

The Worst Kind of Pain

This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3 - Descendants of Abraham
- ▶ Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19 - The faith of Abraham
- ▶ Luke 2:22-40 - Jesus is presented in the Temple

This gospel reading is usually referred to as the “Presentation in the Temple.” As required by Jewish laws, Mary and Joseph bring the newborn Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to publicly introduce him to their religious community and thank God for his birth. Like all new parents, Mary and Joseph were probably excited, nervous, and proud to present Jesus to the world. They probably felt extremely protective of him on the journey—like a father driving well below the speed limit while bringing a mom and newborn home from the hospital. Most likely they had a hard time taking their eyes off him, and like all parents, were completely amazed by what a wonderful baby he was.

Then Simeon and Anna meet them and their baby, and Mary and Joseph are further amazed when the two prophets tell them their child will bring about revolution, heartache, and salvation. By now they have an inkling that this baby, who looks just like all the other dark-skinned, dark haired babies in Palestine at the time, is different. The angel Gabriel said



something similar, as did the shepherds who told them of the angels singing after his birth.

What is new is that Simeon predicts that Mary will suffer

“Put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.”

Sheepish Question:
Who especially needs my compassion today as a beloved sister or brother in God's family?

greatly on account of her miraculous child: “and you yourself a sword will pierce.” Anyone who has raised a child can recognize Mary’s experience at that moment. Filled with awe and love and wonder, she suddenly becomes aware of the pain that will come when her child is hurt. It is perhaps the worst kind of pain there is—watching your child suffer. Now that Simeon has predicted it, Mary must find a way to go on as a mama bear to Jesus, knowing that eventually she won’t be able to protect him. When he is killed, she will know the feeling of having her heart pierced.

Questions of the Week

- 1 Can you relate to Mary and Joseph as new parents? Would you be completely enthralled, excited, and nervous about what lies in front of your newborn? How so?
- 2 What might your reaction be if you encountered Simeon and Anna prophesying about the greatness of this child, but also the conflict that he will bring?