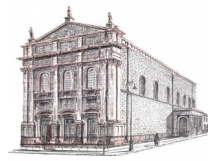




PARISH OF ST. AGATHA

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POPE FRANCIS: THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD

At the Mass for the Presentation of the Lord, Pope Francis focused on the words of Simeon when he encountered Christ in the Temple “My eyes have seen your salvation” (Lk 2:30). Speaking directly to consecrated men and women (Priests, Brothers and Nuns), present for the World Day of Consecrated Life, the Pope said that they, like Simeon, “are simple men and women who caught sight of the treasure worth more than any worldly good”. The ability to recognise Jesus, to see “what really matters in life”, is at the heart of religious life, he said.

KNOWING HOW TO SEE GRACE

This vision, he explained, begins with “knowing how to see grace”, especially by seeing how God works in our lives, “not only in life’s grand moments, but also in our fragility and weakness. He warned that “seeing things in a worldly way” is a great temptation in religious life, which can lead to a loss of passion, sadness, distrust. Being able “to perceive God’s grace for us, like Simeon”, on the other hand, gives meaning to the gift of voluntary poverty, chastity, and obedience.

TO SERVE NOT TO BE SERVED

Continuing his reflection on the figure of Simeon, Pope Francis said that he “sees Jesus as small, humble, the one who has come to serve, not to be served, and defines Himself as *servant*”. Seeing Jesus in this way, and being able to see things as He does, will teach us how “to live in order to serve”. The Pope said “we need to have a gaze that seeks out our neighbour”; and religious are called to bring that gaze into our world.

WAITING FULL OF HOPE

Finally, Pope Francis said “the eyes of Simeon saw salvation because they were expecting it. They were eyes that were waiting, full of hope”. Like Simeon and Anna in the Temple, religious must have hope. The secret, he said, is “never to alienate oneself from the Lord, who is the source of hope”. The Holy Father concluded his homily with the exhortation, “Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank God for the gift of the consecrated life and ask of him a new way of looking, that knows how to see grace, how to look for one’s neighbour, how to hope”. “Then”, he said, “our eyes too will see salvation”. (Vatican News Christopher Wells).

PRESENTATION OF THE LIGHT WHO IS THE LORD

The elderly woman Anna, in today’s Gospel (Lk 2:22-40), is a symbol of the Old People of Israel, who were fasting and praying, watching and waiting for the First Coming of the Messiah. She was now a widow which symbolises the poor and the vulnerable of society, who Jesus came into the world to save. In today’s world, she represents us, the New Church, the New People of Israel, because we too, in this generation, are called to watch and wait for the Second Coming of the Messiah, when He will come as our Judge. She was married for seven years, symbolising the Seven Sacraments of the New Church that weds us to God through Christ. *Anna began to praise God; and she spoke of the child*, which is what we are also called to do as members of the Church, by praying as one voice, in Mass and with our families. The turtledoves are monogamous creatures, meaning they remain in union with each other for life. This mirrors the eternal covenant (marriage) between God and humanity.

A CANDLE LIGHT OF FAITH TO GUIDE US IN DARKNESS

The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that *he would not die until he had laid eyes on Christ the Lord*. He recognised Jesus immediately referring to Him as, *a Light to enlighten the Pagans*, hence Candle-mas referring to the Light of Faith, and seeing Him as *the Glory of Your People Israel*, (the Glory of Your Church today). Simeon also prophesied that Jesus, would be destined for *rejection* by humanity, who He created. He told Mary she too would suffer from the rejection, saying that a *Sword would pierce her Soul too*. We have come to know the sword as the Seven Swords of Sorrow.

JESUS FREES US FROM SLAVERY TO THE DEVIL

Simeon reveals that this child Jesus would be *destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel*. If the country Israel, at that time, symbolises our future Church today, then the Prophet is saying that the destined Presence of Jesus on earth will cause people to either reject or accept Him. To obey His Teachings and live by the Word of God will cause the soul to rise in the Resurrection from the Dead to eternal Life. But to disobey Jesus’ teachings will cause the soul to fall into eternal damnation. Jesus has come into the world to Save us from *the power of the Devil* (Heb 2:14-18), in order to set us free or rescue us (redeem us) *from slavery* to sin. Priests, Brothers and Nuns renew their vows of obedience to their ministry today, to serve God through His People.

OUR FUTURE DESTINY CAN BE OUR CHOICE

People who Accept His Help and His Word, will never *fear death*, but be found destined for their *Rising* in the Resurrection. The choice is ours. Jesus does not condemn, we sadly condemn ourselves. The second reading of Hebrews which was written by St. Paul, tells us today that Jesus came *to atone* (make amends) *for human sins*. He presented Himself as the ultimate Human Sacrifice to conquer Death, by rising from the Dead. He went through all this Human Suffering for us. This ultimate act of Love and Mercy on Calvary is frowned upon by so *many*. But for the *many* true Believers, who do their best to conquer temptation and avoid sin - a great reward awaits us. Jesus *went through temptation* on this earth and *is able to help others who are tempted*. We cannot fight temptation or the devil alone. We must always turn to Jesus and collaborate with the Grace He sends us, through Mary. That is why Jesus exists, to be the Light leading us out of the Darkness of sin and to deliver us from all Evil into the Eternal Light of Heaven. God bless, Fr. Brendan.