

Daily Reflections



GRACED ENCOUNTER

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

*There was a **prophetess, Anna**,
the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.
She was advanced in years,
having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage,
and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.
She never left the temple,
but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer.
And coming forward at that very time,
she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child
to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.*

LUKE 2:36-38

Reflection

I am delighted to end this week of reflections with the second of two elders St. Luke recognized by name. Since women are rarely named nor their lineage given, there is significance in naming Anna as a prophetess in the New Testament. Details are noted by the author, indicating the esteem of Templegoers for Prophetess Anna. Her faithful presence was a clear reminder of prayer, eager longing, and dedication to God.

Her title “*prophetess*” means “graced or favored.” It is a signal to listen attentively. Most likely she was a woman of substance in the world of Jewish Temples. I imagine her 84 years and diverse life experiences, honed by sacred listening, uniquely equipped her with wisdom and spiritual insight -- thus the graced encounter with the one she desired. I wonder if it was the gaze of the child that caught her attention. Perhaps their eyes met, and she knew that she had been seen with deep recognition.

She, like Simeon, recognized the child as the Promised One for whom they had been waiting for endless ages -- so caught by this graced encounter that she was impelled to proclaim what she knew in her soul. She adds her praise and thanks to God for the child Jesus; she reverently receives the child Jesus as the One for whom she had been waiting. Her inner spiritual vision alerted her to God in her midst.

Women were not easily heard in her day, nor did they proclaim, yet she spoke with enthusiasm about the child to all who had ears to hear and a heart to perceive the truth of God’s presence among them. Her life spoke more loudly than her words. Her patient waiting for God’s revelation was satiated in the moment of encounter with this small child and his parents.

Perhaps there is truth and grace revealed in shared vulnerability. It seems that the God of chance encounter is made present within my own desire, through humble attentiveness and patient waiting. Receptivity to grace and God’s favor necessitates profound trust in God’s promise, patient fidelity, loving awareness. All in God’s time, favored grace flows in abundance for Prophetess Anna, and now for you and me. Let us be alert to for the loving gaze of God who surprises us with graced encounters.



Photo by Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

For Pondering

- How alert am I to God's presence, invitation, and "Gaze of Love"?
- What is my response to graced encounters with the Holy One?
- In whom do I recognize the face of God?

- When have I been surprised by God's coming in unexpected ways?

For Prayer

*Gracious God,
you invite me into relationship
and desire to grace me with your companioning presence.
Open the eyes of my heart,
the eyes of faith and patient desire,
to perceive your presence and notice your gaze of love and mercy.
May my life proclaim the God of Hope in our midst.
Amen.*

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