

February 2nd: The Presentation of the Lord

Gospel text (Lk 2,22-40): When the day came for the purification according to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the baby up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God. And they offered a sacrifice as ordered in the law of the Lord: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

There lived in Jerusalem at this time a very upright and devout man named Simeon; the Holy Spirit was in him. He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel, and he had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord. So he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit at the time the parents brought the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law.

Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying, «Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace, for you have fulfilled your word and my eyes have seen your salvation, which you display for all the people to see. Here is the light you will reveal to the nations and the glory of your people Israel».

His father and mother wondered at what was said about the child. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, «See him; he will be for the rise or fall of the multitudes of Israel. He shall stand as a sign of con-tra-diction, while a sword will pierce your own soul. Then the secret thoughts of many may be brought to light».

There was also a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of

the tribe of Asher. After leaving her father's home, she had been seven years with her husband, and since then she had been continually about the Temple, serving God as a widow night and day in fasting and prayer. She was now eighty-four. Co-ming up at that time, she gave praise to God and spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When the parents had fulfilled all that was required by the law of the Lord, they returned to their town, Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew in stature and strength and was filled with wisdom: the grace of God was upon him.

«Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace»

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Today, we see how Simeon, ignoring the winter's cold, is awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. Five hundred years before, when the Temple was starting to be built there was such poverty in the country that its builders were highly discouraged. It was then when Haggai, the prophet, said: «‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house’, says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace’, declares the Lord Almighty» (Hag 2:9); and added «I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory» (Hag 2:7). Words that admit different meanings; some will say «the dearest one», while saint Jeronim will say «the desired of all nations».

The Holy Spirit had assured Simeon «that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord» (Lk 2:26), and today, «led by the Holy Spirit» he has gone into the Temple. He is not a levite, nor a scribe, nor a doctor of the law, he is just «a very upright and devout man that looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel» (Lk 2:25). But the Holy Spirit blows where it wills (cf. Jn 3:8).

Now, he realizes with surprise that no preparation has been made, no flags, garlands, damasks or shields can be seen anywhere. Just Joseph and Mary, crossing the esplanade, and bringing de Child Jesus in their arms. «Lift up your heads, O

you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in» (Ps 24:), claims de psalmist.

Stretching his arms Simeon takes the Infant from his Mother and bless God while saying: «Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace, for you have fulfilled your word and my eyes have seen your salvation, which you display for all the people to see. Here is the light you will reveal to the nations and the glory of your people Israel» (Lk 2:29-32).