

## THE HOLY FAMILY– 27th December 2020

### AND THE CHILD GREW AND BECAME STRONG, FILLED WITH WISDOM

–Biblical Commentary by Father . Alberto Maggi OSM

#### Luke 2,22-40

*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 who first 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, waiting 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 would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit 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 you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your 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 appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

*And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.*

Thirty-three days after Jesus' circumcision, the parents, Mary and Joseph, took the child to Jerusalem, to the temple, to fulfill two regulations of the law; the first is that of the purification of the mother prescribed in the book of Leviticus, it was necessary to bring an offering of a lamb, but for the poorest, two pigeons or turtledoves were enough, as Mary and Joseph did. The other, regulation, in the book of Exodus, was the ransom of the firstborn son. God wanted each firstborn male to be completely his, if the parents wanted the child they had to pay the price of the ransom. The ransom was five silver coins, twenty days of work. Well, the evangelist presents Mary and Joseph who are still under the weight of the law and the term "law" will be quoted in this passage five times like the five books written by Moses. But, while Mary and Joseph go up to the temple to fulfill the law, here comes the man of the Spirit, Simeon, who wants to prevent the useless rite. And there is the meeting between the two where Simeon who takes the child from his parents' arms, blesses him and here the evangelist reports the themes he has already presented at the

announcement of the Angel to the shepherds, of the birth of Jesus. There were two elements that were those of light, the shepherds expected to become incinerated by the wrath of God, instead they were faced by love, by the light of the Lord, and when they tell what happened to them, everyone is disconcerted. Well, here the evangelist reports the theme of light and the theme of bewilderment.

The theme of the light is that Simeon speaking and blessing the child says he will be, “*a light for revelation to the Gentiles,..*” The term used by the evangelist, is the Greek ‘*etne*’ (phonetic), from which comes ethnic, indicating the gentile peoples and this is disconcerting. Tradition said that Israel with the Messiah had to dominate the gentiles and instead here is the announcement of the man of the Spirit. No the love of the Lord is universal and reaches also the gentiles. And this, the evangelist writes, the father and mother of Jesus were amazed and troubled, there is something wrong, something new.

Then suddenly Simeon speaks to Mary with a blessing that seems dramatic, he says “*..and a sword will pierce through your own soul..*” What does it mean? This sword in no way has the meaning of pain, of the pains that Mary that she will have to face in her life; the sword in the bible is an image of the word of God. In the letter to the Hebrews IV, 12 there is a beautiful description that the author gives of this sword, he says “*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*” What is Simone saying ? He is saying to the mother that “**the word of this Son will force you to make painful choices**”. And just as Mary welcomed the words of the angel and became the mother of Jesus, now she will have to welcome the words of the Son to **continue her growth and become his disciple.**