the least of the least - which is a theme throughout Luke's Gospel account. Then the child, eight days – circumcised.

Then this passage today, the child being brought to the temple for cleansing. Actually, it was a rededication rite for the mother who had given birth. It was a matter of blood. And the letting of blood in the ancient world was considered, especially among Jews, blood was **life**. Therefore, if you spill it, you need to atone for it, even in childbirth.

And then of course, that "teenage moment" when Jesus stays in the Temple and his parents are in anguish. (Did you ever experience that with your children? You did? She's laughing- not hysterically.)

Luke's infancy narratives are the key to the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Some of us miss that. Nothing in Matthew's account gets there. Do you know why? Because Mary and Jesus are the center in Luke's Gospel account

Now, you're wondering where I'm going with this, right? Besides this lesson in Scripture and our heritage. What is hidden in those accounts? Especially today's. What are those things that might prick us to hear a little differently?

Well, there's a messenger in Malachi, the messenger who is coming to bear God's Word to his people, bearing the Word of salvation. This is not about the Baptist. This about the prophecy of the "One to come," the Christ, the Anointed One. And he will bring a message of salvation. Yes there is an echo of "who is the king of glory" and an echo of Matthew's account.

And then there is that wonderful passage from our Second Reading, which tells us of the connection of God to humanity: God is not afraid of being a part of who we are.

In the Gospel passage today, there is this touch of joy, mystery and pain.

Joy – Mary is purified with the sacrifice of two pigeons or two turtledoves. Actually, the Law says it should have been a lamb, but it gave the opportunity for those who were poor to have this option, much less expensive.

And one of the animals was sacrificed as the expiation for sin. Not that they had committed any sins, but that's what was done. Don't we do that every time we come here. Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy. And the other was to give praise and thanks to God for the gift of the child, to laud God.

And then there's this old guy, Simeon, in the Spirit, who tells some wonderful news. He takes the child in his arms, holds him close and proclaims that he is going to be something never before seen. – But it won't be easy. He will be a sign contradicted. And Mary will have her heart pierced with Sorrow.

And then there's Anna, a wizened old lady – very faithful – who proclaims in her old age to those around her the goodness of God. She, too, was set upon by the Spirit and prodded by the gift of this child.

Do you remember the Exodus? Remember the blood that was put on the lintel of the doorway to protect the First Born? There's a connection here. The blood came from a sacrifice – not for sin, but for "ransom," protection from death. Thus, the first bird. A sacrifice for protection from slavery to sin.

Light – There is light throughout. In fact, Simeon says, “a light to the glory of the people Israel” and to the Gentiles, as well.

When did you first receive your light? At your baptism. That’s why we lit the baptismal candle today, the Paschal candle.

Connections. Hidden, subtle. There are more. But I’ll admit I’ve gone a little long.

Perhaps we can all go back through this Gospel reading and make some connections with our own baptism. Remember the ritual. Remember how what we read about Jesus here in the Temple is connected. And perhaps our reading of it will also remind us that the death that is yet to come, that will be salvific, is also portended, the fullness of the mystery subtly laid out in a way that we might not have noticed at first. But from this day forward, possibly we will, adding to the richness of God’s revelation to us, who are the Gentiles.