

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord - Awareness

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Awareness is defined as “having knowledge or understanding that something is happening or exists”. I believe that having this knowledge or understanding puts us in a situation where we need to respond. In other words when we are aware of something we need to decide, the decision could be not to do anything, but that in itself is a decision. Think about these two scenarios, you are driving down the road and everything seems fine, suddenly a light pops up in your dash that you have never seen before, you start to worry, you don't know if you should continue driving, pull over, if the car is suddenly going to die, if it would make it another 10 years, you don't know if the light is a false alarm or if it is something to address asap. Either way, now that you are aware of the light you need to decide what to do, the decision could be to ignore it but nevertheless, **awareness requires a response...** My mother-in-law states that she doesn't go to the doctor because they will always find something that she needs to address. In other words, she does not want to be made aware of potential health concerns. Now, just because she doesn't know about them or is not aware of them, doesn't mean that they are not there or that they do not exist, she just chooses to live as if they are non-existent, because **awareness requires a response...**

If you look in the Baltimore Catechism for the question why did God make us, you will find that it states that **“God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.”** If I know him, my response will be to love him and to serve him. To know him we need to be aware of him, that awareness will prompt us to respond. Salvation history is the story of God seeking us, trying to make us aware of who he is, of how much he loves us, so that in turn we can respond by loving and serving him. **He wants to be our God, and that we are his people.** In the beginning we were aware of God, we knew him, but after the fall our knowledge of God **our awareness became distorted** to the point where we didn't know God. God selected the people of Israel so that his presence could be with them, yet their response was similar to someone who was not aware. God's presence accompanied them through the desert in a pillar of fire during the night and a pillar of clouds during the day, yet they didn't recognize him. He was present with them in the ark of the covenant which they were to take with them anywhere they went, yet they didn't recognize his presence. Later the temple built by Solomon contained the presence of the Lord in the holy of holies, yet it seemed as if they didn't recognize him. I say they didn't recognize him because their actions were just like everyone else.

The book of the prophet Malachi continues the pattern of God seeking us to make us know him with the expectation of our reciprocal Love, yet we acted as if we were unaware. After being in captivity for many years, the people of Israel were allowed to go back to their land and rebuild the temple. Instead of being aware of God's presence within them they acted as if he was not present, they took advantage of the needy, they offered defective goods as sacrifice, priests became popular by telling people what they wanted to hear rather than the truth, the people adopted the attitude "*that there was nothing to gain by doing God's will.*" **Their awareness of God was distorted or even non-existent.** The prophet Malachi warns them, by telling them that God is sending a messenger, a messenger that will come to the temple, that messenger will be what they seek and desired.

God's presence was with the people of Israel in the ark of the covenant, in the pillar of fire, in the pillar of cloud, in the mana, in the temple, yet many were not aware, therefore they didn't know him, to love him or serve him. God himself became one of us so that he could be with us, so that his presence would be with us. **The presentation of the Lord in the temple was restoring or returning the presence of God.** When the Lord is presented in the temple, the holy family is encountered by two interesting characters, Simeon and Anna. Simeon and Anna recognized our Lord, they were made aware of the presence of God, and they teach us what should be the appropriate response to knowing our Lord, Siemon blessed the lord and his family, Anna gave thanks to God for the presence of the Lord in her life. **When we become aware, when we get to know God, our response is to bless him, to thank him, to adopt an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving.** Think about the fact that the God of the universe is constantly seeking you and looks for ways to make himself known to you. I would think that it would be the other way around, that I should be seeking him and pursuing him, yet he wants us to know him, to love him and to serve him in this world and to be happy with him forever in the next.

Just as our Lord's presence had been with the people of Israel in many forms culminating in the Godchild, our Lord chooses to present himself to you in your life. **Reflect and pray on the many ways that the Lord has made himself present in your life, have you been able to recognize him, have you been aware, what has been your response? Our Lord tells us that he is with us always, he is with us every moment, we need to find ways of being more attentive to recognize his presence in our lives. In part because God's presence is transformative, once we are aware of his presence, we need to respond. Are you aware of the Lord's presence in your life? If so, what is your response?**