

THIS WEEKEND WE CELEBRATE;

“THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS SUNDAY”

DURING THE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SEASONS,,, WE ALL HAVE HAD MANY,,, MANY,,, MESSENGERS AND MODELS,,, TO ENCOURAGE AND DIRECT US,,, ON OUR WALK OF FAITH.

THE PROPHETS ISAIAH AND EZEKIEL,,, SPOKE TO US IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES. WE’VE HEARD MESSAGES,,, FROM ANGELS,,, FROM MARY AND JOSEPH AND FROM THE SHEPHERDS AS WELL.

TODAY,,, WE SEE MARY AND JOSEPH AGAIN,,, FOR A COUPLE OF VERSES AND THEN WE MEET TWO AGED SAGES,,, SIMEON AND ANNA.

BY THEIR EXAMPLES,,, THESE FOUR BIBLICAL CHARACTERS,,, (MARY,,, JOSEPH,,, SIMEON AND ANNA),,, PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND THEY SHARE,,, WITH US,,, A SIMPLE,,, BUT PROFOUND LESSON,,, ON NURTURING OUR FAITH AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

THE FIRST SCENE OF THIS STORY,,, OF JESUS’ BIRTH,,, WAS IN A SIMPLE STABLE AND THE SECOND SCENE,,, WAS IN THE TEMPLE.

IN VERSE 21,,, MARY AND JOSEPH HAD BROUGHT JESUS,,, AS WAS THE JEWISH CUSTOM,,, TO THE TEMPLE TO BE CIRCUMCISED.

LATER IN VERSE 22,,, WE SEE THEM BRING JESUS TO THE TEMPLE AGAIN,,, BUT THIS TIME,,, IT WAS FOR JESUS TO BE CONSECRATED (NOT SAVED). NOW,,, THE CONSECRATION,,, CONSISTED OF AN OFFERING,,, GIVEN BECAUSE JESUS WAS MARY AND JOSEPH’S FIRST BORN SON,,, WHO WAS TO BE AUTOMATICALLY DEDICATED TO THE LORD. THE COUPLE ALSO CAME TO THE TEMPLE,,, TO OFFER A SACRAFICE,,, FOR MARY’S PURIFICATION,,, WHICH WAS REQUIRED,,, 30 DAYS AFTER A WOMAN GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD.

THESE FEW VERSES,, ALLOW US TO TAKE A GLIMPSE,, AT THE DEPTH OF MARY AND JOSEPH'S FAITH. THEY WERE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE AND RITUALS OF THEIR JEWISH FAITH.

MARY AND JOSEPH,, BROUGHT JESUS UP,, IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TEMPLE AND SYNAGOGUES. WORSHIP,, *SACRAFICE,, PRAYER,, STUDY,, DISCUSSION AND FELLOWSHIP,, WERE ALL A PART OF JESUS' LIFE AND THESE FACTORS,, SHAPED HIM AND MOLDED JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER.*

NOW,, ONE MIGHT THINK THAT,, THAT THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF MARY AND JOSEPH,, REALLY DIDN'T MATTER MUCH,, BECAUSE,, JESUS WOULD HAVE BEEN GOD'S SON AND THE MESSIAH,, EVEN WITHOUT THEIR INFLUENCE.

STILL,, I FIRMLY BELIEVE,, THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR JESUS TO BE RAISED IN A FAMILY OF FAITH BECAUSE THE SCRIPTURE SAYS THAT JESUS GREW IN FAVOR WITH BOTH GOD AND MAN.

FIRST; WE HEAR ABOUT SIMEON,, WHO'S DESCRIBED AS A RIGHTEOUS AND DEVOUT MAN,, WHO WAS LOOKING FORWARD,, TO THE CONSOLATION (*MEANING THE REASSURANCE OR ENCOURAGEMENT*) OF ISRAEL.

LATER,, WE HEAR ABOUT ANNA,, WHO WAS A PROPHET OF GREAT AGE,, WHO NEVER LEFT THE TEMPLE,, BUT WORSHIPPED THERE,, WITH FASTING AND PRAYER,, NIGHT AND DAY.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE PLACE A GREAT DEAL OF EMPHYSIS,, IN LIVING OUT OUR FAITH.

IT'S NOT ENOUGH,, TO JUST BELIEVE,, IN A CERTAIN SET OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPALS AND THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES. WE ALSO NEED TO PUT OUR BELIEF AND FAITH INTO PRACTICE LIKE SIMEON AND ANNA.

THEN FOLLOW JESUS' LATER WORDS OF COMMAND,, TO "LOVE ONE ANOTHER,, AS HE LOVED US." AND WE ALSO NEED TO SERVE!

SIMEON AND ANNA,, DELIVER A DIFFERENT,, BUT ALSO,, AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO US. SIMEON WAS DEVOUT AND RIGHTEOUS. HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ADDRESSED HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM. SIMEON WAS IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM. IF YOUR RELATIONSHIP IS RIGHT WITH JESUS,, THEN MORE THAN LIKELY,, YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS,, WILL ALSO BE WHOLESOME.

SINCE SIMEON WAS DEVOUT,, HE WAS ACTIVE IN WORSHIP,, SACRAFICE,, PRAYER AND STUDY,, AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ANNA'S LIFE,, WERE ALSO DESCRIBED,, AS QUITE THE SAME.

THE PRACTICE OF USING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES,, WERE PART OF THE LIVES OF THESE TWO PEOPLE AND THEY ARE NOTABLE AND IMPORTANT!

AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS NEW YEAR,, IT MIGHT BE BENEFICIAL FOR US,, TO STOP,, AND TAKE A MOMENT,, TO REVIEW,, HOW WE NURTURE OUR FAITH!

IN WHAT WAYS,, DO WE OPEN OURSELVES UP,, TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR DAILY LIVES?

BRIEFLY READING A PASSAGE FROM THE BIBLE,, OR PERHAPS A DAILY DEVOTIONAL AND PAUSING FOR A PRAYER,, **CAN BE LIFE TRANSFORMING.**

PARTICIPATING IN BIBLE A STUDY GROUP,, AND DISCUSSING SCRIPTURE,, CAN LEAD US TO A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S WORD,, HIS GRACE,, AND OF WHAT IT MEANS,, TO BE A CHRISTIAN CATHOLIC!

BOTH SIMEON AND ANNA,, HAD BEEN WAITING FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE MESSIAH,, FOR A VERY LONG TIME. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT WAITING,, WAS AN IMPORTANT PART,, OF THE LIFE OF FAITH!

**WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF WAITING!
OUR GENERATION,,, HAS BEEN DESCRIBED,,, AS
“PEOPLE OF THE INSTANT NOW”.**

**WHEN WE WANT SOMETHING,,, WE OFTEN JUST,,, GO
AND GET IT! WE’RE MORE APT TO “CHARGE
SOMETHING”,,, THAN TO “SAVE FOR IT”,,, AREN’T WE?
THIS LIFESTYLE BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, SIMPLY
DOESN’T WORK,,, IN A LIFE OF FAITH!
NOW,,, THAT DOESN’T MEAN THAT WE HAVE TO SIT
BACK AND “TWIDDLE OUR THUMBS”.**

**AS PARENTS OF FAITH,,, WE PRAY OFTEN,,, AND
ACTIVELY WAIT FOR OUR CHILDREN TO GROW UP,,,
TO BE PEOPLE OF FAITH. PEOPLE WHO GENEROUSLY
SHARE IN GOD’S LOVE AND GRACE.**

**WHILE WE WAIT FOR GOD’S KINGDOM,,, WE ARE TO
USE OUR TALENTS AND ABILITIES TO SERVE OTHERS
AND MEET THEIR NEEDS.**

**WE WAIT,,, WITH EXPECTATION,,, FOR THE LORD’S
RETURN BY PARTICIPATING IN FELLOWSHIP
OPPORTUNITIES AND IN TUESDAY NIGHT PRAYER
AND STUDY GROUPS,,, WHERE WE CAN ENCOURAGE
EACH OTHER IN OUR FAITH.**

**AS WE WAIT,,, WE NEED TO REMEMBER,,, TO ALWAYS
WORSHIP,,, PRAY,,, FELLOWSHIP AND SERVE ONE
ANOTHER.**

**THE LORD HAS MOVED GRACIOUSLY IN ALL OF OUR
LIVES AND HIS CONSTANT PRESENCE IS A REALITY,,,
IN WHICH WE LIVE EVERYDAY.**

**TO NURTURE THAT RELATIONSHIP,,, THAT IS ALREADY
OURS,,, AND TO LIVE IT TO THE FULLEST,,, IS THE
INVITATION THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO EACH AND
EVERY ONE OF US,,, AS WE BEGIN THIS NEW YEAR,,,
2020!**

**SO,,, OUR PRAYER TODAY,,, IS THAT WE MAY BE AS
WISE AS SIMEON AND AS PRAYERFUL AS ANNA.**

**MAY WE RECOGNIZE JESUS,,, AS THE ONE AND TRUE
SALVATION OF ALL AND GIVE GLORY TO HIS NAME,,,
BY LOVING HIM AND ONE ANOTHER.**

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER,,, AND OF THE SON,,, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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1,040 Wds, 5 Pgs