

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, February 2, 2025

The Presentation of the Lord

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than sixteen years.

WHAT'S ON FEBRUARY 2?

On the Church's liturgical calendar, this Sunday, February 2, is the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

But most people do not connect February 2 with the Presentation, but rather with Ground Hog Day. This is probably true for most Catholics as well, for the observance of the Lord's Presentation most often falls on a weekday, not on a Sunday as it does in 2025.

Strange as it might seem, there may be a connection between these two celebrations that both occur on February 2.

On Ground Hog Day, thousands of people gather at sunrise in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to watch as a famed ground hog emerges from its burrow. According to tradition, if this ground hog sees its shadow there will be six more weeks of winter. If it sees no shadow, spring will come early. Most people hope that no shadow is seen; they want the cold of winter to be quickly overcome by the warming light of spring.

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, which comes 40 days after Christmas Day, is also about light and hope.

This feast commemorates the day when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. There Mary offered the sacrifice required to be made 40 days after giving birth to ensure her ritual purification. Then, as required by the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph dedicated their firstborn son to God.

In the Temple, the infant boy being dedicated to the Lord was noticed by Simeon, who "was righteous and devout...and the Holy Spirit was upon him."

Inspired by the Spirit, Simeon realized this baby boy was the long-awaited Messiah, who would be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" and a source of glory for the people of Israel.

The Prophetess Anna, a widow who had devoted most of her life to prayer, also saw and recognized the identity of the infant Jesus. "She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem."

Both Simeon and Anna were blessed with the realization that Israel's long, cold winter of waiting for the promised Messiah was coming to an end. In the infant being held by Mary, they saw the arrival of the light that would overcome the dark shadow of sin and death. Israel's many years of waiting for the "spring" of salvation had come to an end.

February 2, the day when the media focuses society's attention on a weather prediction, the Church directs our attention to a day of lasting significance. We remember the wondrous day

when the Lord Jesus was recognized by Simeon and Anna as the hoped for Messiah, the source of light and salvation for us, and for all people.

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