



Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Date: Friday, November 21, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: 1 Maccabees 4:36–37, 52–59

Responsorial Psalm: 1 Chronicles 29:10b–d, 11–12d | **Response:** 1 Chronicles 29:13b

Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27

Gospel Reading: Luke 19:45–48

Preached at: the Chapel of Xolile Keteyi House in the Archdiocese of Durban, South Africa.

The readings today are about what it means to belong to God and to make room for God in our lives. Dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, on this Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we listen to stories of a Temple renewed, a people who praise, and a Saviour who restores sacred space so that everyone can draw close.

Our first reading from the First Book of Maccabees brings us into a painful chapter of Israel's history. Judas Maccabeus and his companions return to a Temple that has been defiled and left in ruins. For Israel, the Temple was not only a holy place. It was the centre of their story with God. Some rabbis called it the meeting point where the earth opened itself to heaven.

When the people cleanse the courts, rebuild the altar, and light the lamps again—on the very day the Temple had been desecrated three years before—the contrast is striking: darkness remembered, light restored. This rededication, echoing the light that Mary's life would later amplify, became the foundation of the Feast of Hanukkah, a celebration of renewed hope and the stubborn belief that light can return after deep shadow. In this way, the Maccabean story speaks to all who struggle today—here in South Africa and across the world—with the weight of economic hardship, the pains of violence and corruption, and the longing for a society where dignity shines again.

The responsorial psalm from the First Book of Chronicles gives us David's prayer of praise. It is a simple lesson in trust: all strength, all beauty, all honour come from God. These words shaped the prayer life of Israel for centuries. They

would have shaped the home of Joachim and Anne, Mary's parents, whose story we remember today. Our feast comes from an early Christian tradition found in the Protoevangelium of James—not canonical Scripture but cherished because it reveals a truth the Church has long held: Mary offered her life to God from her earliest days. She became, in herself, a living temple, a place where God could dwell with freedom and joy.

The Gospel acclamation from John reminds us what it means to belong to God. My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. In Jewish thought, to hear is to respond with one's whole life. Mary is the one who listens in this way. Her listening opens a path for God's Word to take flesh. She becomes, in her offering, the first sign of the "holy exchange" the Roman Missal speaks of: God taking what we offer and filling it with grace. As the Church prays today, may we too be presented blameless before God.

The Gospel according to Luke brings us again to the Temple. Jesus walks into a space meant for prayer and finds it crowded with noise, dishonesty, and barriers that keep the poor on the margins. He clears the space, not with anger for its own sake, but with love strong enough to challenge what is unjust—just as Simeon foresaw the Child as a 'sign of contradiction' (Lk 2:34), revealing hearts and calling us to inclusive prayer. He restores the Temple to its true purpose: a house where all can come, all can pray, and all can feel the embrace of God.

Here lies a beautiful harmony in today's feast. Just as Mary presented herself in the Temple, Jesus presents the Temple's true purpose: a place where no one is excluded, where God welcomes all, where prayer opens the heart. As Paul VI once wrote, Mary's Presentation foreshadows the Church offering itself to God so that the world may find a path to Christ. Her life becomes a doorway; her trust becomes an invitation.

Ignatian spirituality invites us to enter the Gospel scene with imagination. Picture Jesus walking slowly through the courts, hearing the cries of those pushed aside, feeling the longing of those who came hoping to meet God. Then picture your own heart as a temple. What corners are cluttered? What fears have taken up space? What habits or grudges make it harder to pray or harder to love?

All the readings today draw us back to one simple image: the Temple. The Temple that needed rebuilding. The Temple that Jesus purified. The Temple that Mary embodied. And the temple that each of us is called to become. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that every human life is sacred ground, and every society is called to honour that dignity. We see this call in the struggles of our own country: in families pressed down by rising costs, in young people searching for work, in neighbourhoods tired of crime, and in communities longing for leaders who serve with integrity.

But God does not ask us to fix everything at once. God asks us to offer ourselves, as Mary did. God asks us to keep a space in our hearts open. God asks us to let his light return, even if the place feels dark or forgotten.

As we come to the altar today, we walk with Mary. We ask for her faith, her courage, and her willingness to belong completely to God. May our lives become living temples where others find welcome, where hope grows, and where God is at home.

For your prayer this evening, I offer three Ignatian questions:

- Where in the temple of my heart is God asking me to clear space for his presence?
- Whose dignity can I honour this week through a small act of justice, kindness, or truth?
- What simple offering can I make to God today that he may fill with his light?

May God renew the temple within us and make us signs of hope for our world.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.