

Genesis 15:1-6, 21:1-3;  
Psalm 105;  
Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19;  
Luke 2:22-40

## Holy Family



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. [...] 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.”

I can just picture this moving scene: the elderly Simeon, a man of the Spirit, takes into his arms the One awaited since the creation of the world, the One who is the Lord of all, the mighty Messiah to whom everyone looks for liberation, the One who will return to the temple so as to destroy the injustices of the world and reign over the whole earth—this person has finally arrived in the form of a child. He is placed in the arms of Simeon, in my arms and yours. Simeon chants the prayer recited at Compline—the concluding prayer of the day; the concluding prayer of one’s life. My life has meaning, it attains fulfillment, when I take this Love into my arms, when I recognize the amazing things the Lord has accomplished in me. The meaning of my life can be found in this warm embrace. Simeon holds salvation in his arms—a salvation the Lord has prepared for all peoples.

Like Joseph and Mary, I too am astonished at his words. What it comes down to is that I can’t understand why salvation is offered to everyone: to the just and the unjust, to believers and atheists alike. Simeon blesses the little family and then says to Mary: “This child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted.” The life of Jesus is a scandal to everyone because no one is ready to accept the kind of Messiah he is, not even his disciples. They too will fail him. We all fail him. We are scandalized by a small and vulnerable God who takes upon himself the evils of the world. And yet, by doing so, he makes resurrection possible for everyone. He is a sign of contradiction: a contradiction of all the ineffective thoughts of human beings. He lays bare the false reasoning of our hearts and reveals to us the truth of a God who loves us just as we are.

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets;  
in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son.*

**The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children** (EG 66).

