The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord– February 2, 2025
Text: 1 Samuel 1:21-28
Theme: A Mother's Love

In our Old Testament reading for today, we hear the story of Hannah who was the mother of Samuel. Hannah had not been able to have children and she promised the Lord that if she were able to have a child, she would give him to the Lord. That is an amazing act of faith on a couple of different levels.

First, Hannah gave up raising the child for whom she longed. She considered the life of a child more important than her own wants and needs. She was willing to sacrifice her needs for the child to be born. I think many mothers would gladly sacrifice anything to protect the life of her child but this is extreme. Imagine going through all the trials of pregnancy and birth, especially in days before epidurals, not to mention diapers and nighttime feedings and all the difficulties of rearing a toddler, only to turn the child over to the priest as soon as he was weened. Samuel was probably 5 or 6 years old when he went to the temple.

Second, Hannah kept her promise! After Samuel, she may have had six more children if we understand her song in 1 Samuel 2:5 literally when she sings,

"The barren has borne seven" But at any rate it seems that she did have more children after Samuel and could easily have

conveniently forgotten her promise to God. But she didn't. She kept her promise and as soon as Samuel was weaned, she took him to the temple.

Third, Hannah understood that God's plan was bigger than her life or the life of her son. She didn't know how it would all work out, but she believed that God would make it work. She could not see in 1105 BC what God would do in 4 BC when Jesus was taken to the temple and Simeon held Him in his arms and proclaimed Him to be the Messiah for whom all Israel had been waiting. But she fervently believed that all of us play a crucial role in God's plan and that God always works good for those who love Him.

We sit here more than 3,100 years after Samuel's birth and more than 2,000 years after Christ's birth. Yet, still we are amazed at the way God works. God enters us through Baptismal water and strengthens us through His body and blood. God continues to speak to us through His Word and remind us daily that we are loved by Him. How could we ever be worried or afraid? Just as Samuel was presented to God, just as Jesus was presented to God, so, through Holy Baptism have you and I been presented to God.

If you are struggling today with worry or fear of the future, remember Hannah. She did not have the luxury of having seen the

Messiah born. She did not know that all of her sins would be forgiven by the ultimate sacrifice when God put His son on the cross and allowed Him to suffer Hell for her. She only trusted that the God of the universe loved her as much as He said He did, and that He would work all things for her good. He did. And He will for all of us as well. Blindly trust in God. If He loved you enough to give up His son for you, what won't He do to make sure that you are in paradise with Him for eternity?

Today we celebrate two mothers who had faith that was so strong that they were able to selflessly give up their sons to the will of God. Faith like that comes to us through hearing the word of God and receiving the sacraments that Jesus Christ left behind for us. Hannah and Mary set worthy goals for us as we continue growing in Christ and in God's love. We know that we are God's children whom He has never abandoned and always blessed beyond measure. What will faith like that do for us? What can faith like that accomplish?

Some religious people are offended by God the Father being referred to with the male pronoun. He is neither male nor female because He is above such human things as gender, but the rules of language dictate that we use a pronoun and when He speaks of Himself, He uses male words like father so, that's what we use. But never forget that both men and women received all of their good

traits from God. There is nothing good within our corrupted human nature, so everything good is imported from God. True Godly love is one of those good things that God places in our hearts when the Holy Spirit creates faith in us. We hear people talk about "a mother's love." What we know as "a mother's love" is shown in our texts for today to be from God. A mother's love is really quite incomprehensible. It is perhaps the most powerful human love in this life and it comes directly from God. It is His amazing gift to women and children. It is perhaps as close as we get in this life to comprehending God's agape love for us.

Only in paradise will we be able to grasp the full love of God. But in this life, we get a taste of His complete and sacrificial love for us through the women in our lives. It is an astoundingly beautiful thing and that love gives us hope and strength to overcome all obstacles and to be mirrors of that same love to all whom we encounter.