

Presentation of the Lord.CMA

2.2.25

Recently, I had to call an agency that I've done business with in order to close one account and open another. To be honest, I kept putting off this call because I wasn't at all confident that my request would be dealt with in a satisfactory way. When I called the customer service line, I was connected with a recording that listed all my options. You know the deal, "press 1 for English, *si desea escuchar este mensaje de nuevo por favor oprima 2*, if you are a new customer press 3, if you have questions about your bill press 4." When that litany concluded, I simply asked to be connected to an agent.

It wasn't 10 seconds later that I heard the voice of a living, breathing human being. I explained my situation but was preparing myself for pushback or a runaround. Instead, the customer service agent said, "I can help with that." After I successfully answered a couple of security questions, my first account was closed. Opening a second account was effortless as well. The customer service agent must have thought I had dropped off the call because I was speechless at how smoothly and efficiently the whole process went.

After I profusely thanked the agent, I asked her to forward a customer satisfaction survey to me. I wanted to write a glowing report about how helpful she was. She chuckled and said, "I don't often get that request from folks."

Isn't it nice and almost unexpected these days when we receive excellent customer service? When that happens, it is reassuring and makes us happy that we are using that service or product. In the days following that episode, I've told so many others what good service I received. I'm hoping that the compliments I've shared will move others to consider that agency and their services in the future.

On this Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, we hear the story of Mary and Joseph fulfilling the Jewish tradition of presenting their newborn son in the Temple to God the Father. That practice was merely a custom (they didn't have to do it), but Mary and Joseph thought it important enough that they sacrificed their time and what little money they had to engage in that tradition. As we know, God blessed this good couple in so many ways for their fidelity and dedicated service to God and their Jewish faith.

We could say the same about Simeon, the holy man in the Temple, and the prophetess Anna, who was praying there as well. Simeon and Anna were blessed because of their faithfulness and dedication to their religion and God. Both speak of the salvation they knew that would come from the Christ child. They knew that the birth of Jesus meant salvation for all. And their profession of faith to the Holy Family was blessed by God who smiled upon their fidelity and their sharing of the Good News about the Messiah.

In today's business terms, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna gave great customer service. They were faithful, joyful, hopeful, and believed in a positive outcome. God blessed their faithful witness by granting them a share in his Kingdom for all eternity.

At the Masses this weekend, Fr. Zach and I are speaking about the diocesan Catholic Ministry Appeal. A few years ago, Bishop Parkes made the decision to use every cent that is donated to the appeal for direct ministry throughout the diocese. Not a penny of your donation goes toward overhead or administration at the diocese. Those fees are paid by a tax that pastors remit to the diocese throughout the year.

Your sacrificial gift to the Catholic Ministry Appeal or CMA then goes directly toward educating our seminarians, providing safe shelter for the homeless, forming deacons / lay ministers / youth ministers / catechetical leaders, sharing the Good News with prisoners, providing preparation programs for those getting married, tuition assistance grants, and providing a home for several of our retired priests who have given their lives to serving the people of this diocese. These are just a few of the many ministries that are offered by our diocese and supported by your generosity.

At all our Masses last weekend Dr. Mark Majeski, the Associate Superintendent for our diocesan schools, spoke about these ministries and others like them. A number of people came up to me after hearing him

speak at Mass and said that they didn't know so many ministries in our diocese were supported by the Catholic Ministry Appeal. We can be proud that our sacrificial gifts go directly to these services. And I know that God smiles upon us for the generosity we show and sacrifice we make for this appeal.

Anyone who prays the Liturgy of the Hours each day knows that Night Prayer is offered to God before we go to sleep. Night Prayer always concludes with the same scripture verses. It comes from the *Canticle of Simeon*. That Canticle or song is what we heard in part of today's gospel.

After he witnesses Mary and Joseph's faithfulness to Jewish custom, after God the Father reveals that the child Jesus is indeed the chosen Messiah who will bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike, Simeon exclaims:

Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all peoples: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.

We begin to witness God's glory in the good works that are done through our support of the Catholic Ministry Appeal. Like Simeon, we can go to the Lord in peace on our last day knowing that we've had a hand in promoting and implementing the ministry of Jesus through our participation in this appeal.

We're not taking your pledges today. I'm simply asking that you prayerfully reflect on what God is calling you to sacrifice for this appeal. Fr. Zach and I will be doing that this week as well, and will be ready with our pledge next week.

God lovingly looks upon our fidelity and our sacrifice. May he bless, in abundant ways, our humble efforts build up his Kingdom among us through the Catholic Ministry Appeal.

Amen? Amen!