

## **Consecration and the Roles of Faithful Witnesses**

Candlemass / Presentation of the Lord, 2 February 2025

Luke 2:22-40

**“Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.”**

– **Exodus 13:2**

Candlemas is a celebration of consecration, light, and hope. In Exodus 13:2, God commands the consecration of the firstborn, a declaration of gratitude for His deliverance and a recognition of His sovereignty. Mary and Joseph, faithful to this command, present Jesus in the temple, where they encounter two extraordinary figures: Simeon and Mary themselves in her role as the mother of Jesus. Each offers us profound insights into faith, hope, and discipleship, particularly relevant to the challenges we face today.

Simeon is described as a righteous and devout man who spent his life waiting for the “consolation of Israel.” Guided by the Holy Spirit, he enters the temple and recognizes Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promise. His proclamation, known as the **Nunc Dimittis**, is a hymn of profound faith and hope. In it, Simeon declares that God’s salvation is not limited to Israel but is a light for all nations, especially for those in darkness. His long years of waiting remind us that faith involves trust in God’s timing. Even when progress seems slow, God’s promises are being fulfilled. This faith is not passive but active, a persistent hope that transforms how we live. Simeon’s testimony challenges us to proclaim Christ’s salvation in a world fractured by division and despair. His prophetic voice reminds us that we are called to be bearers of this universal light, especially for those who feel excluded or forgotten.

Simeon’s words to Mary, however, carry a weight of sorrow alongside the joy. “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” These words foreshadow both the opposition Jesus will face and the suffering Mary will endure. Mary’s role is not just that of a mother but of a disciple who fully participates in her son’s mission, even when it brings deep personal pain. Her heart, pierced by sorrow, teaches us that discipleship often comes with a cost. Yet Mary remains steadfast, trusting in God’s plan even when it is difficult to understand. Her example calls us to embrace the challenges of faith, knowing that God’s grace sustains us through trials. For many today—parents making sacrifices for their children, activists standing against injustice, or individuals enduring personal suffering—Mary’s journey is a powerful reminder of courage and trust.

The encounter in the temple invites us to reflect on the roles each person plays in God's plan. Simeon's proclamation reveals the fulfillment of God's promises and the universal scope of salvation. Mary embodies the cost of discipleship, showing us that faith requires not only trust but also courage and resilience. Together, their stories remind us that faith is both proclamation and participation. It involves sharing the light of Christ and embracing the sacrifices that come with following Him. In today's world, these lessons are crucial. As we face challenges like inequality, conflict, and environmental crises, we are called to live out our faith actively, becoming witnesses to Christ's light in the darkness.

Faithful waiting, as demonstrated by Simeon, is an essential aspect of discipleship. It is not mere patience but a trust that God is at work even when we cannot see the full picture. Simeon's joy at holding the Christ Child reveals the reward of such faith: the assurance that God's promises are true and that His light will overcome the darkness. This challenges us to remain hopeful and faithful, even when change feels distant or obstacles seem insurmountable.

Proclaiming Christ as the light of the world is not just an individual task but a collective mission. Like Simeon, we are called to declare this light in our words and actions. This involves reaching out to those on the margins of society—the poor, the displaced, the oppressed—and bringing them hope and inclusion. It also involves challenging systems of injustice and working for a world that reflects God's justice and peace. Simeon's words remind us that this light is not just for us but for all nations, a beacon of hope for a fractured world.

Mary's role highlights the sacrifices inherent in discipleship. Her willingness to bear the cost of following Christ teaches us that faith is not always easy but is always worth it. Her journey calls us to trust in God even when His plans bring us through pain or uncertainty. Mary's example is a source of strength for those who carry heavy burdens today, showing that God's grace is sufficient to sustain us.

Finally, consecration is not merely a ritual but a way of life. Just as Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the temple, dedicating Him to God, we are called to consecrate our lives to His service. This consecration involves offering our time, talents, and resources for the good of others and the glory of God. It is a daily commitment to live as faithful witnesses, reflecting Christ's light in all we do.

Candlemas reminds us that our faith is not static but dynamic, involving proclamation, participation, and sacrifice. As we light candles today, let us dedicate ourselves anew to bearing Christ's light in the world. Like Simeon, may we proclaim His salvation boldly. Like Mary, may we embrace the cost of discipleship with trust and courage. And together, may we live as faithful witnesses, consecrating our lives to God's mission of love and justice. Amen.