

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Dec 30th 2013

“There was a prophetess, Anna ...” Luke

The prophetess Anna rates just one mention in Luke as she thanks God for the birth of Jesus and tells people at the Temple about his importance. I love this passage because I resonate to its 84-year-old heroine.

Picture the Temple that day as a stately, wrinkled, white-haired woman with kind eyes pronounces her great news. Even men who normally would pay little attention to a woman can't ignore Anna because of the palpable wisdom that her well-lived, long life has bestowed. Even her name is fitting: Anna, meaning “grace” or “favor.”

It's especially easy for me to conjure up images of the Biblical Anna because I grew up with a wise old woman who shared her name, my Great Aunt Anna or “Aunt Annie” as everyone called her.

Aunt Annie prayed mostly in a little farmhouse, not the Temple, but she was devout in her own cock-eyed fashion, conversing regularly with God. She'd read the Bible and comment on Old Testament stories that reminded her of her beloved murder mysteries.

Like the Biblical Anna, Aunt Annie saw wonder and hope in children. Remembering how she would defend us to our male elders, it's easy to envision Anna speaking authoritatively about the child to skeptical men in the Temple. Magnificent women, both, I'm sure!

One thing we notice in the New Testament is that God sometimes uses obscure people such as Anna to announce great news, like the significance of this child. We sense that they represent us, especially when they remind us of people we know.

So today I thank St. Luke for shining light on the beauty and wisdom of such people, especially those who happen to be older women. I hope that today's Gospel also evokes joyful memories of the “Annas” and “Aunt Annies” in your own lives.

Happy New Year!!!!

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