



When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord," and to offer the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accordance with the dictate in the law of 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 Messiah 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 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." There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

**Introductory Prayer:** Lord, I open my heart to receive the power of your Spirit flowing from your heart into mine. I wish to carry it zealously as a light from my heart to my family, to my friends, to the weak and empty of heart. With the fire of your love in me, I want to acknowledge you as true light and as the glory and splendor of every human person. I long to be filled with a consuming love for you.

**Petition:** Lord, help me to penetrate the meaning of my baptism by contemplating your consecration in the Temple and on the cross.

**1. Glory of the Father, Light of the Nations:** Contemplate this scene from God's perspective. The Son, now in human history, enters the Temple for the first time. The Son enters the house of the Father. He, the perfect Lamb for whom no earthly sanctuary is holy enough, accepts to be consecrated in this place built by men, this place that was dedicated to the memory of the signs that were all in expectation of him. The True Lamb arrives at last to the place of offering. The Temple was above all a place of sacrifice in order to gain God's favor. It was a place of expiation to free oneself of the inheritance of sin, and a place of prayer to offer fitting honor and praise to the one true God. And here, on this day, in the arms of Mary, comes the only sacrifice that counts, for without him no other sacrifice has meaning, whether in sacred rituals or in our personal lives.

**2. "Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord"** Contemplate this scene through the heart of Mary. In the simple rite of consecration; the Son is going to recognize his belonging to the Father, but he will do it through Mary's fidelity to the prescribed ritual. Yet, who can speak for THIS child? Can anyone speak for the zeal of his heart, the hunger of his heart to suffer for souls? Mary's pure and humble heart emerges as his spokesperson, and it speaks the language of self-giving and donation, though under the rituals prescribed by the law. "For their sake I consecrate myself." She reflects to the world what has been communicated to her by her Son, who is flesh of her flesh. In our ordinary life we elevate the meaning of small events in union with Christ. Flesh of our flesh by grace, he enables us to live a consecration to a mission in his name. Our acts are made from the power of Christ's living presence moving our heart and will.

**3. "A sword shall pierce your heart..."** Now contemplate the true temple of Christ's body on the Cross, where every consecration is made perfect. Yes, Christ gives us the privilege to speak the words that echo from his heart. Over time he perfects this language in us, if we are faithful to the cross in our life. My own baptismal consecration is all about speaking from what is in the heart of Christ, so that his words 'pierce my own heart' and replace that heart of stone with a new heart. I seek to speak like Christ—chaste, poor, and obedient—with a language forged and pounded into full authenticity at the Cross. My death to sin and egoism will call forth the risen life of the new man of the Kingdom—possible only through the fire of the Spirit that flows from the

open side of Christ.

**Conversation with Christ:** O Jesus, make my soul a temple worthy of your entry. May the walls of my heart be adorned with purity, honesty and upright intention in all I say and do. May its floors, upon which you walk, be sealed with modesty and sincerity, and lead you to an undivided heart.

**Resolution:** Today I will renew my personal consecration to the Heart of Christ in a visit to the Eucharist, and I will remember in a special way all consecrated persons throughout the world who renew their vows today.

|