



## PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Year A

Malachi 3:1-4  
Psalm 24:7, 8, 9, 10  
Hebrews 2:14-18  
Luke 2:22-40

### Gathering

*(An unlit candle, a bible, open to this week's gospel rest on a table covered with green cloth. Also resting on the table is a shoebox, with removable lid, gift-wrapped in white tissue with question marks drawn on the tissue. In the box are slips of paper that read: **calmness, thankfulness, strength, patience, vigilance, faithfulness, hope, and vigor.** If there are more than eight members, duplicate slips are made up.)*

In the spirit of Simeon and Anna, we reflect this week on the process, the experience of holy waiting. Last week we reflected on the image of light with which that gospel introduced the ministry of Jesus. Sharing in his mission, how did you bring light to the world around you this past week?

### Prayer

*(The candle is lit. Members are invited to rest for a time in the presence of God. A selection of instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, several members lead the community in prayer as follows.)*

- I: For thus said the Lord GOD,  
the Holy One of Israel:  
By waiting and by calm you shall be saved,  
in quiet and in trust shall be your strength.  
But this you did not will.
- All: Lord, teach us how to be *calm* as we wait for you.
- II: Truly, the LORD is waiting to be gracious to you,  
truly, he shall rise to show you mercy;  
For the LORD is a God of justice:  
happy are all who wait for him!
- All: Lord, teach us how to be *thankful* as we wait for you.
- III: Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is God from of old,  
creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary,  
and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny.
- All: Lord, teach us how to be *strong* as we wait for you.
- IV: He gives power to the faint,  
abundant strength to the weak.  
They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength,  
they will soar on eagles' wings;  
They will run and not grow weary,  
walk and not grow faint.
- All: Lord, teach us how to be *patient* as we wait for you.
- V: While you worked awesome deeds we could not hope for,  
such as had not been heard of from of old.  
No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen,  
any God but you  
working such deeds for those who wait for him.
- All: Lord, teach us how to be *vigilant* as we wait for you.

VI:            Would that you might meet us doing right,  
                  that we might be mindful of you in our ways!  
Indeed, you are angry; we have sinned,  
                  we have acted wickedly.

All:            Lord, teach us how to be *faithful* as we wait for you.

Isaiah 30:15, 18; 40:28, 29, 31; 64:2-4

## HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “**What draws you to this gospel?**” “**Where do you resist this gospel?**” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

### Reflection

Waiting is not an easy process, and it is up to us, to some extent, how we deal with it. It is often filled with expectation, anxiety, wonder and challenge. When the Holy Spirit is involved, the unexpected can happen.

Mary and Joseph obeyed Jewish law as they waited the prescribed forty days after Jesus' birth before going to the temple to present him to the Lord. Attended by the Holy Spirit, Simeon had spent his time of faithful waiting to see “the Christ of the Lord” by being a devout and righteous man. Anna spent her time of waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem by constantly praying in the temple and fasting. As Mary and Joseph listened to the unexpected words of Simeon and Anna, they were amazed at this information that would season their time as parents of a son who would grow up with “the favor of God upon him.”

Jesus, in his journey of deliverance of the Jews and the Gentiles, could expect opposition and contradiction as he awaited his crucifixion and the ultimate overcoming of the power of death through his resurrection. We see in the gospels that Jesus wisely stayed close to the Father in prayer.

We read in Hebrews that Jesus was fully human and “able to help those who are being tested;” so Jesus understands what the test of waiting can do to us and how hard it can be. He is there for us with empathy and mercy. As we live forward and look forward to our final reunion with God in heaven, we can take our earthbound waiting to a positive new level with prayer, faithfulness to God’s law, repentance, and openness to the Holy Spirit. We trust that God keeps his promises. Faithful in waiting, we too, will grow in wisdom, strength and holiness!

### Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ When has waiting been difficult for you?
- ◆ When has patient waiting helped you as you struggled with some problem?
- ◆ Whose patience has inspired you?
- ◆ When has waiting brought you closer to God?
- ◆ What religious rites/practices have been inspirational for you?

### HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

### Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Explore the practice of the *Examen of Consciousness* originated by St. Ignatius Loyola. Go to [norprov.org/spirituality/ignatianprayer.htm](http://norprov.org/spirituality/ignatianprayer.htm).
- ◆ Pray a decade of the rosary every day this week for members of

the armed forces and for parents, spouses and children who are waiting for

- ◆ the return of a loved one who is deployed overseas.
- ◆ Seek out a spiritual director. Consult your diocesan website for a retreat house where you might find a spiritual director.

## Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.*

*Following this sharing, the leader unwraps and passes the shoebox. Members take a slip of paper from the box. The leader invites all to pray silently for that particular gift in dealing with some challenge in their life for which they are awaiting resolution. After a time of silence, the prayer concludes as follows.)*

Leader: Lord, our Light in the darkness of waiting, we give you thanks for all the times you have been our consolation. Send forth your Holy Spirit to renew and purify us, that we may serve you well in this world and spread the good news of your love. We wait in hope for your coming in glory.

All: Amen.

*(Members join in singing, “Eye Has Not Seen” which can be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, members exchange a sign of peace.)*