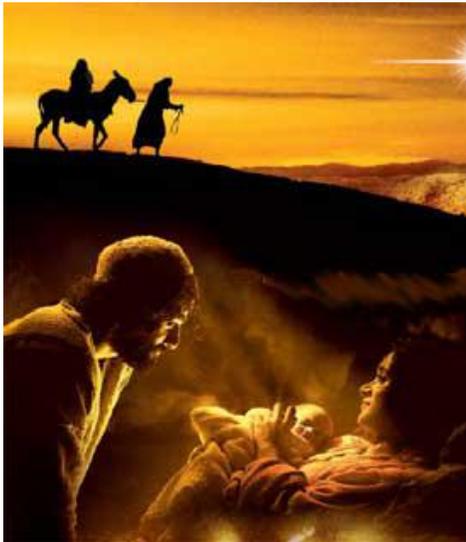


## Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

### FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Cycle B - December 27, 2020

#### OPENING PRAYER



Leader: Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!

All: For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored.

Leader: Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home;

All: your children like olive plants around your table.

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

Though Christ, our Lord. Amen.

#### FIRST READING [ Sirach 3 (2-6), (12-14) ]

***God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons.***

***Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and preserves himself from them.***

***When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother.***

***Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard.***

***Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.***

***My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; revile him not all the days of his life; kindness to a father will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt of your sins —a house raised in justice to you.***

About two centuries before Christ, the Hellenization of ideas and customs began in Palestine. Yoshua Ben Sira, the author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus book, represents the old wisdom of Israel that comes out of these foreignizing innovations. This wise man from Israel cares especially about the education of the youth and sets his eyes on the family, which has always been the bulwark of the people's traditions.

The family scheme of those times was patriarchal: father, mother and children constitute a holy order that must be preserved at all costs. Such a family privileges the past and stability, tradition and order. To maintain this structure for the benefit of Israel's spiritual heritage, Ben Sira instills in young people all those virtues that favor it: obedience, respect for the elderly, care for parents who are in need and confers on these virtues a religious value.

Our parents gave birth to us, and then they fed us, clothed and educated us, what will we give them in return? Sadly, we too often find a bad answer: at home they are strangers, on vacations they are admitted as sick people, in serious conversations we do not ask their opinion, in society they embarrass us. Parents, especially older ones, are in the way of many houses.

Our Western society progresses in knowledge, but does not practice Eastern wisdom: affection for the elderly, hospitality, listening carefully to their experience...

(1) What strikes you from this reading? Why?

(2) Read Proverbs 18: 4. Can we understand in this way the presence of the elderly among us?

SECOND READING [ Colossians 3(12-21) ]

**Brothers and sisters:**

**Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

**Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord.**

**Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them.**

**Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord.**

**Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.**

Family life according to God's will. This letter is written during Paul's first captivity in Rome. Comparing its content with that of the first reading, an enrichment is noticed that the example of Jesus gives it. Paul draws a picture of the activity and family virtues according to God. We are all chosen, loved, of God. We are therefore "saints" with holiness not necessarily moral, but ontological, which derives from baptism. By virtue of this sanctity, we must clothe ourselves internally - not exterior mimicry - with a series of virtues: kindness, humility, sweetness, understanding ... They are the social virtues that make family life and social life pleasant. Pablo already conceives the family as integrating man in society.

(1) What strikes you from this reading? Why?

(2) Saint Augustine, commenting on this reading, wrote: "just as he who neglects discipline is unfortunate, so he who rejects it is cruel". Comment on this opinion.

GOSPEL [ Luke 2 (22-40) ]

**When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, They took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord, and to offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.**

**Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.**

**He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, He took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "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 sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."**

**The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted —and you yourself a sword will pierce— so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."**

**There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with**

***fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.***

Among the huge crowd that has come to the temple, Jesus goes unnoticed. The priests, too busy with the rites they must perform, do not notice anything special. Mary and Joseph are confused with the people in such a way that God can go incognito to the appointment. But an old man and an old woman quietly wait in prayer: they wait for the Messiah, and they wait with the infinite patience of old people, whom nothing can discourage. That is why his half-closed eyes recognized the Lord. They came out to meet him.

At the foundation of the scene of the presentation is the old Jewish law according to which every firstborn is sacred - whether man or animal - is sacred, belongs to God, and therefore must be given to God or sacrificed. As human sacrifice was prohibited, the Law required a change to be made so that instead of the child a pure animal was offered.

The fact that Jesus has been "presented to the Lord" is highlighted, that is, solemnly offered to the Father. The meaning of this offering will be understood only in the light of the Calvary scene, where Jesus can no longer be replaced and will die as the authentic first-born who gives himself to the Father for the salvation of men.

Jesus has been offered to the Father and the Father responds by sending the force of his Spirit to the elderly Simeon, whom he prophesies. In his words it is discovered that the ancient Israel of hope can rest easy; His story - represented in Simeon- does not end in vain, he has seen the Savior and knows that his goal is now the triumph of life. In that life all those who hope find their meaning, because Jesus is not only the glory of the Israelite people, he is light and salvation for all men.

These words from the old Simeon hymn are beautiful, sentimentally emotional. However, glances deep inside him are a reflection of pain and struggle. That is why they culminate in the suffering destiny of Mary.

Whenever Christ goes to a meeting, to an appointment with us, he does it without noise. Today he comes like a little one, like a newborn. Tomorrow he will come discreetly, like a friend knocking on the door. At sunset he will beg our gaze, when they expose him naked on a cross. And once resurrected, he comes again, he appears, but our hands cannot hold him: we have hardly recognized him, and he has already disappeared.

(1) What strikes you from this reading? Why?

(2) The first commandment asks us to "Love God above all things." How many times do we put love of our family before love of God? How do we make family matters more important than God in our lives?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father .....**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*