

Holy Family Sunday

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.

You can only imagine the shock of Mary and Joseph when they brought Jesus to be offered in the temple. They knew they were not famous. They knew they were very poor; they couldn't even afford a lamb for sacrifice. They were just another tiny family from the boondocks that came to the capital to follow the law of their faith.

How shocked they must have been when all of a sudden people started speaking prophecies over their son. Of course, they remembered what had happened so far. They remembered the Annunciation, the Nativity, and all the amazing events around the Child Jesus. Yet nothing can prepare a person for a moment like this: when the Child is brought to the ancient temple of the Lord, the temple feels like it's been waiting for Him always.

The prophecy of Simeon is the vocal expression of what every rock, every decoration, and every priest who ever served in that temple could say: My destiny is fulfilled. The existence of this temple is absolutely complete. The Lord is present here.

They probably knew, and certainly felt, that in this moment when Jesus is brought to the temple, the great ancient circle of God's love is completed. The first step of the revelation of the Father's love to the world is done. When Jesus comes to fulfill the law in the temple, this law is truly fulfilled, it achieves its utmost goal, it becomes the true worship, true prayer, and true adoration of God.

When the prophecy of Simeon ends, Mary and Joseph hear that something new is beginning among them; a new era of mankind is being opened with this Child they are bringing. It is this Child who will bring new life and truth to human hearts.

This Gospel is a perfect celebration of the Holy Family; a family united by the love of the Father, a family entrusted with God's life, and a family that is marking the fulfillment of God's promise for the future. The true Father, who really is the initiator and protector of this family, reveals himself to us again.

By entrusting into our hands his beloved Son and by receiving him in the ancient ceremony that he himself gave to his people, in this very moment, He gives to us a gift of a new family. Family in which human love is brought to fulfillment in the mysteries of God's love, where it finds its source and its completion. In this new family, a man and a woman united by the true presence of Jesus Christ, support each other in the pilgrimage to the love of the Father in heaven. When they do that, they are already purified by that love and guided by it to the fulfillments of their own lives and their own vocations. This way, their family becomes the new temple of the Lord. As modern theology calls it: a home Church. The community that becomes the dwelling place of God and a place where we learn the dignity of the human person.