



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 27th 2020 – The Holy Family

1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself might pray the text over the next few days.
4. Over the next week, set aside times to come back more than once to the passage. You could read it all or part of it again, slowly. Perhaps there is a special word for you in this passage of Scripture? Keep this word or phrase in your thoughts and gently repeat it, bringing it to mind and allowing God to speak to you in your heart.
5. Finally, come back to the text to conclude: What is God in this scripture asking of you this week? What is the one challenge, one little change you are asked to make or the thing you have been asked to do? Then say a prayer of thanksgiving for the good news in the passage. End in quiet prayer.



THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Luke 2:22-40

The child Jesus was presented to God, then lived at home in Nazareth

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 firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'



Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by 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 favour of God was upon him.

A Short Thought

The Feast of the Presentation, sometimes called the Feast of Meeting, is, at its core, a feast of longing. This feast reveals the longing between humanity and divinity. Our deepest longings are to know and be known. That can only ever really happen in relationship to God. This is not about gathering information or learning about God. This kind of knowing is of the heart not the intellect. It is about the union that sets us free, the oneness that allows us to depart in peace, and the relationship that is salvation. For this to happen we must live with and offer the fragility, vulnerability, and joy of an open and longing heart. That heart is the temple of meeting, the place where today we find Mary and Joseph, Anna, Simeon, and Jesus.

Longing is not an absence or emptiness waiting to be filled. Longing is a presence and fullness waiting to be expressed, manifested. Two persons do not long for each other because they are apart. They long for each other because they are in love.

We are sometimes too quick to quench the longing, to satisfy the desire. That never takes us to the temple. It keeps life superficial and us moving from one "fix" to another. Longing, however, if trusted and followed always takes us to the temple, the place of meeting, and we discover that we already hold the baby.

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

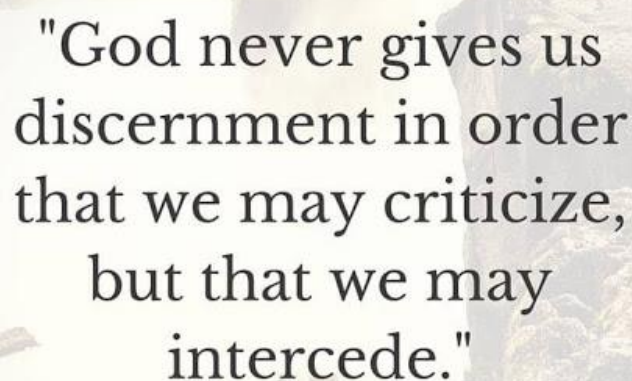
1. It was a day that started without any expectation of something unusual. It turned out to be a day with a meeting they would remember for a long time. Perhaps you have had significant meetings on what you expected to be just an ordinary day?
2. Mary and Joseph fulfilled the law and made the offering of the poor – two turtle doves. Then the focus switched to two older people from different backgrounds but they had faith in common. Both uttered words of hope. Simeon saw Jesus as 'a light of revelation to the Gentiles'. Anna spoke about the child 'to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem'. Who are those who have been a witness to your faith?
3. For St Luke the Holy Spirit is never far away. Here the Spirit is helping an old man to recognise that God is closer to him than he could have ever hoped. This fills Simeon's heart with joy. The Holy Spirit dwells in me too: I am his temple! But is he perhaps only a quiet lodger whom I hardly notice? Where do I see the Spirit at work in my life?
4. The final sentence speaks of Jesus as one who grew and became strong and was filled with wisdom. recall times when you had a sense of growing up in some way. What brought that about? Think also of how you have seen growth in another person.

Prayer -

Loving God, you cradle us at the beginning of life and embrace us at our journey's end, for you love us as your own. Bind our families together and deepen our faith, that, like the Holy Family of Nazareth, we may grow in wisdom and be guided by your word. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen**

Prayer in these uncertain times

We pray for all those in our country and throughout the world suffering from the Corona Virus. May its victims and their families be strengthened by the support of our community of faith and restored soon to full health. We also pray for our leaders and medical personnel who deal with the virus. May we keep calm and may we join together in solidarity with care and compassion to tackle this emergency. This we ask in confidence through Christ Our Lord. Amen



"God never gives us discernment in order that we may criticize, but that we may intercede."

- Oswald Chambers