

December 31, 2017
Christmas 1
“Mixed Blessing”

First Reading ~ *Luke 2:22-40a*

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, the couple took Jesus up to Jerusalem and presented him to God. For it's written in the law of our God, "Every firstborn heir is to be consecrated as holy to God". They likewise came to offer in sacrifice "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accord with the dictate of the Law of our God.

Now there lived in Jerusalem a man named Simeon. He was devout and just, anticipating the consolation of Israel, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Messiah of God. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child, Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Now, O God, you are dismissing your servant in peace, just as you promised; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all peoples to see - a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel." As the child's mother and father stood there marveling at the things that were being said, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, the mother, "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that is rejected, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your heart as well."

There was a woman named Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was also a prophet. She had lived a long life, seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, worshiping day and night, fasting and praying. Coming up at that moment, she gave thanks to God, and talked about the child to all who anticipated the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When the couple had finished everything required by the law of God, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew in size and strength, filled with wisdom.

Second Reading ~*from Kalidasa*

Look to this day!
For it is life, the very life of life!
In its brief course
Lie all the verities and realities of your existence:
The bliss of growth;

The glory of action;
The splendor of beauty;
For yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow only a vision;
But today, well lived,
Makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness,
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.