

4th Sun OT – Luke 2:22-40

“My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation”

Jesus' Presentation in the Temple by Luke focuses on the Holy Spirit's role in our Salvation History. In fact, already the Holy Spirit has been quite active in Luke's gospel! Beginning with the announcement of John the Baptist by the Angel Gabriel that his son, John, **will be filled with the Holy Spirit!** And again, the Angel Gabriel soon appears to Mary that **the Holy Spirit will come upon her and overshadow her.** And again, when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, **Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.** And then there is Simeon and Anna, the prophetess, which means she also was filled with **the one and same Holy Spirit.** We meet both in today's gospel.

The passage ends with, “The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and **the favor of God was upon him.**” We will meet the Holy Spirit many times throughout this gospel. Even when this gospel ends, Luke continues in volume Two, Acts of the Apostles, right at the beginning with **the descent of the Holy Spirit** upon the apostles and Mary in the upper room.

Since Luke's focus was certainly upon the Holy Spirit in this first part of his gospel we can forgive him for messing up, (or re-interpreting?), the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Technically, the purification was about Mary, when after 40 days for a male child the mother would offer a sacrifice for herself. As for the male child that opens the womb, she didn't need to go to the Temple for a dedication. That would be a major journey for anyone living in Jesus' time.

It was this dedication in the Temple that many Catholic mothers would bring their children to church and dedicate them to the Lord. My own mother told me once that she brought me to the church soon after I was born and dedicated me to Our Blessed Virgin Mother. Later in my young life she hinted that my dedication as a second son also included that I would be a priest. I fought that a lot later in life, but eventually she won.

At Baptism, we are all **anointed by the Holy Spirit** as Priest, Prophet and King. What does that mean? That means we are set aside as **priests**, to pray for ourselves and others to God through Jesus Christ for our increase in faith or for the gift of faith for others and to intercede for them as Moses did for his people. As **prophets**, we are to show others the Trinity's unconditional love

for us, as Hosea wrote of God's love for Israel his Bride. And as **Kings**, we are to lead others to Christ the King who died for us.

How many saints throughout the centuries have modeled for us their own consecration to God through their lives by believing, loving and leading by example. Saint Francis de Sales is a good example. He was born into a wealthy family in the mid-16th century. Soon after his ordination he volunteered for a dangerous mission: to serve as a priest in the region around Lake Geneva, a bastion of Calvinism. For years he trudged through the region on foot, enduring poverty and harsh winters, and many times barely escaping assassination. Rather than simply denouncing Calvinism, he chose instead to proclaim **the positive message of the Gospel** in a way that would overcome negative stereotypes of Catholicism. As a result of his mission, hundreds of families were reconciled with the Catholic faith.

He achieved fame as a preacher and spiritual director. It was Francis' goal to rejuvenate the Church by raising the level of spiritual devotion through his book, *An Introduction to the Devout Life*. "Genuine devotion," he wrote, "is simply true love of God." He also believed that the measure of love is to love **without** measure!" To do that we have to remove the final barriers that get in our way, and mostly those barriers are ourselves.

One can follow all the regimens that even the most strict religious orders have followed, like the Trappists in Gethsemane, Kentucky, or even better, the Camaldolese at Big Sur in California, which is an order of hermits, but without love, then all is in vain.

"If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. If I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing."

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to love without measure. Mary was the only human to achieve that. She was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit was filled with love without measure, and she named him Jesus.