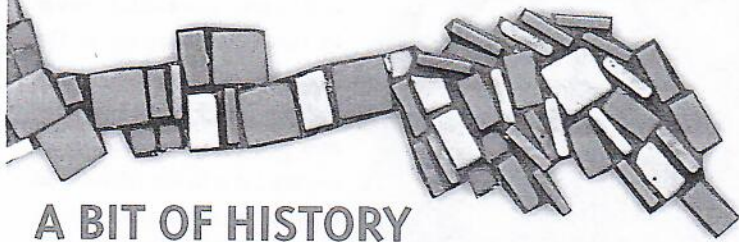


We Believe

It is easy to picture the moment when Simeon proclaimed this now-famous canticle. Mary and Joseph have come to the Temple as prescribed in Jewish law. Mary and Joseph came to offer ritual prayers of purification following childbirth and have brought Jesus to be consecrated to the Lord as a firstborn son. As the holy family enters the Temple, Simeon takes the infant into his arms and recites the prayer that we now call his canticle. This humble, aged man sees with the eyes of faith that this newborn child is truly the long awaited savior. Throughout his life, Simeon has been a faithful and holy person, consistently open to God. Now he sees a great promise fulfilled and offers his bold, yet humble prayer of trust and submission to the will of God.

Our Christian existence is not static but vividly dynamic, pushing us ever outward to do good and proclaim salvation in Christ Jesus.

Trusting in God's promise of salvation as Simeon did and following the teachings of our faith as the holy family did are hallmarks of faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. We are each called to exemplify the qualities seen so vividly in Simeon. We seek the peace that comes to one who is certain of the grace that God has bestowed—blessings in abundance are ours even in the darkest hours. When our eyes are focused by faith, we find ourselves understanding our role in the whole story of salvation. When we understand what it means that God the Father sent his son to save us and experience the presence and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are compelled to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). We, like Simeon, proclaim in public places that Jesus Christ has made a difference in our lives and that this gift of salvation is for all. As Simeon lifted the child Jesus, we lift his name and story in words and actions. Like Simeon, we, too, are to be missionaries to our families, our communities, and all whom we encounter. Our Christian existence is not static but vividly dynamic, pushing us ever outward to do good and proclaim salvation in Christ Jesus.



A BIT OF HISTORY

The ancient practice of praying at fixed times of the day is rooted in the daily prayer rituals of Judaism and has strong roots in the New Testament as well. Saint Benedict of Nursia, the sixth-century founder of Western monasticism, enumerated the specific times that liturgical prayer would be prayed each day in the religious order he began. From these Benedictine communities, the practice of praying the Hours spread throughout the Church. Today, the Liturgy of the Hours is prayed by clergy, in monasteries, by religious communities, and more and more by lay people, as encouraged to do so in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the first document promulgated by the Second Vatican Council.

We Live

The Canticle of Simeon is a wonderful reminder of the peace, humility, and gratitude for salvation that we can all integrate into our daily lives. We can be like Simeon, placing all our trust in God and ever proclaiming in word and deed that Christ brings salvation.

- Pray the Canticle of Simeon each night before you go to sleep, surrendering your will, emotions, and your every activity to God. Don't pray as though you can change God's mind, but for the strength and wisdom to change yours.
- Do not be afraid; only trust. We sometimes fear that what we offer the Lord or do in his name will not turn out right. But Jesus died and rose again, which means that a great deal has already turned out right!
- As an individual or family, serve those who are in more need than you. Christian service is more than volunteering; rather, it is a vibrant expression of trust that God provides for all people and that we each play a part in that provision.
- Serve within your parish community as an outward sign of deep commitment to your faith. Be publicly open about what you know is the way of Jesus Christ by carefully choosing not just what you do, but how you do it.

With Children

- Read and talk with children about people who do good things, the saints, and the holy people in the scriptures. Give your children options for role models other than the figures of pop culture. If we take our cue from Simeon in his praise, gratitude, and trust, we can talk honestly with our children about the challenges and virtues of living our faith.
- Make the Canticle of Simeon part of your bedtime routine. Encourage children to pray the canticle itself. Then, as a parent prays the antiphon, he or she (or the other parent) can trace the Sign of the Cross on each child's forehead.
- For older children needing more independence, print the text of the canticle on a card or mark it in a bible so that they can pray it on their own. Talk with them about what the prayer teaches us about the God to whom we belong.



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