



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 30 January 2022

Candlemas

Today we celebrate the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. For Mary's human son, this fulfilled the religious customs of the day. For God's incarnate Son, this fulfilled prophecies that the Lord would come to his Temple. So let us welcome Jesus into our hearts, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection for this week's Gospel teaching

**"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation."**

Luke 2:29-30

An Illustration to set the scene

Cyrano de Bergerac is a young French nobleman and soldier. He is also a gifted poet, but he has one problem – his enormous nose.

So ashamed is he of his appearance that he is reticent in expressing his love for the beautiful and intelligent Roxane.

His rival in Roxane's affections is a young man named Christian, who sees himself as



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The Observer

a simple, uneducated man.

Cyrano has the bright idea of writing to Roxane pretending to be Christian.

It allows the poor, love-smitten Cyrano to express his thoughts and feelings.

Roxane is deeply moved by Cyrano's words and she starts to fall in love the writer, who she assumes to be Christian.

Cyrano even speaks his love directly to Roxane, under cover of darkness, while she still thinks it is Christian who addresses her.

It is not until many years later, when Christian has died and Cyrano is gravely ill, that Roxane finally realises who wrote such tender words to her, and that it is Cyrano with whom she has been in love all along.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

Simeon and Anna have put in years of faithful service at the Temple, and they are now rewarded by the presentation of a special baby, no less than the long-awaited Messiah.

Not a strong, grown man striding in with a large retinue, but a baby cradled in his mother's arms, the salvation of God's people, wrapped in a baby's shawl.

This theme of reversal runs throughout Luke's Gospel.

Before Jesus was born, Mary praised God in the Magnificat, rejoicing that God brings down the powerful and lifts up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty.

Now her baby son is greeted with words that have also entered our worship. Simeon's announcement has become the Nunc Dimittis and Mary's Magnificat is sung at Evensong

Day by day, the theme is the same. God turns our expectations upside down.

Anna connects this baby from a humble background to the promised redemption of Israel, and Simeon recognises him as God's salvation, the glory of Israel and a light to the Gentiles, foreigners, non-Jews.

Joy is dominant in this story, and joy will ultimately prevail, but first comes sadness.

Mary's beloved child will grow into a man whose words and deeds will offend those who are complacent and prejudiced, as he turns their preconceptions upside down.

Jesus will mix with sinners and outcasts, discuss theology with women, heal foreigners, welcome children and rail against the hypocrisy of the religious establishment.

Offended and outraged, they will seek to silence him.

But death on the cross will not be the end, because the human baby presented in the Temple is also the Son of God.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

Perhaps it's understandable that Roxane failed to appreciate the man who really loved her, because she was being tricked by both Cyrano and Christian.

Simeon and Anna, too, might have failed to see the true identity of the baby who was brought to the Temple by his parents.

Their vision might have been blighted by the prevalent expectation that the messiah would be an avenging warrior.

But instead they recognised this baby – presumably just one baby among many, presented as was “customary under the law” – as none other than the Son of God.

Nunc dimittis servum tuum – **“now let your servant depart”**.

Simeon is ready to go now, in peace; his faithful work is done. It may be the end of an era for him, but it is also the beginning of a whole new life for all of us, made possible by a little baby.

Christians today are called to care for all God’s children, both literally and metaphorically, to see past our individual prejudices and our cultural preconceptions.

What can we do to help overcome prejudice and discrimination?

Can we be open, as Anna and Simeon were, to the amazing potential of any human being?

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.”

Luke 2:29-30

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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