

The First Sunday after Christmas

Hymns: 92, 99, 98, 93

The INTROIT

(Ps.93:1,2,5)

Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever. Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting. The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty: The Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself. Hallelujah!

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, direct our actions according to Thy good pleasure, that in the name of Thy beloved Son we may be made to abound in good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 11:1-5 (NKJV)

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.45:1,2; 93:1a)

P:/C: Thou art fairer than the children of men: **grace is poured into Thy lips.**

P:/C: My heart is inditing a good matter, I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: **my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

P:/C: The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty: **the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself. Hallelujah!**

The EPISTLE

Galatians 4:1-7 (NKJV)

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Psalm 96:11; 98:2)

P:/C: Hallelujah! Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad before the Lord: **for He hath made known His salvation. Hallelujah!**

And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

Luke 2:33-40 —

“Behold, this One Is Set for the Fall and Rising Again of Many in Israel”

INTRODUCTION

- I. BEHOLD, THIS ONE IS SET
- II. AND SHE COMING IN THAT INSTANT GAVE THANKS
- III. ACCORDING TO THE LAW

CONCLUSION

And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. (KJV)

The First Sunday after Christmas

Hymns: 92, 99, 98, 93

Luke 2:33-40 —

“Behold, this One Is Set for the Fall and Rising Again of Many in Israel”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today is the First Sunday after Christmas and the appointed Gospel reading is Luke 2:33-40:

And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

This is the first Sunday after Christ Mass. The Blessed Sacrament of Christ's blood is the great proclamation of the Church. In the Blessed Sacrament we commune with God, Immanuel. Just as He was given to be born King of the Jews as God's love for the world, so also He is given every time the New Israel gathers to the House of Bread to receive the blood of Jesus, the blood of the remission of sins. For this is the only way that we dare come into God's presence, even as we hear in Hebrews 10:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold

fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:16-25)

This is also what St. Paul exhorts, saying, **“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”** (1 Cor 11:26)

On this first Lord's Day after Christmas we hear the confession of two dear saints who confess this wonder that God has given for the salvation of the world, and their words cause Joseph and Mary to marvel at what was proclaimed concerning the baby Jesus, whom they carried to the Temple to fulfill all things according to the Law of the LORD.

I. BEHOLD, THIS ONE IS SET

And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

In the preceding verses Luke records the words that caused Joseph and Mary to marvel. We still marvel at these words as we sing them upon eating and drinking the Lord Jesus for our salvation. Accordingly, Luke tells us that with those marvelous words Simeon blessed the LORD, that is, he eulogized or good-worded the LORD.

In today's Gospel reading we hear that Simeon continued, this time good-wording Joseph and Mary by speaking of the Word of God that Simeon held in his arms. **“Behold, this one is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel”**

Behold! This One! This is the one for whom Simeon and all the faithful had been awaiting. His advent was the hope of all those who trusted in God's Old Testament. In connection with the Old Testament two special signs or miracles were given, the Sacraments of Circumcision and the LORD's Passover. Accordingly, the LORD declared that anyone who was not circumcised and who did not partake of the Passover was cut off from God's holy people. With the gift of Jesus, whom Joseph and Mary according to the obedience of the Faith brought to the temple, the Old Testament was fulfilled. This is the very promise given to the woman in the garden of Eden. This is the promise to which the Sacraments of Circumcision and the Passover bound and kept the faithful until this very day. Now Simeon was filled with proclaiming the Lord's death in the eulogy of the Church concerning the Christ.

Behold, this one is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Truly this is sacramental language. It is the same language used in 1 Peter 3:21, **“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”** and in Galatians 2:9-15 & 19-20,

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

. . . For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Truly, even as dear Simeon prophesied, in connection with God's means of grace, many are caused to fall and rise again. For all flesh, even as we are all corrupt according to the old Adam, must be crushed, along with the head of the serpent who deceived mankind and led us all into the way of death. But in Baptism we are raised up to new life in Christ, and in His remembrance, that is, in the continual proclamation of His death in the Holy Supper, we are strengthened and kept in His resurrection unto new life.

But even as Simeon warns, many in Israel will speak against this one who has come by water and blood. Just as many in Israel fell away and spoke against the means of grace in the Old Testament, so also among those claiming to be the Church today many deny the promises of God in the sign of the Word made flesh connected to the means of grace. But to those who receive Him, he gives the power to be raised up as sons of God.

II. AND SHE COMING IN THAT INSTANT GAVE THANKS

While Simeon was prophesying and blessing Joseph and Mary concerning the infant Jesus, Anna came into the temple and approached the tiny group of saints. She joined in the joyous confession of the Christ child. Anna was of the ancient order of women who were of the service in the temple's military. She was what some call a "prayer warrior." In the worship that God ordained for the people of Israel, there were women who spent their lives fasting and praying. They were spoken of in Exodus 38:8, where Moses records the furnishing of the tent of meeting, **"And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."** The same term used for military service and for priestly service is applied to these women, of whom also is Anna.

As a young woman, Anna was married for seven years, and upon her husband's death, began serving in the temple, giving witness unto the LORD through continual fasting and prayer. Now as an old woman her youthful joy, the joy of the faith renewed in partaking of the presence of the Christ, she joins the small party in giving thanks likewise unto the LORD.

This "giving thanks" is from the word *anthomologeomai*, made up of two words, *anti* and *homologeō*. Against-same-wording. So Anna came up against the eulogy of Simeon and added to what he declared the same confession of redemption in Jerusalem. Anna continued as a true

“prayer-warrior,” echoing what she heard faithfully confessed and proclaimed in the temple. This is exactly what we do in the divine liturgy, that is, the divine service. Our service unto the LORD is to echo what we hear from Him in His holy house. He speaks and we echo in faith what He tells us.

This faithful servant, Anna, continued speaking this same confession of Jesus to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Just as dear Simeon sang out,

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Even as Anna continued echoing these words that caused Joseph and Mary to marvel, so we continue echoing this prophetic word of grace, mercy, and peace as we behold Jesus coming to us today. All who come to the divine service looking for redemption will surely hear God’s people continuing in the service that Anna demonstrated on this blessed day and for all the remaining days of her life on this earth. Surely even now, as she abides in the LORD’s holy communion, she continues singing with us this wonderful confession of redemption.

III. ACCORDING TO THE LAW

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Truly this is the reason for the gift of the Law. This is what St. Paul writes to the Galatians.

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

The Law is our schoolmaster, teaching us to remember that Christ is the fulfilment of the Law for us. The Law points us away from our own reason and strength, showing us our weakness so that we look to Christ, in whom we are made strong for all things. And so in faith we come to Jesus in the Sacraments, where He has promised to continue to be available for us to cleanse us and bless us everlastingly. Joseph and Mary did all that the LORD commanded for families who live by faith. Because of this they came to the temple and received God’s blessing through Simeon and Anna. Likewise, as Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus to the house of the Lord’s name, even as God commanded, those other saints who observed the Word received Jesus according to the promises of God. If from either side the commandment had been ignored, if either Joseph and Mary had forsaken the Lord’s ordinances or if the others gathered in the name of Jesus had forsaken the ordinances, this joyous day of the LORD would not have been fulfilled for them and us.

Yet God's Word did go forth and come back to Him, according to the purpose for which God sent Him into the world. And so the redemption that we look toward is available to us all.

CONCLUSION

Truly this season of Christmas is a marvelous time in the Church year. It is only twelve days, but even as the twelve tribes carried the Christ with them unto the day of His presentation in the temple, so the doctrine of the twelve apostles has carried Christ to us today. Like Simeon and Anna, we come to the Lord Jesus where He promises to be present for us to bless us and keep us in His grace. Like Simeon and Anna, we brace up against one another and share in the same confession of Christ, partaking of His Holy Communion together by His grace. Even as Joseph and Mary marveled at what was proclaimed concerning the baby who was given to them, so we continue to marvel at what we hear again and again as He is given to us. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.