

## The Presentation Of Jesus In The Temple

February 4, 2018

Much of my week has been attending to Mary Ruth's death and dying. On Monday and Tuesday I was fortunate to sit by her bedside in her final hours where I administered last rites and shared with her evening prayer and compline service. I was also took the one last opportunity to tell her the profound influence she made in my life and in the life of our parish.

The prayer entitled, Simeon's song, is lifted from the Gospel of Luke when he writes of the presentation of Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem. In the prayer Book Luke is translated, Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; For these eyes of mine has seen the savior; whom you have prepared for all the world to see.

I could not help but imagine this prayer in the soul and countenance of Mary Ruth as she lie in great weakness. Our faith in Jesus as divine shepherd nurtures and accompanies us from the crib to the death bed. From the womb to the tomb. It is our faith in God's constant companionship that allows us to speak, both quietly and aloud to God as we experience all of life's joys and struggles.

This faith in a God who watches over the world is echoed by the prophet Isaiah who proclaims to his generation some four to six thousand years ago that the power and reign of rulers and kings are no sooner here then they are gone. All power that remains is in the hands of God, who never wearies or faints but is always bringing forth divine goodness into our world.

I have watched God's loving care of Mary Ruth in her elder years in the same way I observed Mary Ruth care for so many others. Providing a home, resources, and kind attention as she descended deeper into physical and mental decline. I watched advocates like Guy and Judy Smith be raised up on Mary Ruth's behalf. I witnessed pastoral kindness extended by persons who barely knew Mary Ruth in her years of ministry at St. Andrew in addition to those who have known her for decades.

It is the vibrancy of God that brings energy and vitality to each of us who lean upon and trust in God, whom we know through the icon or image of Jesus, the Christ; whose prayers and words remain with us today, long after the legacy of those who ruled in his day have been long forgotten. It is prayer and hope and eternal love that we who feel so powerless and insignificant, compared to those who sit upon the seats of power and influence, can wield in our day to invoke the One "who sits above the circle of the earth."

We, the church, are vested with the power to invoke the divine just as Isaiah did in his day: to lift the lowly and bring justice and hope to those who have none. The church is not a fortress to escape the ways of the world; but it is a force amidst the ways of the world that offers corruption and greed in place of servant leadership; neglect and

aggression in the place of good governance, consumerism instead of stewardship, and folly instead of wisdom.

We, who are small, and tired, and weary can connect with the eternal source of love and kindness and life. We come together, even as few as two or three, to call upon God to act on behalf of us all, and especially those who suffer horribly in places where whole people groups are targeted for persecution and injustice. We come together and pray and advocate for those who languish without assistance, who hide in fear of injustice, who exchange wellness and freedom for substance and addiction.

We, like Jesus before us, are called to assert our place that he left to us amidst our own villages and communities bringing relief and healing to the sick and casting out the evil that corrupts the creation of God. You may call them demons or you may call them greed, prejudice, racism, sexism, addiction, abuse, violence, injustice, apathy, arrogance, despotism, poverty, discrimination, etc... and so forth. When we who are small and powerless face these giants on our own we are overcome. But when we, as the saints throughout the ages have done, invoke the one who established the foundations of the earth, who sits high above the circle of the earth, who brings princes to naught and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing, when we bring before God day and night our prayers, it is then that we, the meek, inherit the earth, to champion the holy causes of wellness and to bring dignity to all human beings, and to the whole creation.

As the season of Epiphany draws to a close and Lent is upon us. May we give ourselves back to the places that is ours to fill: the places of prayer, the places of healing and wellness, the places of hope and faith in the One who brings beauty and vitality to all of Creation.

There is a palpable sense of weariness and hopelessness in our culture, today. Perhaps we feel it. But this is not the way of the Lord, to be weary and without hope. It is our way to wait for the LORD and renew our strength, that we may mount up with wings like eagles, that we may run and not be weary, that we may walk and not faint.”

Amen