Feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (B)

Gospel text (*Lk* 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 Messiah 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.

“They took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord”

Fr. Joan Ant. MATEO i García
(Tremp, Lleida, Spain)

Today, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. Our gaze shifts from the center of the nativity scene—Jesus—to contemplate Mary and Joseph close to Him. The eternal Son of the Father goes from the eternal family, which is the Holy Trinity, to the earthly family formed by Mary and Joseph. How important the family must be in the eyes of God when the first thing He provides for His Son is a family!

Saint John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter "Rosarium Virginis Mariae," highlights once again the crucial importance of the family as the foundation of the Church and human society, asking us to pray for families and to pray as a family with the Holy Rosary to revitalize this institution. If the family is doing well, both society and the Church will do well.

The Gospel tells us that the Child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. Jesus found the warmth of a family that was built through their mutual relationships of love. How beautiful and beneficial it would be if we strived more and more to build our family: with a spirit of service and prayer, with mutual love, with a great capacity to understand and forgive. We would taste—like in the home of Nazareth—heaven and earth! Building the family is today one of the most urgent tasks. Parents, as Vatican Council II reminded, play an irreplaceable role here: "Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered." In the family, we learn the most important thing: how to be people.

Finally, to talk about family for Christians is to talk about the Church. The evangelist Saint Luke tells us that Jesus' parents took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. That offering was a figure of Jesus' sacrificial offering to the Father, from which Christians are born. Considering this joyful reality will open us to greater fraternity and lead us to love the Church more.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Nazareth is the school in which we begin to understand the Gospel. Oh, how We would like to repeat, so close to Mary, our introduction to the genuine knowledge of the meaning of life!.” (Saint Paul VI)

- “Jesus' family was a family like all others and as such, it is a model of conjugal love, collaboration, sacrifice and entrustment to divine Providence ..., of all those values that the family safeguards and promotes, making an important contribution to forming the fabric of every society.” (Benedict XVI)

- “The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 533)