

February 2, 2020

LET YOUR SERVANT GO IN PEACE!

"Now, *LORD, LET YOUR SERVANT GO IN PEACE...MY OWN EYES HAVE SEEN YOUR SALVATION: A LIGHT TO REVEAL YOU TO THE NATIONS and THE GLORY OF YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL*" (Luke 2:29-32) This is the amazing CANTICLE OF SIMEON, which all priests pray every day before going to rest (as part of the daily Night Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours). This is part of this weekend's Gospel, as exceptionally we celebrate the FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD (always February 2nd) on a Sunday this year. You may recall that last year, this Feast fell on a Saturday and Bishop Fisher came that day to bless our newly renovated Father Martin Hall.

Mary and Joseph chose to present "baby Jesus" to the temple exactly 40 DAYS after his birth (traditional time allowed for the purification of the mother). This presentation is the occasion of another EPIPHANY: GOD had revealed to an old, righteous and devout man SIMEON, filled with THE HOLY SPIRIT, that "*he should not see death before he had seen the CHRIST of the Lord*". Filled with the Holy Spirit, Simeon is praying in the temple on that day and when he takes baby Jesus in his arms, he recognizes in him "*the Messiah, the Savior of the World, the Light to the Gentiles!*" Because of this Revelation in the Temple (coming after the Revelation to the Shepherds at the Nativity and the Adoration by the Magi), the Christmas Season used to last 40 DAYS ending on February 2nd.

St Luke simply attributes to the HOLY SPIRIT the power given to Simeon to recognize the Messiah in the humble, 40-day old Jesus: "*THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS UPON SIMEON...SIMEON CAME IN THE SPIRIT INTO THE TEMPLE*". Maybe as Simeon took Jesus in his arms, the face of Baby Jesus was "transfigured", shining like the sun and he could say: "Lord, my eyes have seen your salvation: *A LIGHT TO REVEAL YOU TO THE NATIONS*".

Simeon also makes the prediction that "*A SWORD WILL PIERCE JESUS' MOTHER MARY*." This announces that Mary will endure great suffering because of her son. She will accompany Jesus through his Passion and will be at the FOOT OF THE CROSS when HE is dying for our SALVATION.

How can we apply to our Christian life Simeon's own encounter with Christ and Mary?

We too like Simeon are seeking PEACE and we too like Simeon HOPE we can find PEACE, lasting PEACE. All of us can learn from Simeon. I suggest that you meditate on this beautiful passage from Luke's Gospel. Just read the first 14 verses: Luke 2:22-35. Put yourself in the story. You are praying in the temple of Jerusalem. You see Joseph and Mary enter with the infant Jesus being held in the arms of his mother. You notice this old, holy man Simeon

take Jesus into his own arms and you listen to him pray aloud to God (above mentioned Canticle of Simeon) and then you are amazed by his prediction to Jesus' mother Mary that "*her child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a SIGN to be contradicted - and YOU MARY A SWORD WILL PIERCE - so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed*." Use your imagination and all your senses (eyes, ears, heart) and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in reflecting on some of the following questions (whichever you find more relevant given your current challenges and desires for change):

1. What is the greatest desire I have today? If I encounter Jesus today and he asks me: "What do you want me to give you right now?" What do I answer: more money? More pleasure of the senses? More power and more control of my own life? Or do I ask him to help me take away the chains that attach me to sins, including any addiction I may have to money, power, sex, food, alcohol? Do I ask JESUS TO STAY WITH ME AND TO HELP ME TO FOLLOW HIM WHEREVER HE WANTS ME TO GO?

2. Is my life focused on God (like Simeon) or on the short lived attachments to this world? Do I have the Faith and Hope of Simeon, i.e. that one day I will have an amazing personal experience of encountering Jesus Christ here on earth and then that at the end of my journey on earth I will be at PEACE WITH JESUS CHRIST forever and ever? Am I prepared like Simeon to let the HOLY SPIRIT guide all my decisions? Or would I rather rely entirely on my own efforts?

3. Can I imagine how Mary felt in her encounter with Simeon, this mix of JOY and SORROW? Like Mary, in order to be totally with Jesus Christ and be SAVED, can I ACCEPT the SWORD OF SORROW to PIERCE MY HEART? Can I join Mary at the foot of the CROSS? Can I look up to Jesus dying on the CROSS for my sins and can I feel the immense, personal LOVE HE has for me?

COME HOLY SPIRIT! HELP ME TO SEE JESUS AS MY GUIDING LIGHT! STRENGTHEN ME! HELP ME TO ACCEPT MY SUFFERINGS AND CARRY MY OWN CROSS WELL! GIVE ME HOPE IN MOMENTS OF DESOLATION! TAKE AWAY MY CHAINS TO SINFULNESS! HELP ME TO GO TO CONFESSION REGULARLY AND WHENEVER IN STATE OF MORTAL SIN! HELP ME TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE HURT ME! HELP ME TO LOVE EVERYONE INCLUDING MY ENEMIES! HELP ME TO FIND JOY IN RECEIVING JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST! HELP ME TO BE GOD'S FAITHFUL SERVANT AND FIND PEACE!

One in Christ,  
Fr. Alain