

### **Turning Point!**

*Malachi 3<sup>1-5</sup>; Psalm 24; Hebrews 2<sup>14-end</sup>; Luke 2<sup>22-40</sup>*

*Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God.  
(Luke 2<sup>27-28</sup>)*

Zachary will be one year old tomorrow - and Baptism is a great way to mark the end of his first year. His parents have Brought him here **to do what is customary** under the covenant of grace. This priest will, as the old priest Simeon did for Jesus, will take him in my arms and bless him.

There is where I hope the parallel will end - Simeon then went and popped his clogs having seen what God had promised he would, and we certainly don't want a saintly widow telling Vanessa that, because of your son, **destined for the rising and falling of many**, what you have to look forward to is that **a sword will pierce your soul!**

What we anticipate, even in his young life, is that this will be a turning point.

- ✦ We have already said that Candlemass marks a turning point in the life of Simeon - he has seen all that he had hoped for and prays, **Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace.**
- ✦ So, too, with Anna - she saw God's hand in the birth of the Messiah - she spoke **about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.**
- ✦ The Church now now turns away from the great celebrations of Christmass and the Epiphany and begin to focus our attention on preparing for Lent, the Passion and for Holy Week (to rush to Easter without doing so would be to undervalue the cost of Jesus' sacrifice for our forgiveness).

So what does the turning point of Baptism hold for Zachary (and all the baptised)?

- ✦ The first change is that Zachary is no longer a visitor to the Church, he is a member of the family: he belongs. As with every family, he will have to grow into it and learn his place - and helping him to do that is responsibility of parents, godparents and the whole Church family.

- ✦ The next is that those closest to him no longer want him to be a good person, or a successful person, or a happy person (some interesting cultural difference on what people want for their children). From today, the greatest ambition is the he will be more and more like Jesus.
- ✦ Then, like the old priest, Simeon, we want him too to be **guided by the Spirit.** When that is the case, anything is possible for him as he grows into the future God has for him.

There is one way in which Zachary is already like the infant Jesus - even God incarnate, as a baby, had to be taken to the Temple and there to have done to him **what is customary.** For this turning point to become as effective as it should, he has to be brought; he has to shown; he has to be inspired - and that is for all of us to do.

So we end the festive season - and we begin to turn towards the cross: birth turning to life; life turning to death; death turning to resurrection; and resurrection turning to hope!