

## The consecration of the Master

### ■ The 71th Sharing of the Word

#### ● First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

The "messenger" mentioned here is considered to be John the Baptist, as recorded in the New Testament (Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2-3). The messenger has the role of preparing for the coming of the Lord (the Messiah). The Lord (God or Jesus) will suddenly come to His temple. The arrival of the Lord brings both joy and a day of fear and trial, for the righteous and the unrighteous will be separated, and the unjust will be judged (Malachi 3:5). Refining is the process of removing impurities to produce pure gold or silver. As a refining fire, the Lord purifies the Levites (priests), making them worthy to stand before God, serve Him, and offer sacrifices and worship that are pleasing to Him.

#### 【About Malachi】

1. Malachi is considered the last prophet of the Old Testament, who was active after the Babylonian exile (around the 5th century BC). While the temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt, the people's faith had declined, and worship had become mere formalism.
2. He pointed out the corruption of both the priests and the people, urging them to serve God faithfully and delivering words of hope (Malachi 3:16-18). The people were offering blemished animals in worship (Malachi 1:6-14), and the priests were failing to teach the law correctly (Malachi 2:7-9). Malachi called on the people to live according to the law and prophesied about the "Day of the Lord," which would bring both salvation and judgment. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the messenger (John the Baptist) who would prepare for Him (Malachi 3:1, 3:23-24).
3. As the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi serves as a bridge to the New Testament, preparing for the arrival of the Messiah (the Savior).

#### ● Second Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18

Just as humans possess flesh and blood, Jesus also took on the same flesh (incarnation). The fear of death enslaves and binds people's hearts, depriving them of freedom. Jesus came to bring liberation from this bondage and to destroy death. The salvation through Jesus' atonement is directed toward humans, the descendants of Abraham. Through God's deep mercy, Jesus became the High Priest who atones for the sins of the people.

Jesus lived a fully human life, sharing in all human experiences. God understands the human heart, and through Jesus' actions, people can feel that they have shared the same experiences with Him. This eliminates the gap between God and humanity. The lesson here is not merely about understanding people based on personal experiences but about transcending one's own experiences, fully putting oneself in another's position, and imagining their circumstances. This enables deeper empathy, fostering a society of mutual support.

Although Jesus, as the Son of God, could have helped the suffering without personally experiencing trials and hardships, He intentionally chose to endure them so that humans could understand His love and sacrifice.

#### ● Gospel Reading: Luke 2:22-40

Jesus' parents brought their firstborn son (Jesus) to the temple to dedicate Him to God according to the Law of Moses and offered a sacrifice of the poor. Simeon, a devout and righteous man filled with the Holy Spirit, was in the temple when Jesus' parents arrived. He took the child in his arms, praised God, and proclaimed that Jesus was the light of salvation. His words astonished Mary and Joseph.

Simeon then told Mary that Jesus would cause the rise and fall of many and would face opposition. Mary must have been shocked to realize that Jesus' mission would lead to conflict, rejection, and suffering. The prophetess Anna also saw Jesus, gave thanks to God, and spoke about Him to those who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

After fulfilling the requirements of the law, Jesus' parents returned to Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus grew in wisdom, and God's grace was upon Him.

**【The Dedication of the Firstborn】**

1. "Every firstborn... whether human or animal, must be dedicated to Me and set apart as holy." (Exodus 13:2)
2. The final plague before the Exodus was the death of all the firstborn in Egypt?both human and livestock (Exodus 12:29).God instructed Moses to have the Israelites mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb. That night, the angel of death "passed over" the houses with the blood, sparing their firstborn. In commemoration of this event, the Jewish people continue to celebrate the Passover to this day.

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