Blog
Spirituality



"The Presentation in the Temple" (ca. 1430) by Alvaro Pirez (Artvee)



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Words hold power. As a translator, I've witnessed how a single phrase can spark wonder, doubt or even transformation. Imagine being Simeon, one of the translators of the Septuagint, staring at the phrase, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son." What would it feel like to be tasked with translating words that defy logic, tradition and even human experience?

The Orthodox tradition holds that Simeon was one of 70 Jewish scholars chosen to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus in 296 B.C. It is believed that when translating the verse from Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel," Simeon hesitated on the word "virgin" because he feared people would make fun of him. Instead, he considered translating the word as "young woman."

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According to legend, an angel appeared to him, saying, "You shall see these words fulfilled. You shall not die until you behold Christ the Lord born of a pure and spotless Virgin." Simeon lived for about 300 years, awaiting this promise. When he finally held the infant Jesus in his arms, his vision was restored, and the Holy Spirit revealed to him, "This is the child you have been waiting for."

The rest of Simeon's story we know from Scripture. Simeon was one of the elders in the temple when Joseph and Mary presented Jesus according to the prescriptions of the law. When Simeon saw Jesus, he blessed him and exclaimed the Nunc Dimitis ("Now Dismiss") that we sing at compline each day:

> 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 (Luke 2:29-32).

I feel a deep connection with Simeon. Like him, I have struggled with challenging phrases. I remember a particularly difficult translation early in my time with Global Sisters Report in a Q&A with Sr. Ianire Angulo, a Spanish theologian. She was being interviewed about abuse of conscience in consecrated life, a very sensitive and complex topic.

Sr. Ianire's responses were scholarly and deeply rooted in research, yet I struggled. How could I do justice to her research while ensuring clarity? The enormity of the subject made it difficult to capture its depth in either Spanish or English. I doubted whether I was being faithful to the message.



"Simeon’s Song of Praise" by Aert de Gelder (Artvee)

My ministry at GSR demands precision and humility. A single misplaced word can distort the meaning or obscure the beauty of the message with which I'm entrusted. With every column, I am reminded that the words are not mine; I am simply the channel through which they pass. Though I may not always see the impact, I trust that these words will touch the hearts of others in the same way they touch mine.

My ministry unfolds mostly behind the scenes, but it is helping me to grow in empathy as I step into other people's experiences. I am slowly learning to listen — not just to the words but to the meaning beneath them. And it has made me more aware of how powerful words can be.

Simeon's role in salvation history may also seem minor — his work as a translator and temple elder made him unnoticeable. Yet, his labor brought God's word to those who could not read Hebrew, opening the Scriptures to the Greek-speaking world and allowing countless people to encounter God's promises.

As an elder in the temple, Simeon was described as a "just and devout man" who waited patiently for God's promise. When the moment arrived, his response was simple yet profound: "A light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel." In those words, he proclaimed that salvation is for everyone — a truth he recognized because the Christ child turned his doubts into certainty.

> Simeon's words were a recognition that God's promises are trustworthy, even when they seem incomprehensible at times.
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Simeon's labor on the Septuagint was not just an academic exercise; it was a bridge for others to encounter God's Word. Similarly, my work allows me to share stories of faith, struggle and hope. Each story is a witness to someone's journey, and my role is to ensure that their truth shines through.

As we celebrate the World Day of Consecrated Life on Feb. 2, we are reminded that consecrated women are entrusted with the stories of faith, loss, hope and transformation of the people we serve. And we are called to be witnesses like Simeon, who recognized and proclaimed God's promise fulfilled in Jesus.

When Simeon proclaimed, "My eyes have seen your salvation," it wasn't a simple, "Oh, yes, I saw that." It was a witness for a world in need of it. Simeon's words were a recognition that God's promises are trustworthy, even when they seem incomprehensible at times.

I believe there will be many times when we do not understand everything perfectly. Yet, it is important to speak out when we do see God at work — and to proclaim what we know to be true. It is important to remember that through our ministries, we bridge the gap for others to encounter God.

May our lives and our words, like Simeon's, be a light of revelation and witness to God's love and faithfulness.

Happy World Day of Consecrated Life, dear sisters!