

Clippings

*Newsletter of Good Shepherd
Lutheran Church
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Good Shepherd doesn't do much with what are called the "Minor Festivals:" saints' days, and days commemorating Biblical events like The Visitation (May 31, Mary's visit to Elizabeth after the angel Gabriel came to her with the big news) or The Martyrdom of John the Baptist (August 29th). But the one appointed for February 3rd, called The Presentation (or sometimes The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord) is worth knowing about. The event that it commemorates is the end of Mary's ritual uncleanness following the birth of her male child, as specified in Leviticus 12; basically, 39 days after bearing a son, the new mother was to bring an atonement offering to complete her purification. At the same time, Mary and Joseph "presented" her firstborn son to God in recognition that ever since the Exodus, God has a claim on every firstborn, because He spared the firstborn of the Israelites in the Passover.

It was during the time when Jesus was presented to the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem, that Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit to find the holy family and prophesy that Jesus is the Light for the Gentiles, and we've been using his *Nunc Dimittis* as our Offertory during this Epiphany.

But the concept of "presentation" isn't just for Jesus. Because He was presented, we become "presentable" to God. This takes on a practical significance, in Paul's letter to the Romans, first in chapter 6:

¹³**Do not present** your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but **present yourselves** to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ... ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just **as you once presented** your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so **now present** your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. [ESV]

Later, in chapter 12, he returns to this theme as he begins wrapping up his letter:

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies** as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.[ESV]

And he would write to young pastor Timothy using the same language:

Do your best to **present yourself** to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15, ESV).

Present your body to God, and present all the parts that are attached, too! Present your mind (Romans 12:2), that's a part of you too. Present your very self: show up for OJT (On-the-Job Training), and say, "Here am I, send me!" (Isaiah 6:8). Knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ has made you presentable (1 John 1:7), you are ready to move forward with this blessing from the last verse in Jude's letter:

²⁴Now to him **who is able** to keep you from stumbling and **to present you blameless** before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. [ESV]

Pastor Fremer