

FEBRUARY 2, 2025 FATHER PETER TURRONE

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation...a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

In the beginning of today's Mass, there are different options that we can choose from, and one of the options is where we have a candlelight procession. So, there are many men and women, religious, consecrated, who usually will meet outside of the church or in the back of the church, and then they'll slowly process in towards the altar. So, we also call it candle Mass, where we bless the candles. I remember years ago, living back in Italy, in the North, and then in Rome, there was this beautiful moment where we had this celebration of the Mass, and then we also had a Vesper celebration during the pontificate of Benedict XVI, and this was in 2010, so during the Vesper's service.

And so, there were many of us that were there, and Benedict XVI spoke so beautifully about what today means for us as Christians and, in particular, for consecrated men and women. So, he was going on and explaining how, of course, here again, we see the fulfilment of the scriptures, that Jesus is the light of the world. He's the light to the Gentiles. Salvation comes from the Jews. He is this light that comes for all people. He gathers everyone to himself. And this is also, in the old calendar, the last day of Christmas tide. In fact, at the same celebration, that would have been the last day that the outdoor Nativity would have remained at St. Peter's Basilica.

So, it's an opportunity again to reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation. So, when we go through the scriptures, we see again a successive series of events taking place that are very important for us and in our own

journey, as well, as Christians, whether we're consecrated, religious, or as through our baptismal promises, as well, that we make over and over again - hopefully, on a daily basis. So, we hear that, at the purification, according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph arrive, so they're doing everything according to the law. So, these are holy Jewish people who understand and receive the law. Even though Mary is the mother of God - the Theotokos - she is not above the law, so in their humility, they follow it to bring the Lord to the temple.

Now, if you just put yourself there and you think about the thousands of people that are going into the temple every day, the men, the women, the children that are being carried in, so many people. There's a court of the Gentiles, all these people that are there. There's so much confusion, people are praying, and they're waiting, and they're praying, and for the majority of the people, they have no idea that God has just arrived and he's being carried in the arms of a virgin. So, think about that mystery.

So, we heard it again from the Prophet Malachi. He says that he's suddenly going to come to the temple. So, perhaps maybe people were expecting this huge theophany, but he comes in humility, and God often does that. So, he arrives in the arms of the Virgin and following everything, and then we hear that Simeon, this great man who had been waiting forever for the arrival, for the consolation of Israel, comes and he knows this because of the impulse of the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit rests upon him.

And so, every night, especially for those who are consecrated and for clergy, we pray the office, and then, there's Compline, which is a night prayer. So, we always wrap up or conclude our day with these very words, the Nunc dimittis. So, these are the words where we reflect upon the reality of the gift that God has given us and we close our day again

with that hope and having had that experience of consolation ourselves, knowing who Jesus is, but also for having spent our day making him known to other people.

There are many people who are waiting for the consolation. They're waiting to find meaning and hope in a world that is filled with division - whether it's political, there's so many different problems, so many different concerns that we carry in our hearts. But we have Christ himself who unifies and brings consolation. He's the one that understands our suffering. He's the one that loves us so deeply. He's the one that has brought us the true light in the midst of the darkness. All around us, we have opinions, but it's Christ who reveals the heart of the Father. Therefore, he reveals to us what is truth itself.

So, going back to what Benedict XVI said, as he was reflecting on this feast, and speaking in particular, he was speaking to the religious, he said the following, he said, "Look, the purpose of this day is threefold. First of all, to praise and thank God for the gift of consecrated life. Second, to promote knowledge and appreciation of it among the whole people of God." So, we pray for vocations on a daily basis. "And then, lastly", he says, "to invite all those who have dedicated their life totally to the cause of the Gospel, to celebrate the marvels that the Lord has worked for them and through them."

So, what a great gift. And how do we do this? Well, the religious, in a particular way, we call it "further deepening of their baptismal promises", they take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. So, you can say, "Well, the majority of us watching at home are not vowed religious," but all of us are consecrated. So, all of us share, all of us are called again to detachment from the things of the world, to grow in our obedience to the Word of God and to continually pray and ask God for

purity of heart. So, what we seek in our lives is God's will above all things and to bring Christ to other people.

So, we share, right, through our baptism, in the prophetic office of Christ. So, we heard Simeon, and then we didn't hear but there's also the Prophet Anna, as well. Male or female every single one of us, every baptized person, is called to bring Jesus Christ. So many people are suffering, so many people need consolation. They need to know that God loves them and he wants to heal them. And through our prayers for religious and by following the example of these great saints, may we do the same, as well.