

Fidelity prepares the soul

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (February 2): (R3) Luke 2:22-40; (R1) Malachi 3:1-4; (R2) Hebrews 2:14-18.

Next Sunday celebrates the feasts of the Presentation of the Lord and the Purification of Mary.

Katherine Lee Bates in her stirring poem, "America," wrote: "Confirm thy soul in self-control/Thy liberty in law."

She was saying what Americans need to remember is that the guardian of liberty is law!

Laws are the dikes or levees that hold back the surge of human passion. How often one has been held back from doing wrong, because there was a law!

The incidents of the Presentation and the Purification are meant, among other things, to teach us to obey the law. In those incidents, Joseph and Mary were obeying the Mosaic law.

Moses had commanded that the firstborn child had to be redeemed; that is, presented to the Lord in the temple and be bought back for five shekels paid to one of the temple priests. The reason for this law was that Israel might never forget what God had done for their fathers in Egypt. When the Hebrews were slaves in Egypt, God sent 10 plagues upon the Egyptians to force Pharaoh to free his people. The tenth plague was the slaying of the firstborn of the Egyptians, but the sparing of the firstborn of the Hebrews. So the firstborn of the Hebrews really belonged to God; its redemption reminded the Hebrews of this.

Also, Moses commanded that a mother, 40 days after the birth of a



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

male child, should be purified by going to the temple and offering a lamb and a dove; or, if poor, two doves (Leviticus 12:2-8).

Of course, neither Jesus nor Mary were obliged by these laws. Yet both submitted to them to teach us to obey the laws of God and his church. When they did, the Holy Family encountered an old man and an old woman — Simeon and Anna, both very holy persons.

Simeon told Mary that a sword of sorrow would pierce her heart. Anna was 84 years old and still served the Lord. How wonderful! Two young people and two old ones were the first to greet the Lord when he came into the world. How often grandparents can be a blessing to a family. So often they generate the true spirit of devotion to the Lord in the family, in the parish and in the world.

In the 1830s rubber fever swept over the United States. Everyone wanted rubber goods. Millions of dollars were invested in producing them. Then, too late, after millions had been spent, it was discovered that rubber products became viscous, sticky like chewing gum, in summer and frozen bone-hard in winter.

It was then that Charles Goodyear became interested in this mysterious "gum elastic." For five long years he studied it. Then in 1839, he more or less stumbled across the discovery of rubber that would not be affected by either heat or cold.

One winter day, his wife sent him to the grocery store. As always, Goodyear had a fistful of rubber gum in his hands. At the store, while waiting for his order, he warmed himself at the sizzling hot, potbellied stove. He was tossing the rubber gum in his hand, and it accidentally dropped on the stove. Recovering it, Goodyear found it had a new quality. He discovered that the one ingredient rubber lacked was heat. Heat vulcanized it.

Later on, when people said his discovery was an accident, Goodyear stoutly denied it. He maintained that neither he nor any other man would have profited from the so-called accident had it not been for the fact that he had been working for years on rubber and therefore could draw the proper conclusion from the "accident." The incident held meaning only for the man whose mind was prepared to draw an inference.

So, too, with Simeon and Anna — they alone of all Jerusalem recog-

Daily Readings

Monday, February 3

Hebrews 11:32-40; Psalms 31:20-24; Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday, February 4

Hebrews 12:1-4; Psalms 22:26-28, 30-32; Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday, February 5

Hebrews 12:4-7, 11-15; Psalms 103:1-2, 13-14; Mark 6:1-6

Thursday, February 6

Hebrews 12:18-19, 21-24; Psalms 48:2-4, 9-11; Mark 6:7-13

Friday, February 7

Hebrews 13:1-8; Psalms 27:1, 3, 5, 8-9; Mark 6:14-29

Saturday, February 8

Hebrews 13:15-17, 20-21; Psalms 23:1-6; Mark 6:30-34

nized the Holy Family, because they had been for years preparing their souls for God. Likewise, our years of fidelity to God and his law will pay off someday. All we need do is persevere, like Simeon and Anna.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

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