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## **PRESENTATION OF THE LORD—FEBRUARY 14**

### ***Dyarn-un-ta-rach—A Mini-Lesson for all Ages***

*Share the joy of Dyarnuntarach with your students. Convey the information given below. Then for younger grades, read the Scripture and explain the simplified miniature on page 3, which they can then color while you tell the story. With older grades, discuss the reflection questions after reading the Scripture.*

In keeping with the traditions of Old Testament times, Mary took Jesus to the temple to be “presented” forty days after his birth. The account in *Luke 2:21-40* combined two Hebrew traditions that would have taken her there—one, to be purified herself after giving birth and the other, to present her baby to the temple along with a sacrificial gift of a pair of doves. There, in the temple, was the priest Simeon who had always prayed to be allowed to see the Savior. *Read the full account in Luke together.*

This important moment in the life of Jesus eventually became one of the feasts celebrated by the church with services and festive rituals.

One of the older customs associated with *Dyarnuntarach* would take place the evening before. It was a good example of how pagan celebrations were re-set in the context of Christian faith. People would leave the evening church service and light a bonfire with their candles (wood was assembled beforehand for the purpose). Those assembled would celebrate, part of which was a game of jumping over the fire. Newlyweds were especially encouraged to participate since by doing so, the holy fire was said to promote their ability to have a child. Women would scorch the bottom of their dresses with the fire for the same purpose. And everyone took some of this “sacred” flame home with them in a lamp. This little ceremony, in a highly modified form, is sometimes recreated today in Armenian parishes.

**A.** As you examine the miniature with students, point out that from left to right are pictured: Joseph (with the two sacrificial doves), Mary, Simeon holding the baby Jesus (Jesus’ halo always features the distinctive curved cross bars), and Anna the prophetess. Ask for comments: what else do students notice? Perhaps they will mention Mary and Jesus reaching towards one another or the beautifully decorative architectural details.

**B.** Some reflection questions for older grades:

1. What does this temple ceremony reveal about Jesus' parents? (they were pious, dedicated Jews; they were poor, since they only could afford two doves; wealthier people brought a lamb)
2. Why do you think it would have been important for a new mother to bring her baby to church forty days after birth? (to feel new again, to share her joy, to get God's blessing on this new life, to present her child to God in gratitude, etc.)
3. Why is it so important to know that Simeon immediately knew he was in God's presence? (God was revealing the Savior to him)
4. Put Simeon's predictions (*verses 29-32; 34-35*) into your own words.
5. How does Anna's experience add to the impact of Simeon's prophecy? (she, too, recognized the divine nature of the baby Jesus)
6. What are some of the characteristics of fire that would be important in a religious ritual? (a source of light, cleansing, purification)

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