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Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Candlemas)

Dear Friends in Christ,

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord" (Luke 2:22). Thus begins the Gospel for today's Feast, the last of the Christmas season, in which Holy Mother Church commemorates the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple forty days after His Nativity.

As the aged Simeon rightly said, Our Lord is "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32), but He is also "a sign which shall be contradicted" (Luke 2:34) — prophetic words which point to the opposition He would face during His public ministry, which was directed towards the destruction of the devil's works (cf. 1 John 3:8) and the salvation of souls (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15).

This spiritual combat began in earnest immediately after Our Lord's Baptism, when He "was led by the Spirit," that is, by the Holy Ghost, "into the desert to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1). We will hear this Gospel towards the end of this month on the First Sunday of Lent, after we have begun the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday. In the meantime, we would do well to begin looking ahead to Lent and preparing ourselves accordingly, especially as we approach the pre-Lenten season of Septuagesima (see here and here). As Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., observes in *Divine Intimacy* (meditation for Septuagesima Sunday, which falls on Feb. 5 this year):

> "The time of Septuagesima is somewhat like a prelude to Lent, the traditional time for spiritual reform. That is why the liturgy present us today with a program which we must put into effect in order to bring about within ourselves a new, serious conversion, so that we may rise again with Christ at Easter."

As members of Christ's Mystical Body the Church, we too will face opposition in our spiritual combat against our three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Yet like Him, we are called to "shine as lights in the world" (Philip. 2:15) and to be signs of contradiction in a world that is often hostile to the truth. It should not surprise us when we face

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persecution, since we know that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). "In the world you shall have distress," Our Lord tells us. "But have confidence. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

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May God reward your generosity and help you prepare for a fruitful Lent!

Sincerely in the Holy Family,

Matt Gaspers
Managing Editor

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