

## What the Presentation means for parents

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February 1, 2015

We have to let go. We knew that, right? People told us from the beginning. *The years fly by so fast and before you know it, they'll be grown and enjoy this time before it's gone.*

We smiled and looked down at the baby in our arms. We knew they were right but we couldn't imagine not holding this child.

We knew they would grow up one day, theoretically. They would push us away, they would slam the bedroom door, they would refuse to talk to us. They would probably tell us they hated us one day. (We knew because we did all those things to our parents, too.) But we still couldn't imagine what it would really feel like to let them go.

So we practice letting go a thousand times. We let go of their chubby hand for a split second while they take their first toddling step towards the couch. We slip away for a date night while Grandma waves goodbye from the front door. We walk back alone to the car when the teacher promises they will be fine.

Each time our instinct is to reach out and pull them back to us. Each time our heart and mind are divided between need and want, us and them, now and later. Each time there is no script for when or how. Only the bittersweet truth of time and growth.

And the nagging knowledge that they are not ours to keep forever. They were never ours alone.

Today's Feast of the Presentation is this same practice for the Holy Family. Here are Mary and Joseph: brand-new, bewildered parents. Here are Anna and Simeon: expectant elders. Here is Jesus: newborn and newly named.

They are all letting go. Mary and Joseph hand over their child into the hands of strangers. These prophets hand over their expectations of what their savior would

look like.

And God lets go, too. Lets the Son of Love be brought to the temple, hinting at the heartbreak that will happen one day when Jesus comes back to Jerusalem.

Simeon whispers this terrifying truth to Mary, tries to warn her that *you yourself a sword will pierce*. But his mother can't grasp what this will mean for her child. For herself. None of us could.

We can only practice letting go in small ways. We can only trust that we'll be given strength for what's to come.

Originally posted at [Mothering Spirit](#)