

# Collect, Readings and Reflection for 01 February 2026, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

## Collect (*the Church's prayer for today*):

Almighty and ever-living God,  
clothed in majesty,  
whose beloved Son was this day presented in  
the Temple,  
in substance of our flesh:  
grant that we may be presented to you  
with pure and clean hearts,  
by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
light of the nations and glory of  
Israel:  
make your home among us,  
and present us pure and holy  
to your heavenly Father,  
your God, and our God.  
Amen

## Readings: Hebrews 2:14-end ; Luke 2:22-40

*Today's reflection is by the Vicar, the Revd Canon Jonathan Cain.*

### Anna's witness

There are moments in Scripture when the Holy Spirit seems to shimmer just beneath the surface — not always named, not always dramatic, but unmistakably present. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple is one of those moments. It's often thought of as a feast of light, a hinge between Christmas and Lent, but it is also, very much, a feast of the Holy Spirit.

Mary comes to the Temple carrying the child who has been conceived by the Spirit. Joseph comes in obedience to the Law. Simeon arrives because the Spirit has prompted him — nudged him — to be in the right place at the right time. And Anna... Anna has been strengthened, sustained, and shaped by the Spirit over a lifetime.

Luke doesn't give us many details about Anna's life, but the few he offers are enough to open a window. She is elderly. She has known grief. She has lived faithfully, quietly, steadfastly. In her devotional book, *Women of the Nativity*, Paula Gooder invites us to imagine Anna not as a frail elderly woman tucked away in a corner of the Temple, but as someone whose life has been forged in the fires of grief and shaped by decades of prayer. Widowed young, she chooses not to retreat from life but to offer herself wholly to God. Her waiting is not passive; it is active, attentive, expectant. And because she has spent a lifetime listening for God, she recognises Jesus the moment he enters the Temple. She becomes the first evangelist of the Christ-child — a prophet whose authority comes not from status but from a life steeped in the Spirit. Anna shows us that holiness can grow in the long shadow of loss, that courage can take the form of daily faithfulness, and that the Spirit equips ordinary people to speak extraordinary hope.

And the Holy Spirit is at work in her.

Helping her to worship.

Giving her courage to offer her life to God.

Giving her confidence to speak.

When Mary and Joseph enter the Temple, Anna recognises — not with her eyes alone, but with the deep intuition of a life attuned to God — that this child is the one for whom she has waited.

And she begins to speak about him to all who were looking for redemption. Not timidly. Not cautiously. But with the freedom of someone who knows that God has kept faith with her.

I want to pause with Anna for a moment... and invite you to picture her as Paula Gooder helps us to imagine her.

A woman who has known loss.

A woman who has lived long years of quiet faithfulness.

A woman whose sorrow has deepened her, not diminished her.

Day after day she comes to the Temple — not because she has nowhere else to go, but because she has chosen a life oriented entirely toward God. Her waiting is not passive. It is attentive, expectant, Spirit-shaped.

And so when Mary and Joseph walk in with the child Jesus, Anna sees what others miss. She recognises him because she has spent a lifetime listening for God. And joy rises in her — the joy of someone who knows that God keeps faith.

Just hold that image for a moment:

Anna, steady and prayerful, seeing clearly, speaking hope.

And let her story rest with you.

Where might the Spirit be shaping you in the same way —

helping you to worship,

giving you courage to offer yourself,

giving you confidence to speak hope?

Later in this service, we will commission several members of our congregation for the ministry of prayer. It is a ministry that, like Anna's, is rooted in attentiveness — listening to God, listening to others, holding space for the Spirit to move.

And the words of the commissioning liturgy echo the very gifts we see in Anna:

Help to worship — because prayer ministry begins not with our own strength, but with the Spirit drawing us into the life of God.

Courage to offer ourselves — because to listen deeply to another person is a vulnerable, generous act.

Confidence to speak words of hope — not our own cleverness, but the quiet confidence that God longs to meet people in their need.



These are not only gifts for those being commissioned. They are gifts for all of us. Anna's worship is not a moment but a posture. Day by day, she returns to the Temple. Day by day, she offers herself in prayer and fasting. Worship, for her, is the steady orientation of her life toward God.

And the Spirit helps us in the same way.

When our minds are scattered.

When our hearts are heavy.

When we don't know how to pray.

The Spirit gathers us, steadies us, and draws us back into the presence of God.

Anna's courage is quiet but profound. She has lived through loss. She has lived through waiting. Yet she continues to offer her life to God — not in grand gestures, but in daily faithfulness.

Courage in the Christian life is rarely dramatic. More often, it is the courage to keep showing up. To keep praying. To keep loving. To keep offering ourselves, even when we feel small or inadequate.

And the Spirit meets us there.

Anna speaks because she has seen God's salvation. She speaks because hope has taken root in her. She speaks because the Spirit gives her the confidence to do so.

And we, too, are called to speak — gently, humbly, but confidently — of the hope that is within us.

In the coming weeks, we'll be encouraging one another to engage with the tryPraying resources. The invitation is simple: 'use it' and then pray for a God-given moment to 'lose it' — to pass it on to someone who might need a word of hope.

Not forced. Not awkward. Just attentive. Just open. Just like Anna.

So today, as we celebrate The Presentation of Christ in the Temple and prepare to commission those who will offer prayer ministry among us, may Anna's example rest with us:

May the Holy Spirit help us to worship.

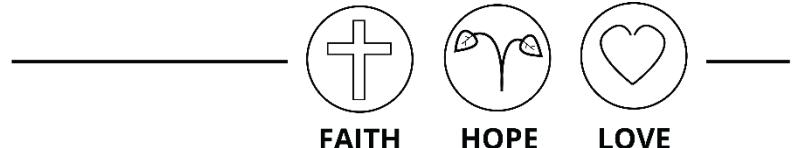
May the Holy Spirit give us courage to offer our lives.

May the Holy Spirit give us confidence to speak words of hope.

And may Christ, the light revealed in the Temple, shine through us — in our praying, in our listening, and in our witness — for the sake of the world God loves.

Amen.

ST JAMES WOODSIDE  
HORSFORTH



Sharing God's blessing in Horsforth for 175 years