May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

They met in the temple, Mary and Joseph, Anna, Simeon, Jesus. How did they get there? What brought them to that place of meeting? What brings us to the temple, the place where God resides?

Mary and Joseph came in obedience to the law, to present Jesus to the Lord and offer a sacrifice according to what was written in the law. <…> Behind the legalities, however, was longing.

Anna never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. This is not, however, about a rule of life or asceticism. It is about longing.

Simeon was guided by the Spirit. He was righteous, devout, and looking for the consolation of Israel. But it was more than piety that took him to the temple. It was longing.

Jesus is brought to the temple, not as a passive baby but as the embodiment of his Father’s longing for humanity.

The Feast of the Presentation, sometimes called the Feast of Meeting, is, at its core, a feast of longing. This feast reveals the longing between humanity and divinity. Our deepest longings are to know and be known. That can only ever really happen in relationship to God. This is not about gathering information or learning about God. This kind of knowing is of the heart not the intellect. It is about the union that sets us free, the oneness that allows us to depart in peace, and the relationship that is salvation. For this to happen we must live with and offer the fragility, vulnerability, and joy of an open and longing heart. That heart is the temple of meeting, the place where today we find Mary and Joseph, Anna, Simeon, and Jesus.

Longing is not an absence or emptiness waiting to be filled. Longing is a presence and fullness waiting to be expressed, manifested. Two persons do not long for each other because they are apart. They long for each other because they are in love.

We are sometimes too quick to quench the longing, to satisfy the desire. That never takes us to the temple. It keeps life superficial and us moving from one “fix” to another. Longing, however, if trusted and followed always takes us to the temple, the place of meeting, and we discover that we already hold the baby. Amen.