

The Holy Family

■ 66th Word Sharing

● First Reading: 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

This event, dating back to around the 11th century BC, recounts the story of Hannah, wife of Elkanah, who prayed fervently to the Lord to be blessed with a child, saying, "If you take notice of your servant's misery... and give her a male child, I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 1:11). God answered her prayer, granting her a son whom she named Samuel ("God has heard"), as her persistent prayers had reached the Lord. When Elkanah set out for Shiloh to offer sacrifices to God, Hannah chose to stay behind until her child was weaned. She declared, "I will present him before the Lord, and he will live there always" (1 Samuel 1:24-28), intending for her son to serve the Lord at the tabernacle in Shiloh for his lifetime. By faithfully keeping her vow and offering her only son, who was granted by God, back to Him, Hannah expressed her gratitude.

After weaning her son, she brought offerings of "a three-year-old bull, flour, and wine" to God, symbolizing her thankfulness. She told Eli, the priest, that she had prayed for a child at that place and that God had answered her prayer. In fulfilling her vow, she entrusted her son to Eli for God's service, demonstrating complete trust and dedication to the Lord.

【Elkanah】

A descendant of the Levite tribe, responsible for serving at the temple or tabernacle. He lived in Ephraim, led a devout life, and observed the Law by offering sacrifices at Shiloh annually (1 Samuel 1:3). Although he was not wealthy or socially prominent, he was a man of faith.

【Shiloh】

A key location in the Old Testament, situated in the hill country of Ephraim, and served as Israel's religious center. After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Shiloh was the site of the tabernacle (Joshua 18:1). However, it later fell into decline following the Philistines' capture of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4) and became a symbol of Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness (Psalm 78:60-61).

【Contents of the Ark of the Covenant】

The two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 10:2-5), a gold jar of manna (Exodus 16:32-34), and Aaron's staff (Numbers 17:23).

● Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

Reflecting on the Father's love, consider this: we receive air for breathing (Psalm 24:1), health to walk to the local store, income from our work to purchase necessities, and countless other blessings. These reveal God's overflowing love and grace. At Christ's return, believers will be transformed to resemble His resurrected form. Christians who are free from guilt can pray boldly and confidently before God. Therefore, we should strive for daily self-reflection and inner peace. When we obey God's commandments—such as the commandment to love one another—and demonstrate our love through actions, our prayers will align with His will and be fulfilled (Philippians 4:19). Those who follow God's commands experience His presence through the Holy Spirit.

● Gospel Reading: Luke 2:41-52

Every year, Jesus' parents journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover. At the age of 12, when Jewish boys assumed religious responsibility, Jesus stayed behind at the temple, unknown to His parents, who assumed He was with the traveling group. Upon realizing He was missing, they returned to Jerusalem, finding Him in the temple astonishing others with His profound understanding of Scripture and the Law.

When Mary reprimanded Him as a concerned mother, Jesus explained that He was fulfilling God's plan. Mary, recalling the angel Gabriel's message about Jesus' divine mission, treasured these things in her heart. Jesus returned to Nazareth

with His parents, growing in favor with God and humanity.

【Religious Responsibility】

Internal: Living according to Scripture and teachings.

External: Practicing neighborly love (Matthew 22:37-38), engaging in social service, and spreading the Gospel (Matthew 28:19).

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