

I am writing this reflection on the feast of the Presentation. It is often known as “Candlemas” because it is traditionally celebrated with a procession with everyone carrying a candle to honour the One who is the Light of the Nations.

Although Jesus Christ is the God's Word made flesh, he doesn't appear in the temple in his divine glory but as a helpless baby. He whom angels worship is presented to God like any other baby, in obedience to the law of Moses. St Luke repeats several times, that everything that was done was in accordance with the law. This is because Jesus was born as the fulfilment of all God's promises and patience

All through the ages from Adam until Jesus, God had been carefully guarding and guiding his people. However often they betrayed him and disobeyed his law, he kept faith with them. This is what we mean by God's patience.

All through the ages, God's patience had found an echo in a few human hearts. God's patience with us is reflected in the patience of his chosen servants. Four such people are the central figures in the Presentation of Jesus in the temple. Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna.

These four stood in a long line of faithful men and women who had trusted that in his own good time God would reveal his salvation. Patience means practical endurance through times of difficulty and darkness, when it seems as if God is absent or doing nothing. Patience rests however on something much deeper - the theological gift of hope. This hope grows out of our faith in God's faithfulness. We can hope because God is faithful. We can be patient because God is patient and wants us all to be saved. Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna teach us what God can do when faithful people wait in trustful hope for his promises to be fulfilled.

We need the same hope in our own lives and in our own times. Jesus revealed God perfectly and completely. He has shed his light on us in baptism and the eucharist, in the scriptures, in the lives of the saints and in the daily experiences we have of love and sacrifice.

And so, we have hope even when sadness and difficulties occur. And because we have hope, we can endure patiently, and also have the courage to use our own efforts to try to make things better. Hope lets us believe that even the smallest acts of kindness make the world a better place.

Today, many churches are full of the candles God's faithful have lit as a sign of their hope. The real lights are of course not the candles themselves which will burn away. The real lights are ourselves when we live in hope. By God's grace, may these lights burn brighter and brighter until they no longer appear as single lights but simply shine as one with the light of Jesus Christ himself.

May God's patience transform our lives and illuminate us with the light of Christ. May Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna pray for us that we may live in hope and follow their examples of patience and courage until Christ comes in glory.

John Hind 2nd February 2017