

Gospel for 29 December: Robbing a Piece of Heaven

Gospel for the fifth day of the Christmas Octave, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 2:22-35*)

And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law

of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,

according to thy word;

for mine eyes have seen thy salvation

which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,

a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to thy people Israel.”

And his father and his mother
marveled at what was said about
him; and Simeon blessed them and
said to Mary his mother,

Behold, this child is set for the fall
and rising of many in Israel,
and for a sign that is spoken against
(and a sword will pierce through
your own soul also),
that thoughts out of many hearts
may be revealed.”

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Commentary

Simeon lived with hope. What a
precious virtue! It is one of the
greatest gifts that God gives us when

we are baptized. He places in our soul the ability to wait with certainty for everything we need, because God loves us as dearly beloved children. The human heart is filled with desires. While living on this earth, we sense the desire to attain goodness, happiness, because we have been created for God, the Highest Good and source of unending happiness. We live in hope, which gives wings to faith and love. In contrast, those who don't ask God to increase their hope and fail to foster it, easily fall prey to discouragement. A person without hope lives trapped in a world without love. We have to be "thieves" of hope, stealing a little piece of heaven, as Saint Josemaría said, for those who are going through a bad time. We need to ask our Lord, through the intercession of our Lady, *Spes nostra*, to bring the light of hope to every heart.

All the persons in this scene go to the Temple led by God: Simeon, moved by the Spirit; Mary and Joseph to fulfill a precept of Moses, which is a divine precept. We need to let God lead us in our own lives, to go with Him everywhere and bring Him to all men and women. Thus we will fulfill our mission on earth and attain the joy of Heaven.

Mary and Joseph are amazed at what Simeon says about the newborn Child. Through the old man's words, God reveals new things to them: that the child will be a sign that is spoken against in Israel and that a sword will pierce Mary's soul, pointing to the future passion and death of the child God. And once again the hearts of Mary and Joseph respond "yes" to God's will, although the announcement is both joyful and painful at the same time, for they know that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

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