

Presenting ourselves on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Jocelyn A. Sideco | Jan. 30, 2014 Young Voices

I feel weird writing for the Young Voices column. How do I even qualify as a "young voice," anyway? And as much as I believe in them, I get frustrated that so many people are pleasantly surprised when "young adult" retreats fill up and people between the ages of 21 and 40 have a good experience of faith and community.

Who are young adults? What do I have to do to qualify as an adult? Do young adults talk differently? Have different priorities? Experience a different faith? And what do they have to say about our church?

Sunday is the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. We remember the events surrounding Jesus' birth and dedication to God. According to Jewish law, every family's first-born son is dedicated to God. The family would then make the journey to Jerusalem approximately 40 days after his birth to make an offering to God as a way to "get back" their child.

This day has also been called the feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary. She was seen as ritually clean again 40 days after giving birth.

These rituals may be foreign for us "progressive, liberal, first world and justice-minded types." After all, the very thought of buying your child seems preposterous and absurd! Or the ridiculous practices of seeming inequality and separation for the women and their ability to participate fully in the community. Our modern-day sensibilities are challenged by the literal understanding of these feast days and rituals.

I suppose I could have written about anything else: President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address; the success of yet another young adult retreat; the upcoming Super Bowl between the best defense and the best offense; the controversy surrounding the Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, that has people worried for their safety; the recent news of snow and subsequent traffic in Atlanta; or a recent court ruling that "pulled the plug" on a brain-dead, pregnant woman in Texas.

All of these current events would at least keep your interest.

But the Presentation of the Lord is not just about something and somebody else in the past. In fact, the feast of the Presentation is a feast about all of us and our communities' abilities to be dedicated to God and one another.

To be dedicated or consecrated to someone requires a devotion, a single-mindedness and a loyalty. We can be dedicated to people, things and activities. When we are dedicated to God, this devotion and loyalty is to our very call and invitation to be people -- loving and merciful, as it were. [Paul writes to the Romans](#) [1]:

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you

may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned.

For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.

Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

So, I suppose, we can even ask, "How are we to live this vocation amid a world of judgment, imperfection, tragedy?"

Jesus' parents presented him in the temple, and an old man by the name of Simeon was waiting and praying for the coming of the Messiah. When he saw Jesus, he took him in his arms and blessed God, saying:

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel" ([Luke 2:29-32](#) [2]).

I cannot help but trust that my own *PRESENTATION* to God as a young adult committed to the church and God's people offers some hope and light for previous generations who long for insight and revelation and an experience of a good, healing future. As much as I hate to admit my reluctance to being called a "young" adult, I realize that my witness can be just as truthful and inspiring to others as Jesus' presentation at age 40 days was for Simeon.

I pray for the strength and the courage to present myself as much as I pray for us all to present ourselves to God and our communities.

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