Liturgical Notes for The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Sunday, February 2

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord falls on a Sunday of Ordinary Time this year, and according to the Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar, The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord supersedes the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, and it is celebrated beginning with the Vigil Mass on Saturday afternoon and through all the Sunday Masses. In response to a number of inquiries, the Office of Divine Worship offers these helpful suggestions:

Background

This feast celebrates the fortieth day after Christmas. The feast was first observed in the Eastern Church as "The Encounter." In the sixth century, it began to be observed in the West: in Rome with a more penitential character and in Gaul (France) with solemn blessings and processions of candles, popularly known as "Candlemas." In the middle ages, the feast became associated by farmers with predictions about the weather (if the sun shone on Candlemas and cast a shadow, then winter would continue; if it was cloudy and there was no shadow cast by the sun, then spring would come soon).

Liturgical Options

The entrance rite today is similar to the entrance rite for Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion, except that on this feast members of the community carry candles instead of palms.

The Roman Missal provides for a full procession, with the congregation and the ministers first gathering in a separate place before processing into the church. There is also the option given of a “Solemn Entrance”. If the solemn entrance is used instead, the assembly gathers in the church as usual. The celebrant greets the congregation and blesses the candles from the entrance of the church and then processes with the ministers to the altar, while all hold their lighted candles.

A song is sung at the very beginning of the liturgy, while the candles of the people are lit and while the ministers take their places either in a place apart from the church or at the church entrance. The antiphon provided in the Missal expresses our faith that God brings "light to the eyes of those who serve him well."

The same or another song may be used to accompany the procession of the congregation and/or the ministers into the church. The Roman Missal contains an entrance antiphon that speaks of "a light for revelation to the Gentiles," along with verses drawn from the Canticle of Simeon, which we hear proclaimed in today’s Gospel. In addition to the metrical versions (hymn) of the Canticle, below you will find the ICEL Music and Accompaniment, which is based on the ancient chant for the feast.
First Form: The Procession

1. At an appropriate hour, a gathering takes place at a smaller church or other suitable place other than inside the church to which the procession will go. The faithful hold in their hands unlighted candles.

2. The Priest, wearing white vestments as for Mass, approaches with the ministers. Instead of the chasuble, the Priest may wear a cope, which he leaves aside after the procession is over.

3. While the candles are being lit, the following antiphon or another appropriate chant is sung.

   Behold, our Lord will come with power,  
   to enlighten the eyes of his servants, alleluia.

4. When the chant is concluded, the Priest, facing the people, says: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Then the Priest greets the people in the usual way, and next he gives the introductory address, encouraging the faithful to celebrate the rite of this feast day actively and consciously. He may use these or similar words:

Dear brethren (brothers and sisters),
fourty days have passed since we celebrated the joyful feast of the Nativity of the Lord.  
Today is the blessed day  
when Jesus was presented in the Temple by Mary and Joseph.  
Outwardly he was fulfilling the Law,  
but in reality he was coming to meet his believing people.  
Prompted by the Holy Spirit,  
Simeon and Anna came to the Temple.  
Enlightened by the same Spirit,  
they recognized the Lord  
and confessed him with exultation.  
So let us also, gathered together by the Holy Spirit,  
proceed to the house of God to encounter Christ.  
There we shall find him  
and recognize him in the breaking of the bread,  
until he comes again, revealed in glory.

5. After the address the Priest blesses the candles, saying, with hands extended:

Let us Pray.  
O God, source and origin of all light,  
who on this day showed to the just man Simeon  
the Light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
we humbly ask that,  
in answer to your people’s prayers,  
you may be pleased to sanctify with your blessing + these candles,  
which we are eager to carry in praise of your name,  
so that, treading the path of virtue,  
we may reach that light which never fails.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.
Or:

O God, true light, who create light eternal,
spreading it far and wide,
pour, we pray, into the hearts of the faithful
the brilliance of perpetual light,
so that all who are brightened in your holy temple
by the splendor of these candles
may happily reach the light of your glory.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

He sprinkles the candles with holy water without saying anything, and puts incense into the thurible for the procession.

6. Then the priest receives from the Deacon or a minister the lighted candle prepared for him and the procession begins, with the Deacon announcing (or, if there is no Deacon, the Priest himself):

   **Let us go in Peace to meet the Lord.**

   Or:  **Let us go forth in peace.**

   In this case, all respond:

   **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

7. All carry lighted candles. As the procession moves forward, one or other of the antiphons that follow is sung, namely the antiphon A light for revelation with the canticle (Lk 2: 29-32), or the antiphon Sion, adorn your bridal chamber or another appropriate chant.

8. As the procession enters the church, the Entrance Antiphon of the Mass is sung. When the Priest has arrived at the altar, he venerates it and, if appropriate, incenses it. Then he goes to the chair, where he takes off the cope, if he used it in the procession, and puts on a chasuble. After the singing of the hymn Gloria in excelsis (Glory to God in the highest), he says the Collect as usual. The Mass continues in the usual manner.

**Second Form: The Solemn Entrance**

9. Whenever a procession cannot take place, the faithful gather in church, holding candles in their hands. The Priest, wearing white sacred vestments as for Mass, together with the ministers and a representative group of the faithful, goes to a suitable place, either in front of the church door or inside the church itself, where at least a large part of the faithful can conveniently participate in the rite.

10. When the Priest reaches the place appointed for the blessing of the candles, candles are lit while the antiphon Behold, our Lord (no. 3) or another appropriate chant is sung.

11. Then, after the greeting and address, the Priest blesses the candles, as above nos. 4-5; and then the procession to the altar takes place, with the singing (nos. 6-7) for Mass, what is indicated in no. 8 above is observed.
While the candles are being lit, the following antiphon or another appropriate chant is sung.

\[
\text{Ec-ce Dó-mi-nus nos-ter cum vir-tú-te vé-ni-et, ut il-lú-mi-net ó-cu-los ser-vó-rum su-ó-rum, al-le-lú-ia.}
\]

Or:

\[
\text{Be-hold, our Lord will come with power, to en-light-en the eyes of his ser-vants, al-le-lú-ia.}
\]

Then the Priest receives from the Deacon or a minister the lighted candle prepared for him and the procession begins, with the Deacon announcing (or, if there is no Deacon, the Priest himself):

\[
\text{Let us go in peace to meet the Lord.}
\]

Or:

\[
\text{Let us go forth in peace.}
\]

In this case, all respond:

\[
\text{In the name of Christ. A-men.}
\]
Antiphon

All carry lighted candles. As the procession moves forward, one or other of the antiphons that follow is sung, namely the antiphon A light for revelation with the canticle (Lk 2:29-32), or the antiphon Sion, adorn your bridal chamber or another appropriate chant.

**Lu-men ad reve-la-ti-ó-nem gén-ti-um, et gló-ri-am ple-bis tu-æ Is-ra-el.**

**Or:**

**A light for reve-la-tion to the Gen-tiles and the glo-ry of your peo-ple Is-ra-el.**

**Lord, now you let your servant go in peace, in accord-ance with your word:**

**For my eyes have seen your sal-va-tion, which you have prepared in the sight of all the peo-bles.**
V. The Lord be with you.  R. And with your spirit.

V. Lift up your hearts.  R. We lift them up to the Lord.

V. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  R. It is right and just.

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For your co-eternal Son was presented on this day in the Temple and revealed by the Spirit as the glory of Israel and Light of the nations. And so, we, too, go forth, rejoicing to encounter your Salvation, and with the Angels and Saints praise you, as without end we acclaim:
THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

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Be-hold, our Lord will come with power, to en-light-en the eyes
of his ser-vants, al-le-lu-ia.

Then the Priest receives from the Deacon or a minister the lighted candle prepared for him and the procession begins, with the Deacon announcing (or, if there is no Deacon, the Priest himself):

Let us go in peace to meet the Lord.

Or:

Let us go forth in peace.
In this case, all respond:

In the name of Christ. A-men.

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THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Antiphon

A light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace, in accordance with your word:

Antiphon
For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared
in the sight of all the peoples.

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