Pastoral Letter

This week’s gospel has some profound insights that are well worth a moment’s reflection. If you look it up in your bible, the subtitle is “Jesus presented in the temple”. Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple for his circumcision. This of course is part of the ancient custom of the Jewish faith. The experience of purification according to the Law of Moses was quite an extraordinary event. It is likely that there were many people in the building and that there were several young parents and babies. Both traditions were significant. But the presentation of Jesus in the temple was a wonderful event well worth this reflection. The couple arrived with Jesus and a pair of doves or 2 young pigeons to be sacrificed as was part of the law. All of this is tradition, but what I want to talk to you about is the extraordinary witness of Simeon and Anna.

Simeon was a devoted and dedicated believer. God had told him that he would see the Messiah before he died. We are not sure how long he waited but we know that when Jesus was presented in the temple, Simeon knew who Jesus was. Simeon asked if he could hold the Christ child. Scripture tells us he praised God and announced who Jesus was. “A light for revelation to Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel”. (v 32) Simeon had a caution for Mary when he said, “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your soul too.” (v35) Now let me draw your attention to the fact that some people wonder if God still speaks when we get old. Indeed God speaks to whomever, whenever God chooses. So keep listening. You too may be called to announce God’s action in the community as Simeon was called.

There was also a prophetess named Anna. The bible tells us she was very old, maybe around 84 years of age. She spent a lot of time at the temple. She was a faithful and prayerful individual. She too had insight about Jesus and made it clear that he would be the source of “redemption of Jerusalem” (v 38). She had the courage to speak about her faith and to announce it to all who would listen.

Sometimes seniors say to me that they are unsure about how “useful” they may be to God. The truth is God does not consider our age but rather our faithfulness to follow his direction in our lives. We are never too old to be inspired by God’s will for humanity. We are never too old to share that inspiration.

Blessings

Stephen