



February 2
Festival: Presentation of Our Lord

The event is described in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:22–40). According to the gospel, Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem forty days (inclusive) after his birth to complete Mary's ritual purification after childbirth, and to perform the redemption of the firstborn, in obedience to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 12, Exodus 13:12-15, etc.). Luke explicitly says that Joseph and Mary take the option provided for poor people (those who could not afford a lamb) (Leviticus 12:8), sacrificing "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Leviticus 12:1-4 indicates that this event should take place forty days after birth for a male child, hence the Presentation is celebrated forty days after Christmas. This ceremony is still practiced by Orthodox and Conservative Jews and is called a Pidyon HaBen.

Upon bringing Jesus into the temple, they encountered Simeon the Righteous. The Gospel records that Simeon had been promised that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26). Simeon prayed the prayer that would become known as the *Nunc Dimittis*, or Cantic of Simeon, which prophesied the redemption of the world by Jesus:

Now you are releasing your servant, Master, according to your word, in peace; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation to the nations, and the glory of your people Israel (Luke 2:29-32).

Simeon then prophesied to Mary: "Behold, this child is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which is spoken against. Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

The elderly prophetess Anna was also in the Temple, and offered prayers and praise to God for Jesus, and spoke to everyone there about Jesus and his role in the redemption of Israel (Luke 2:36-38).

Painting: *Presentation of Christ at the Temple* by Hans Holbein the Elder, 1500–01(Kunsthalle, Hamburg)