

Fr. Romeo Evangelista's Homily
February 2, 2020
The Presentation of the Lord (A)

How many of you here still have some Christmas décor in your homes that are not yet removed? I still have my Christmas tree. Here's good news to those who have not yet removed their Christmas décor. Today's feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the day when the Child Jesus was presented at the Temple in Jerusalem forty days after the Epiphany, is said as the actual end of the Christmas season. Hence, it is only on this day when the Vatican traditionally removes its great Christmas tree at St. Peter's Square. Either today or the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the end of the Christmas season it doesn't really matter because the Christmas spirit lives on, the light of Christ continues to shine on people.

Today's feast has many names because it has many facets. When the Eastern Church borrowed the feast from Jerusalem, it became known as the "Encounter" or Ypapante" to emphasize the meeting of the Savior with Simeon and Anna. In Rome, Pope Sergius I adapted the feast with lighted candles to show Jesus as the light for revelation to Simeon and everyone. Soon it reached France, where it became known as Chandeleur or Candlemass in English – speaking nations, and Candelaria in Spain and her colonies that included Mexico and the Philippines.

That is the beauty of our faith. Certain feasts evolved, depending on the emphasis of the many periods in history yet remaining true to its essence, that is, Jesus Christ our Savior and Son of God. Anyone who truly encounters Jesus is enlightened to meet Him among other people. That Paschal candle is a symbol of Jesus, the light of the nations, who enables us to see the face of every human being as a brother and a sister in Him. If we have a good relationship and connection with our Lord we know that He will always be with us guiding our life and lead all of us to become His face that guides other people.

The importance of our relationship and connection with God are clearly portrayed in the encounter of Simeon and Anna with the child Jesus. Imagine how Simeon and Anna were able to recognize Christ among the many infants being offered that day at the Temple. How did they

know this was the one? Well, St. Luke tells us they were guided by the Holy Spirit and that would have been necessary. But he tells us also they were holy people. They were close to God and spent a lot of time with God in the Temple. Both have always been open with God, sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to recognize God in everyone. In short it is their relationship and connection with God that enables them to recognize God's message and presence in their midst.

I've encountered a lot of people asking me, how should I know that this is the right thing to do Father? Ask God, in other words, pray about it. It is always good to have a connection with God. And sometimes God uses people even strangers to convey his message to us, and for us to truly encounter His real presence in our lives.