

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord - February 2, 2025
Homily by Bp. Fr. Erel Villanueva

Once again, I'm standing here at the authority from our Bishop, Bishop Romie-Jun.

He's in Manila to attend the House of Bishops.

So, we're going to pray for them, that the Holy Spirit will guide them in decision and plan for the CEC Asia.

We pray for our bishops.

So, today we're celebrating the Lord's Day.

At the same time, we're also celebrating the feast of the presentation of the Lord at the temple.

It's part of the tradition of Jewish people.

After eight days, they'll be circumcised.

And then, after 40 days, after 40 days from Christmas, his birth, he would be, what you call, brought to the temple.

Okay?

Presented in the temple.

At the same time also, the purification of the mother or Mary.

That's part also of the tradition and law that any woman, okay, who had given birth would be unclean, ceremonially unclean for 40 days.

And after that, he would go to the temple to be purified.

And that is part of the tradition.

But for us, what we can get from this?

So, today, we could talk about the purification of Mary.

And mostly, I would say about the presentation of the Lord at the temple.

In the session of Epiphany, the Lord was revealed once again that he is the coming Messiah.

During Christmas, revealed to the shepherds by the angel.

Then to the Magi, the three Magi.

And then to Simeon and Anna, the prophetess.

That this is the Messiah.

This is the Son of God with the salvation of Israel would come.

And it was revealed to these two in this time, to Simeon and Anna.

They are devout and faithful people, old people.

But they are there waiting, waiting for the promise of God that the Messiah would come.

That's why when Simeon saw, it is the origin of the Holy Spirit to go in the temple.

And then when he saw the child, very simple child.

He said, this is the child of God.

He is the Messiah.

It is a famous prayer, the Nunc Dimittis, as he said.

Because the Lord promised him, Simeon, that he will not die unless he saw the Savior.

See, he will not die.

And as a promise to him that he will not die, when he sees it, he said, Lord Jesus.

He said, Lord, let your servant free.

You see, he saw already the Lord.

And also one thing, that the promise of God really, really, really works.

When he promised, it would come to pass.

And so to Simeon and Anna, the prophetess, they waited, excited, waited patiently for the Lord.

Because he is coming.

And when the child was brought in the temple, he said, this is the Son of God. This is the Savior.

So today, as we celebrate, two things would say, two things could get from here. Like the continuation of the baptism of the Lord, and the presentation of the Lord at the temple.

Presentation at the temple is as a tradition of the disciple to present the child after 40 days to God.

To present, to offer the child to God.

Or sometimes call it child dedication.
Remember that?
Our charismatic days, child dedication.
It may say you dedicate this child to God.
But sometimes parents, we parents forgot that.
That we dedicate that child to God.
It means to say, it is God who owns that child.
Whatever his plan, whatever his purpose to that child, that child comes to pass.
And that's what you need to support.
We dedicate it to God.
So we dedicate it to God.
It's not just a ceremonial thing, but something happens that, Lord, this child is yours.
So whatever your plan, your purpose, then we parents would support.
But sometimes we forgot that.
Parents.
Because we have our own plan.
We have our own desire.
Yes, it is good. Of course.
All of us parents have a good plan for our children.
But the question is, is it the plan of God?
Because whatever the plan of God, that would be blessed by God.
If it's not the plan of God, it will not be blessed.
So whatever the plan of God for our children, we will support that because it will be blessed by God.
And that's his purpose.
About Jesus.
About Jesus. When he was presented and offered to God.
Because when he was offered to God, he knows what to be offered to God.
He is of God.
And one thing about Jesus, he knows it as he grows.
Having been offered, dedicated to God.
It's meant to say also that he has also to fulfill the plan of God in his life.
And what is the plan of God in his life?
To offer himself to be a living sacrifice.
Perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.
That he would die on the cross.
That later on also, truly, he offered his life.
As he was offered at this day in the cross also, he offered his life.
For you and me.
So also these things that we have also been dedicated, offered, presented at the temple, doing a baptism to God.
So are we willing also to give and offer our life to God?
To fulfill his purpose in our lives?
So, brothers and sisters, in short, we're also an offering to God.
Our life is an offering to God.
That's what I'm going to emphasize this morning.
We are offering to God.
We've been offered by our parents, dedicated, presented to God.
Then we now, who are grown, would also learn to fulfill it by offering our lives to God.
To be used by God.
To fulfill his purpose in our lives.
Not our own desire.
Not our own plan.
But his plan.
His purpose.
So Jesus offered himself as a living sacrifice.
He offered himself.
So also we're going to offer ourselves to God.
That's what I'm going to emphasize this morning.
We're going to offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice.
Everything in us.
Romans 12 says, Romans 12 says, if you read the Bible, it says,

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present.

That's the word.

Present.

Presentation.

Offer.

Give your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

He's talking about the body.

Talking about the body.

In Amplified Bible, it says here, that presenting yourself, your body, all of your members, all faculties, spirit, soul, and body, as a living sacrifice, holy, pure, devoted, and well-pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service and spiritual worship.

So I mean to say we should be a living offering to God.

Living, holy, devoted, pure, and well-pleasing to God.

That should be our task now.

That we should remember that we have been offered to God so we'll, every day of our lives, we will become a living sacrifice,

holy, pure, devoted, well-pleasing to God,

which is our reasonable service and spiritual worship.

So that's what I want to say this morning.

That as the Lord offered himself, and then later on,

he offered himself also to God to die for you and me,

the fulfillment of the plan of God.

So also we, we should be an offering to God.

An offering to God.

Every part of our body, spirit, soul, and body, everything be offered to God.

And not only that, everything that we do should be an offering to God.

Should be everything that we do.

And not only that, but a pure offering.

That's what the first he didn't tell us.

That you should offer a pure offering.

Look at Malakai.

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.

And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple,

even the messengers of the covenant, in whom delight.

Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

But who can endure the day of his coming?

Who can stand when he appears?

He is like a refiner fire.

Refiner.

Tagapino.

Purifier.

Refiner's fire.

And like a laundered soap.

He will sit at the refiner and purifier of silver.

He will purify the sons of Levi.

He's talking about the priests, clergies, and the work in the temple.

Because at that time, they were corrupted already.

He will purify the sons of Levi, purge them of gold and silver.

That, for what reason?

The way he will purify the sons of Levi, the priests, the clergies,

all the working unto the Lord.

That they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.

He will offer something with righteousness, with a right heart, with the right motives.

That's why, brothers and sisters, we are an offering to God.

And a pure offering.

That's why also Mary has to be purified.

She'll be purified before God after 40 days.

So, brothers and sisters,

let us remind once again that we are an offering to God.

So, let it be a day by day to remember that we are offering to God.

We have been offered by our parents, presented at the temple by our parents

during baptism.
Now, we offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice.
To be used by God for His purpose.
And a pure offering.
This is what the Lord is looking unto us.
Our offering.
Everything that we do.
We should offer it with a pure heart.
With a pure motive.
Not in the church, what they're doing in the church.
Or when we are outside.
What we're doing to other people.
Our helping them.
What we're doing to our neighbor.
Is it from a pure heart?
A pure motive?
Or there is a hidden agenda?
God sees that.
Whatever we do, it should be from a clean heart.
And a pure motive.
Because God sees that.
God sees that.
Look at this.
Look at Leviticus.
This is Leviticus.
These are our rules.
But look at this.
Verse 22.
Chapter 22 of Leviticus.
It talks about the offering.
This is the law.
The ordinance in offering.
Just a lot of laws.
But here in 19.
You shall offer from your own free will.
Offer or give.
Present to God.
Whatever it is.
Your song.
Our dance.
Our worship.
Our offering.
Or what you're doing in other people.
Without blemish from the cattle.
From the sheep.
Or from the goats.
Whatever has a defect.
You shall not offer.
For it shall not be acceptable on your behalf.
The rules there.
Because they opt to offer animals before God.
Or sheep or goats.
But it said when you offer, don't offer those who have defects.
With blemish.
Because it will not be acceptable to God.
So maybe he's talking about the offering of animals at times.
But as of today.
Everything we do is an offering to God.
Whatever you do.
Our worship.
Our song.
Our dance.
Our tithes.
Our offering.

Whatever it may be.
From the church.
When you're out in the church.
Your health.
Your goodness.
Other people outside.
Whatever you do.
Is it from a pure heart?
Or right motives?
No hidden agenda?
No string attached?
Because that is called blemish.
Corruption.
Or blemish.
Or defects.
When we do something for other people with a hidden agenda.
With not the right motives.
With not the pure heart.
It is blemish.
Defective kind of offering.
That the Lord said it will not be acceptable to God.
Sayang lang effort.
If you do give and you remember that you have something against your brother.
Leave your offering.
Reconcile with your brother.
And go back and offer.
Why?
Because God wants us to offer.
To offer.
To do.
To give.
To present to God.
With a clean heart.
With a pure heart.
Then it will become now a pure offering to God.
So brothers, that's what I want to share this morning.
Whatever we do.
Ano itong ginaubra?
Make it sure.
Is it from the pure heart?
From right motives?
White hidden agenda.
Because God sees that.
It will not be rewarded.
Because it's not acceptable to God.
Sayang lang.
That effort.
Sayang lang ang binigay mo.
Wala namang balik.
Because God will not accept that.
Because you've given it.
You've given it not with a right heart.
Not with a right motives.
And you think, you think okay?
Hindi okay.
Maybe to you.
But to God who sees that, it's not right.
Like Jesus, he offered himself.
He's the perfect sacrifice.
He's the perfect sacrifice.
But we.
We are not.
Yes, you are offering but we are not.
We are sacrifice.

We are not perfect.
That's why the Lord wants to cleanse us.
To cleanse us with his word.
To cleanse us with other things.
Our motives will be cleansed.
Our heart will be cleansed.
When we do something for other people, we do it with a clean hand.
And with purity.
Surely.
Wala nga sa mga straying thoughts.
Wala nga headed agenda.
Or when you offer something to God, you offer it with a not right kind of heart.
May mga unforgiveness.
May mga tawag ng mga doubt in our heart.
That is a defective kind of offering to God.
So once again, brothers and sisters, the Lord is reminding us today.
As the Lord is a perfect sacrifice.
Living sacrifice.
He offered himself.
To be used by God.
And so with us also today, we are the living sacrifice.
Ourselves.
Have been presented to the temple by our parents.
To be offered.
Dedicated.
Presented to God.
Now, let's make ourselves a pure offering.
A pure offering.
Not only ourselves, but what we do.
What we give.
What we are doing.
Let it be.
It comes from a pure heart.
With no straying thoughts.
No blemish.
No defect.
Such as unforgiveness.
Hatred.
It cannot be acceptable to God.
Even if it does not rise.
It will not reach God.
Because you have offered it with unclean hands.
An unclean heart.
So brothers and sisters, once again today, it will remind all of us.
That we are a living sacrifice to God.
Pure.
Devoted.
Well-pleasing unto the Lord.
It is our reasonable service.
Reasonable.
And our spiritual worship.
What we do to God is our offering.
It's our worship before God.
But let it be.
Let you do it with a clean heart.
With the right motives.
With no straying thoughts.
With no hidden agenda.
Because that's what the Lord is looking for.
I said in giving.
Without grudgingly.
Give with a free heart.
Give with a joyful heart.
That's one thing also.

If you know it, you know it.
That it is from a pure heart.
There's joy.
There's happiness in doing it.
Why?
Because you know it's from the heart.
It's just accompanied by that genuine happiness and joy when you do something
from the heart.
It's not forced.
It's just possible.
No.
Because it is not acceptable to God.
If we don't have the motives.
It will not reach heaven.
It will not reach heaven.
It's a waste.
So what the Lord is looking to us, like Jesus.
That he offers himself as a living, pure sacrifice.
So maybe in our offering, what we're doing in life, every day, in the church, in
the house, in the office.
Maybe that comes from a pure heart.
From a pure heart.
And clean motives.
Because that's what the Lord is looking for.
That's what the Lord says.
It is a living sacrifice.
Devoted, pure, reasonable service.
And what you call your spiritual worship.
And when you do that also, one thing for more.
It becomes a sweet-smelling aroma to God.
Your offering.
Small or big.
Whatever it is.
That comes from the heart.
It becomes a sweet-smelling aroma to God.
And acceptable to God.
Please stand.