

GOSPEL PEARLS

An offering for us

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When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph took Jesus 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 the 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. (Lk 2:22-40)*

The presentation of the infant Jesus at the Temple by Joseph and Mary to offer Him to the Father as prescribed for all the firstborn of Israel, is contemplated in the fourth Joyful Mystery of the Holy Rosary. With reflection, it's apparent this episode also constitutes an anticipation of the fifth Luminous Mystery and of the first Sorrowful Mystery, when Jesus, respectively, freely offers himself to the Father with the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday and when he accepts His Will in Gethsemane. With these acts Jesus cleanses us of our sins, taking them away for free at the cost of

assuming the consequences. Let's not allow Jesus's gratuitous offer to be made in vain by living as if our salvation depended on our good deeds and not on God.