Light and darkness are opposites and incompatible. When we enter a dark room and turn on the light, there’s no longer darkness. Light and darkness can’t coexist. If we grasp this notion, then we understand why it’s important for Simeon to see the Lord. The prophet Simeon was a Jew who knew the promises of the prophets. He was a “righteous” man who knew the Messiah had not yet appeared, and he wanted to see Him before he died. To Simeon the world was in darkness until the Messiah would come. Taking Jesus in his arms, Simeon said “Now, my eyes have seen your salvation…a light for revelation…and glory” (Lk. 2:29-32). On that eventful day Simeon could state that his life was fulfilled. Simeon could see the LIGHT because he had made room for the LIGHT in his soul.

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is all about salvation. In the book of Exodus, God commanded the first-born male be presented in the Temple as a countersign to the final plague of the Exodus—the killing of the first born. In the act of presenting the first born, this would show that God “redeems every first-born of His sons” (Ex. 13:15). The Presentation was a sign of redemption for the Jews. They belonged to God. When Jesus is brought to the Temple, God is fulfilling His redemption in Jesus, His Son. For this reason, Simeon calls Jesus LIGHT.

The darkness of sin can blind us. We’re physically able to see, but spiritually we can remain blind. Christ dispels that darkness through redemption because He is the LIGHT. To highlight this truth, we traditionally bless candles on this day. A lit candle reminds us of the light that we should see and take into our lives. Light and darkness can’t coexist. Darkness vanishes when we turn on light. The light of Christ can’t exist in our souls at the same time we find ourselves living in sin. Simeon could see the LIGHT because he removed that sin in him that would defeat the light. There’s no joyful proclamation of faith and salvation unless we’ve first experienced, through conversion, the mercy of God. Simeon was righteous and devout. He can see redemption coming and proclaim it joyfully. His purity of life opened his heart to recognize the Messiah. The light was so evident and powerful, penetrating and brilliant, that Simeon could recognize it even in a baby as Jesus was.

We present ourselves in the Temple knowing that God is intimately familiar with us. It’s crazy that we should be anything but ourselves. But we sometimes go through the pretense of dressing things up, pretending and putting on a show. God knows who we truly are so may we truly own it as we encounter God in this Church. When we’re honest with ourselves in our own presentation to God, it’s much easier to discover, with God, the causes and actions that will lead us to turn away from sin and move to healing, fulfillment, and peace that we can only know in a state of grace. Light and darkness can’t coexist. To let the light of Christ into the darkness of our souls requires us to let light do its work of dispelling darkness. We can’t prefer darkness. There’s no “joy of the Gospel” unless the light shines. We’re to let the light take over in us. Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more so don’t fear to allow this new reality of grace and light to possess you!