

FEBRUARY 2, 2026 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

There is so much to say, and yet so little time to say it.

It's always a wonderful account, this account of the presentation, and we can read it as an account, and to have our distance of it. Look at it as a story.

But when we go into it, when we start to pray with it, the pain of Mary, also the surprise of Mary, "a two-edged sword will pierce your heart."
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And if you're a parent, and I presume many of us who are watching are parents, you will know what that two-edged sword means. You have the child as a baby in your arms, and you have the dreams for that child, what will become of that child, and we always have positive dreams.

But, then life hits reality, and the child grows up, and things happen, and children as they grow up step on parents' hearts, or other things happen. That the child goes off the rails and so on.

And for Mary too, this was a very holy moment. Bringing the child to God, offering this child up to God, to be used for the good of all. To be used for the good of all.

If Mary would've known what happened 33 years later, she might have not come to the temple, she might have been hiding. Because 33 years later, of course, she was sitting at the bottom of the cross, with her Son crucified, in agony on the cross.

And this is also in our lives, as parents walk with their children, this up and down of wonder. Wonder what will become of this child. And also this incredible pain, when the child goes off the track.

I have a feeling that there would be very few parents who would say, "My children grew up, and there never was a problem. Everything was hunky dory," and so on. If someone tells me that, I say, "Yeah right. I don't believe you." I might not say that, but it just is a fact of life.

And so, this is good stuff to pray with.

And the first reading of Hebrews, which is a little lengthy too, again, we go into the mystery of Christ. The mystery that Christ, that God, had to incarnate, and that God had to come like you and me, and to suffer with us. A God who knows each one of our sufferings. And a God who also knows how to bring us back home, through this suffering.

And suffering, of course we can look at it as, "Why does this have to happen to me?" And I listen to quite a bit of it. But our suffering, if we can see that it's also a road to purification. To purifying, to get over ourselves. And parents will know that. Any parent who had children will know that, that it's becoming giving of self. And you don't always start to look— be completely absorbed in self. "Oh my, why does this happen to me?" and so on. We just carry on.

Today, also historically, the Presentation of the Lord, historically, from the Fourth Century on, it was also called Candlemas, and if we had time, we would've started this morning today, the Mass with a blessing of candles, blessings of candles, and a procession. Blessings of candles, which people would use throughout the year, in their homes.

Not too many people use candles any more in their homes. But it was bringing that light of Christ in each one of our homes. And today's candles also would be blessed, for tomorrow's Memorial of Saint Blaise. The blessing of the throat, and again, asking God's intercession to help us along the way.

Today, also, that's why we really don't have much time to say all I need to say, but today also is we pray for World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. So for all who took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. All who gave themselves to God.

And it's so important to pray for that. To pray for vocations. To pray that many more people will hear that voice of God, and come to the Lord, and give their lives to God.

And, of course, I'm also a consecrated religious, and it is good. It is good to be a religious, to answer that call of God. And it does not mean that it's all beautiful and pretty. We have our own suffering too, but wherever we go there will be suffering.

But it's always a question, "Can I allow God to work through my suffering, and let God purify me, so that I'm pure, when the time comes, that I can go back home to God, purely to heaven."

Amen.