The Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas

Gospel text (*Lk* 2:22-35): When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, the parents of Jesus 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: “Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you prepared in the sight of every people, a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of 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.”

“Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation”

Fr. Daniel MEYNEN
(Saint Aubain, Namur, Belgium)

Today, December 29th, we celebrate Saint King David. But it is the entire family of David that the Church wishes to honor, and above all the most illustrious of them all: Jesus, the Son of God, Son of David! Today, in that eternal “today” of the Son of God, the Old Covenant from the time of King David is realized and fulfilled in all its fullness. For, as today's Gospel recounts, the Child Jesus is presented in the Temple by his parents to fulfill the ancient Law: “When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, the parents of Jesus 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’” (Luke 2:22-23).

Today, the old prophecy is eclipsed to make way for the new: He whom King David had announced when he sang his messianic psalms has finally entered the Temple of God! Today is the great day when he whom Saint Luke calls Simeon will soon leave this world of darkness to enter into the vision of eternal Light: “Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you prepared in the sight of every people” (Luke 2:29-32).

We too, who are the Temple of God in which his Spirit dwells (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16), must be attentive to receiving Jesus within ourselves. If today we have the joy of receiving Communion, let us ask Mary, the Mother of God, to intercede for us before her Son: that the old self may die and that the new self (cf. Colossians 3:10) may be born in our entire being, so that we may become the new prophets, those who announce to the whole world the presence of the thrice-holy God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

Like Simeon, let us be prophets through the death of the “old self!” As Saint John Paul II said, "The fullness of the Spirit of God is accompanied (...) first of all through that interior availability which comes from faith. The aged Simeon, the ‘righteous and devout man’ sensed this at the moment of Jesus' presentation in the Temple."

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “If He had not been born in time, you would have been dead for all eternity. Let us joyfully celebrate the coming of our salvation and redemption.” (Saint Augustine)

- “Simeon recognized that Child as the Savior, but he foresaw in the Spirit that the destinies of humanity would be played out around him. Having “touched” the Salvation, the enthusiasm of Simeon was so great that to live and to die were one and the same.” (Benedict XVI)

- “The presentation of Jesus in the temple shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord. With Simeon and Anna (...) Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the ‘light to the nations’ and the ‘glory of Israel’, but also ‘a sign that is spoken against’. The sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ's perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had ‘prepared in the presence of all peoples’.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 529)

Other comments

“My own eyes have seen the salvation”

Fr. Joaquim MONRÓS i Guitart
(Tarragona, Spain)

Today, we contemplate the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, to accomplish what the Law of Moses prescribes: mother's purification and presentation and ransom of the firstborn child.

This scene is described by Saint Josemaría Escrivá in the fourth Joyful mystery of his book The Holy Rosary, while inviting us to get involved in it: “This time, my friend, it will be up to you to bring the cage with the turtledoves. —Do you realize? She —the Immaculate!— submits to the law as if she was unclean. Will you ever learn, you silly child, to submit, no matter what personal sacrifices, to God's Holy Law?”

“Purified! It is certainly you and I who need to be purified! To atone, and, over and above atonement, Love. —A love that sears, that burns away our soul's dirt, and a fire, that inflames with divine flames our heart's misery.”

This Christmas it is appropriate to take advantage of Mary's example to “clean” our soul, by making a sincere sacramental confession and to be able to receive our Lord with our best attitude. Thus, Joseph offers the pair of turtledoves, but most of all, with his work and his pure love, he offers his own capacity to carry forward God's established plan for the Holy Family, example to all families.

The Holy Spirit had assured Simeon that he would not die before seeing the Christ. He goes to the Temple and when, full of joy, he holds in his arms the Messiah, he says: “Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation.” (Lk 2:29-30). With the eyes of faith, this Christmas, let us contemplate Jesus who, with His birth, has come to save us. Just as Simeon intoned a thanksgiving song, let all the families gather around the manger and, together, sing in joy, for we are aware the infant Jesus has saved us.