

for years! This wonderful, attentive old woman now carries the story to all who have been waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. The waiting is over; the Gospel begins.

**PRAYER**

Father of mercies and God of all comfort: abide, we pray with all your people as they face the evening of life.

Comfort them with the assurance of your presence; grant them the grace of your abounding peace; let your light shine on their path and be with them until their days are over. We pray also for all those people who serve you in the person of the aged and who devote themselves to their welfare. May they always give their service with love and devotion, with patience and cheerfulness. Amen.

*Fr Denis McBride's book Stations of the Infancy is available from Redemptorist Publications. Visit [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk) to order. CODE:1861 ISBN: 9780852315590*

**Mass text**

**ENTRANCE ANTIIPHON**  
The shepherds went in haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in a manger.

**FIRST READING** Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3

**PSALM** Psalm 104

**RESPONSE** He, the Lord, is our God.

*He remembers his covenant for ever.*

1. Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. O sing to him, sing his praise; tell all his wonderful works! **R.**

2. Be proud of his holy name, let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice. Consider the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face. **R.**

3. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, the judgements he spoke. O children of Abraham, his servant, O sons of the Jacob he chose. **R.**

4. He remembers his covenant for ever, his promise for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. **R.**



**SECOND READING** Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. Alleluia!

**GOSPEL** Luke 2:22-40

**COMMUNION ANTIIPHON**

Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

**Next Sunday's Readings:**  
(E&W) Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2, 8-12  
Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18  
John 1:1-18

(S) Isaiah 60:1-6  
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6  
Matthew 2:1-12



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**THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE**

*THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE,*

*GREEK ICON, ANONYMOUS*

Central to this icon is the ciborium, a covering supported by four columns that stands over the altar in a basilica. Mary hands over her son into the covered hands of Simeon, the prophet who has waited all his life to welcome this unique child. Behind Mary stands Anna, identifiable as a prophetess by the scroll she holds. Anna looks down at Joseph's offering – two turtle doves – which was the regular offering of poor people.



Reading: Luke 2:25-38

**REFLECTION**

The parents of Jesus take him to the Temple in Jerusalem, where they meet two waiting people, Simeon and Anna. As old people they are connected with the past of promise and with memory; Luke presents them as *anawim* – the devout remnant of those who wait on the ancient promise.

Simeon and Anna have spent their lives in longing to see the fulfilment of those promises. They are an unusual couple of old people because their total concern is for the future. They don't live backwards, but forwards. Something yet to happen draws their lives onwards. They are alive with expectation and hope, waiting for the one who will be the consolation of their own people and the light for the Gentiles. They do not live in the past; Simeon and Anna inhabit the here and now. So you watch Simeon take the child into his arms; you watch old age reach out for the flesh of a promise fulfilled, gathering this promise into his quieting arms. And you hear him break into the poetry of the Nunc Dimittis.

And Anna: she is like some of the old women who seem always to be around our churches, praying and waiting, praying and waiting, and watching. Anna is always around the Temple night and day. She makes herself God's neighbourhood watch, and she has an energetic nose for what is happening in her neighbour's house. An inquisitive woman of faith, she is on permanent lookout: nothing is going to get past this old timepiece. Her timing is exquisite, since, Luke says, "She came by just at that moment" – she has been hanging around

**Stations of the Infancy**



In this series, on his book *Stations of the Infancy*, Fr Denis McBride looks at the beginnings of Jesus story as we use to reflect on in our prayers

**27 DECEMBER 20**

**THE HOLY FAMILY MARY AND JOSEPH**

**YEAR B**

**DIVINE OFFICE WEE**