



FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD ARCHBISHOP'S CALL TO SHARE KICK-OFF 2025 | FEBRUARY 2, 2025

I Christmas Concludes

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple. This only happens on a Sunday every 7 years. In Rome, the Nativity Scene still adorns St. Peter's Square but will disappear tomorrow. The Feast of the Presentation is the Church's official conclusion of the Christmas Season.

II Gratitude and Offering

The Church has celebrated this Feast for more than 1,500 years. We commemorate today Mary and Joseph, in obedience to Jewish law and tradition, bringing the infant Jesus to the Temple and prayerfully offering Him back to His Father.

On this Feast, many consecrated religious renew their vows of poverty, obedience and celibate chastity, offering anew their lives to the Lord. This Feast invites all of us clergy, religious and laity to offer again our lives to God, who humbled Himself to immerse himself into our human condition, even to the point of becoming a tiny baby, so that we could share in His divine life.

The natural state for the Christian is gratitude. How can we ever thank God sufficiently for loving us into existence, revealing the depth of His love for us on Calvary and inviting us to share in His divine and eternal life? The natural response of the Christian is to desire to offer something in return for all that God has done for us.

III Simeon and Anna

Today's Gospel features two holy, elderly people, Anna and Simeon. Anna was a widow for more than 50 years. St. Luke reported that she was always in the temple, fasting and praying. Luke described Simeon as righteous, devout and guided by the Holy Spirit. Of all the people in the Temple, it is only these two prayerful elders who recognize the true identity of Jesus.

Simeon longed for the coming of the Christ. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he would see the Messiah before he died. Led by the Holy Spirit, Simeon took the infant Jesus in His arms and declared: **"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 peoples, a light for revelation to the gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."** Simeon, because of his prayerfulness and his docility to the Holy Spirit, was able to see what so many others could not, the Divine presence in the baby Jesus.

Every night, priests, deacons, religious and some laity pray the Cantic of Simeon. This prayer invites us to ponder how God revealed Himself to us in the encounters and the events of the day. The Cantic challenges us to ask ourselves how God was present in our experiences and conversations.

IV Real Presence in the Eucharist

The Church in the United States is now in the final months of a 3-year pastoral initiative summoning all Catholics to open our hearts to the light of the Holy Spirit in order to awaken in us a deeper and more profound recognition of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Jesus, who became a tiny embryo in the womb of Mary and was carried as a baby in her arms to the Temple of Jerusalem, promised to make Himself present throughout all time under a very unassuming and humble appearance of a simple piece of unleavened bread.



Jesus Christ is truly present to us, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in this Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord offers Himself to us as the Bread of Life in order to nourish us so that we can bring His love to our family, friends, co-workers and neighbors.

Jesus comes to us as the Light of the World so that we can recognize Him in our encounters with others and in the events and experiences of everyday life. The Holy Spirit wants to help us to see what so many others fail to see. Like Simeon and Anna, the Holy Spirit wants to make sure that we do not miss the Divine Presence in what to others seems unremarkable and ordinary.

V Call to Share 50th Anniversary

This year, we observe the 50th anniversary of the Archbishop's Call to Share Annual Appeal. I am very grateful to Archbishop Ignatius Strecker for having the wisdom and vision to begin this annual tradition of the Catholic community in Northeast Kansas pooling our resources so that we can do together what no parish or individual could do on their own.

The Call To Share funds give tangible expression to our ability to see with the light of the Holy Spirit the Divine presence 1) in the unborn child and the pregnant mother, 2) in the children in our Catholic Schools, our Parish Schools of Religion, our Totus Tuus ministries, foster care families, and our campers at Prairie Star Ranch, 3) in the young adults at Donnelly College, our Campus Ministries, and couples preparing for marriage, 4) in married couples participating in the Ever More in Love, Marriage Encounter or Retroville retreats, 5) in the refugee seeking the chance to experience the American dream, the homeless man at Shalom House, the hungry at our food pantries, and 6) in the elderly resident at Villa St. Francis as well as a hospice patient approaching death – the doorway to eternal life.

VI Something Beautiful for God

On this Feast of the Presentation, when Mary and Joseph offered the gift of Jesus back to His Heavenly Father, let us acknowledge the many blessings that God has bestowed upon us, and offer back to Him a portion of His gifts. I invite each of us to make a sacrificial offering to God through a donation to Call to Share.

The ministries supported by Call to Share help others recognize their dignity as one made in the Divine image and of such worth that Jesus gave His life on Calvary. I urge you to make a sacrificial gift, whatever that means for you in the unique circumstances of your life. We are each challenged by the Lord not just to give from our surplus but from our hearts.

Simeon foretold that the heart of Mary would be pierced as she faithfully stood by her crucified Son on Calvary. May our empathy for the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of those served by Call to Share pierce our hearts as we seek to care for and comfort them.

This Feast is also called Candlemas Day, a time when we bless candles used for our liturgy and devotion. May our generosity in sacrificing for the good of our brothers and sisters be a bright beacon of hope and mercy for those who benefit from Call to Share. Let us make Call to Share's 50th year special. Together as a Catholic Community, let us again do something beautiful for God.