

The Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple, by Ludovico Carracci (1555-1619)

Art selection and commentary by [Heidi J. Hornik](#) and [Mikeal C. Parsons](#)

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The origins of the Feast of the Presentation are obscure, but by the sixth century the observance was combined with the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin (both based on Luke 2:22–40) and celebrated on February 2 as a festival also known as Candlemas. This recently discovered work was painted by Bolognese artist Ludovico Carracci during the Italian Baroque period. The bright orange, purple, and gold garment colors are more characteristic of the earlier Mannerist period. Mary, in her customary blue gown and pink mantle, is handing the Christ Child to Simeon. All of the figures are placed on a portico outside the temple. In an unusual feature, additional mothers with their babies stand behind Joseph and Mary, waiting to have their children dedicated. Joseph has two turtledoves in his hands as an offering. The aged Anna holds a stone tablet, presumably inscribed with the words of her prophecy.