



*For this week's letter to the community, I wanted to share the homily I delivered at our all-school Mass today.*

Today we celebrate the *Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*. It was customary in the Jewish faith, forty days after the birth of a male child, for the parents to bring the child to the temple. They would dedicate him to God and offer sacrifice on his behalf.

On the screen behind me, you see an icon depicting *The Presentation*. All of the people we heard about in the Gospel are there. The temple is shown with its pristine marble steps and grand columns. Joseph carries a small cage with two doves that would be sacrificed. Mary hands the child Jesus to Simeon, while Anna looks on.

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Christ. Anna was a prophetess, able to foretell the future. The gospel tells us that both Simeon and Anna were immediately able to recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Christ child.

Here at school the last two days, we have been able to recognize Jesus in our midst. On Tuesday, Fr. Jim took us on a guided meditation. He helped us clear our minds and focus on the presence of Jesus in our lives. Yesterday, we came together for Adoration. The Eucharist sat on the altar and over 700 of us sat in absolute silence. Without distractions, it was easy to recognize His presence in our midst.

So it must have been for Simeon and Anna – no distractions in this beautiful temple. Add in the fact that the infant Jesus apparently had a halo, and it was probably pretty easy to pick Him out.

However, listen to *this* description of what the experience in the temple would have been like: *There was a roaring trade in sacrificial animals in the great courtyard of the Temple. The demand for pure, sacrificial animals was huge, so at the presentation of Jesus at the Temple, one would have heard a symphony of animals braying, birds screeching, the stench of living and dying animals, the carnage from the sacrifices, gutters of blood, and the high sound of animal traders and money changers hawking their wares.* (Source noted below)

This is a beautiful icon we see on the screen. However, the reality is that the temple experience would have been nothing short of chaos. Simeon and Anna didn't recognize Jesus in the peaceful serenity of a beautiful setting. They recognized Him during, and in spite of, the chaos of daily life in the temple.

We can recognize Jesus when we all come together prayerfully and completely focus on Him. However, do we recognize Him in the chaos of our daily lives?

Do we recognize Him in the crowded front office at the beginning of the school day? Do we recognize Him in the chaos of lunchtime in the cafeteria, or in the craziness of the freshmen hallway during passing periods?

If we follow the lead of Simeon and Anna, we can see Christ in the chaos. They recognized Christ because they were seeking Him. Their hearts were open and their desire to find Him was genuine.

If we do that, we'll find Jesus in the chaos, too.

In that crowded front office, Mrs. Gaffney's welcoming smile and basket full of candy reflect the loving presence of Jesus.

You can't find Jesus at lunch? Mrs. Kinghorn is at the cash register and Mr. Page is pushing around a trashcan, picking up after you. They are showing you the face of Christ if you are open to it.

Mrs. Shaw stands in the craziness of that freshmen hallway, greeting every student, offering a smile and a positive comment. If you are not genuine in your search for Jesus, you could walk right by her. If your heart is open, you'll notice Mrs. Shaw looks a lot like Jesus.

Christ can be found in the peaceful silence of Adoration. He can also be found in the chaos.

I will leave you with two pieces of advice:

First, open your heart and allow Jesus to reveal Himself to you – in the quiet times *and* in the chaos.

Second, be aware that you have the power to reveal Christ, to *be* Christ, to others. In the midst of the chaos, allow others to see Jesus *in you*.

Source: <http://ssje.org/ssje/2013/02/02/the-presentation-of-our-lord-jesus-christ-in-the-temple-br-curtis-almquist/>