

2. February 2023

“A light of revelation for the gentiles
and glory for your people Israel”

Lk 2:22-40

And when the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord- observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord- and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to the restoration 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 until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

*Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised;
for my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have made ready in the sight of the nations;
a light of revelation for the gentiles
and glory for your people Israel.*

As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed- and a sword will pierce your soul too - so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess, too, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came up just at that moment

and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And as the child grew to maturity, he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

The so-called “Nunc Dimittis” resounds every evening in the monks' Compline and recalls the words of the aged Simeon, which he spoke in the Temple of Jerusalem when he saw Jesus and His parents offering Him and their sacrifice prescribed by the Law, to the Lord.

What joy for the righteous and pious Simeon, who waited for the consolation of Israel and then recognized revealed by the Spirit in the child Jesus the Messiah. His longing had been fulfilled, his eyes were allowed to behold salvation.

When I read these words, my heart becomes a little heavy. So many of his brothers in faith still lack this decisive revelation, lack the enlightenment that the consolation of Israel is none other than the child whom the aged Simeon took in his arms and spoke the wonderful words:

*“Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised;
for my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have made ready in the sight of the nations;
a light of revelation for the gentiles
and glory for your people Israel.”*

It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to recognize the One who brings salvation to all peoples in the child that Mary and Joseph brought to the Temple.

Those who have been listening to my interpretations for a long time know that the enlightenment of Israel is a very great concern of mine. It is important not only for the Jews, but for the whole world and the Church, that the “firstborn”, after so long a journey and so many centuries in a foreign land, arrives at home (*cf. Rom 11:15*). Home is not first and foremost the State of Israel. No, the home is what Simeon says: the seeing of the salvation that God made ready in the sight of the nations; a light of revelation for

the gentiles and glory for His people Israel. In other words, the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God. He is the Messiah for Israel and for all nations!

We all know that only the Holy Spirit can give this knowledge. But it is precisely for the Holy Spirit that we can pray fervently.

It is a desire of the Heart of God that all people come to the knowledge of His Son (cf. 1 Tim 2:4). It is also an ardent desire of the Apostle Paul that his brothers in the faith recognize the Lord, as he expresses it in the Letter to the Romans (9:2-5):

“There is great sorrow and unremitting agony in my heart: I could pray that I myself might be accursed and cut off from Christ, if this could benefit the brothers who are my own flesh and blood. They are Israelites; it was they who were adopted as children, the glory was theirs and the covenants; to them were given the Law and the worship of God and the promises. To them belong the fathers and out of them, so far as physical descent is concerned, came Christ who is above all, God, blessed for ever. Amen.”

We too can, by our prayer, do our part so that the enlightenment of the People of Israel may take place and the promises thus be fulfilled, because *“there is no change of mind on God's part about the gifts he has made or of his choice”* (Rom 11:29).