



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, CYCLE B

Fr. David Rosenberg

Institute for Spiritual Direction

*The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Luke 2:40*

Our Gospel this week for the Holy Family is the fulfillment of the prophet Samuel, as recorded in the Old Testament Book of 1 Samuel. Luke also includes his themes of fulfillment, universalism, the importance of women, the ministry of witness and the rejection and suffering that Christ's coming will entail.

Joseph and Mary travel to the temple to fulfill the requirements of the Law, particularly two customs: the purification of the mother and the redemption of the first-born. Jesus is brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus will return to Jerusalem at age twelve, "*The loss of the child, Jesus, in the Temple*" (see Luke 2:41-51) and again in the Passion Narrative (see Luke 22-23).

When Jesus, Mary and Joseph arrive at the Temple, they encounter Simeon and Anna, two elders faithfully representing those who have awaited the Messiah. Simeon's words form the theological core of the passage, prayed daily in the Liturgy of the Hours Night Prayer (see *Canticle of Simeon Luke 2:29-32*) where Simeon proclaims the significance of Christ's birth. Then he speaks of Christ's destiny, indicating the conflict and suffering that will mark his ministry. Centuries later, this will become the first of seven core reflections for Our Lady of Sorrows. The Prophecy of Simeon: "*Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted—and you yourself a sword will pierce—and that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*" Luke 2:34-35

Reflecting Luke's continual inclusion of women in the gospel, he has Anna the prophetess join Simeon in recognizing the child and praising God. She also becomes the first evangelist, speaking about the child "*to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.*"

After fulfilling the requirements of the Law, Mary and Joseph return with Jesus to Galilee. The final verse describes Jesus as growing and learning, a reminder for us that he is truly human, like us in all things but sin. *The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Luke 2:40*

The presence of grace is the central reality of the Holy Family, and is passed on to every Christian family. Theologian John Shea summarizes his thoughts on this Feast of the Holy Family, in a reflection that will be good for us to ponder this week:

*"Family holiness is not about perfection. It is about people living in close relationship to one another, in ministry, and discerning opportunities for their shared holiness to flourish. Family members must be alert to cooperate with each individual situation in terms of what it offers. Each must be confident, through daily affirmation, that their spiritual center is capable of contributing to the life that they as family share."*

This is the question to ask your family:

*"Are we ready to act on the call of the Holy Spirit to better our life together?"*

*Bless us, Oh Lord!*

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke**

When the days were completed for their purification  
according to the law of Moses,  
They took him up to Jerusalem  
to present him to the Lord,  
just as it is written in the law of the Lord,  
Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord,  
and to offer the sacrifice of  
a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,  
in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.  
This man was righteous and devout,  
awaiting the consolation of Israel,  
and the Holy Spirit was upon him.  
It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit  
that he should not see death  
before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.  
He came in the Spirit into the temple;  
and when the parents brought in the child Jesus  
to perform the custom of the law in regard to him,  
He took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:  
“Now, Master, you may let your servant go  
in peace, according to your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you prepared in sight of all the peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and glory for your people Israel.”  
The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was said about him;  
and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,  
“Behold, this child is destined  
for the fall and rise of many in Israel,  
and to be a sign that will be contradicted  
—and you yourself a sword will pierce—  
so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”  
There was also a prophetess, Anna,  
the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.  
She was advanced in years,  
having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage,  
and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.  
She never left the temple,  
but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer.  
And coming forward at that very time,  
she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child  
to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions  
of 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 favor of God was upon him.