

Homily – World Day for Consecrated Life

February 2, 2020

Early in Luke's Gospel we are introduced to six role models among God's people – simple individuals who are prayerful, observant of God's law, open to the working of the Holy Spirit: Zachary and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna. They are bridges from the prophecies of the Old Testament to their fulfillment in the New Testament. Today, we celebrate Jesus' presentation in the Temple at Jerusalem shortly after his birth -- a place he will return to many times in his life.

The elderly Simeon holds the six-week infant in his arms and recognizes the child as "the consolation of Israel," – the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus' parents must have been struck with awe and wonder at Simeon's intervention. Angels have sung about his coming. Shepherds and magi have been led to the place of his birth. Who is this child and what is his God-given mission in life?

However, Simeon's message also has a dark, somber prediction: the shadow of the Cross falls upon the newborn child and his parents, especially his mother. Simeon says that Jesus will be a sign of contradiction. He will bring the truth into light, but many will

choose to continue to walk in the darkness of a world filled with hatred, falsehood, violence, selfishness. It is especially heart-rending when a parent has to bury a child. Mary will stand at the foot of the Cross with a broken heart but faithfully obedient to God's will.

The widow Anna, who has given her life to prayer in God's presence at the Temple, also is led by the Holy Spirit and confirms the working of God through this little child who is the Savior of the world. Like his parents, Simeon and Anna, Jesus will be fully human – like all of us, his brothers and sisters. So, he will also understand our suffering, struggles, temptations.

The gospel calls us to make a decision. In a world consumed by a quest for possessions, the word of God counsels poverty and sharing our resources with the poor. In a world obsessed by sensual pleasure, we learn about the importance of respecting every person – at every stage of life and in all circumstances. In a world that prizes power and domination, we see our Savior obedient to death, even death on the Cross.

We have a choice today: to walk with the Lord or away from him! Our Lady of Guadalupe shows us the way to discipleship!