

GOSPEL

Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

'Now, Master,
you can let your servant go in peace,
just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the nations to see,
a light to enlighten the pagans
and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

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Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Gospel shows them to us in the temple of Jerusalem for the presentation of the Baby to the Lord (cf. Lk 2:22-40). [The Holy Family] arrives in the temple bearing the humblest and simplest among the prescribed offerings as a gift, a testimony to their poverty. In the end, Mary receives a prophecy: "And a sword will pierce through your own soul" (v. 35). They arrive in poverty, and set out again loaded with suffering. This is surprising — but how is it that Jesus' Family, the only family in history who can boast the presence of God in flesh and blood within it, be poor instead of rich! Rather than having things easy, it seems that this family meets obstacles! Instead of being free from hardship, it is immersed in tremendous sorrows!

What does this way of living, the story of the Holy Family, poor, faced with obstacles and great sorrow, tell our families? It tells us something very beautiful: God, whom we often imagine to be beyond problems, came to live in our life and its problems. This is how he came to us. He did not come as a fully grown adult, but very little. He lived in a family, as the son of a mother and father. He spent most of his time there, growing, learning, in a life made up of ordinariness, hiddenness and silence. And he did not avoid difficulties. Rather, by choosing a family, a family that was "expert in suffering", he says this to our families: "If you are facing difficulties, I know what you are experiencing. I experienced it. I, my mother and my father, we experienced it so we could say to your family too: You are not alone"!

Joseph and Mary "marvelled at what was said about [Jesus]" (cf. Lk 2:33) because they never thought that the elderly Simeon and the prophetess Anna would say these things. They marvelled. I want to reflect on this today, on their ability to marvel. Being able to marvel is a secret for moving forward well as a family, not getting used to the ordinariness of things; knowing instead how to marvel at God who accompanies us. And then marvelling in our families. I think it is good for couples to know how to marvel at one's own spouse, taking him or her by the hand, for example,

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and looking the other tenderly in the eyes for a few seconds in the evening. Marvelling always leads to tenderness. Tenderness in a marriage is beautiful. And then, to marvel at the miracle of life, of children, taking time to play with them and to listen to them. I ask you, fathers and mothers: Do you find time to play with your children? To take them for a walk? Yesterday, I heard from someone on the telephone, and I asked her: “Where are you?” “Oh, I’m in the park. I took my children for a walk”. This is good parenting. And then, to marvel at the wisdom of grandparents. We often shut grandparents out of our lives. No: grandparents are a source of wisdom. Let us learn how to marvel at the wisdom of our grandparents, at their stories. Grandparents bring life back to what is essential. Lastly, to marvel at our own story of love — each of us has our own, and the Lord made us walk in love — to marvel at this. Our lives certainly have negative aspects. But also marvelling at God’s kindness in walking with us, even though we are not such experts at it.

May Mary, Queen of the family, help us marvel. Today, let us ask for the grace of being able to marvel. May Our Lady help us to be marvelled at what is good every day, and to know how to teach others the beauty of marvelling.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Simeon and Anna recognised God's presence in an ordinary child. What does their example teach us about seeing God at work in everyday life?



Heart: Pope Francis speaks about the importance of wonder. When was the last time you genuinely marvelled at God's goodness in your life, your family, or another person?



Hands: What is one ordinary gift, relationship, or moment you could intentionally give thanks for this week? How might practising gratitude help you see God more clearly?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.