

What did Anna say? January 1 2025 World Day of Peace Mary Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 96; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:21-40

Twenty-six years ago, the eighteen year old son of a dear friend of mine on the reserve was charged with murder. I was caught up with the case, hosting and praying for his parents in our home during his court dates in Lethbridge. I was translating legal language into every day talk for them and visiting their son or talking on the phone with him when I could. This took place over several months and around that time, a few months before, an infant came into my life, too. Little R. was six weeks old when I met him. When the stress of the murder case was overbearing, I remember lying down beside his cradle and feeling a deep peace. I felt such blessing, such grace in the company of this sleeping infant.

In the first reading, we hear the intention of the “One Who Holds Everything Together,” as an elder once described Creator. The intention of the Most High God, the Source of All Being, is to bless. To connect with the eyes of the soul in such a way that we see and we feel that we belong and are provided for. When have you felt the peace, the touch, the flow of being blessed?

We learn in the second reading that such blessing has to do with our hearts being touched: “Creator has sent the Spirit of this Holy One into our hearts”. Consider the person who loves you most in this world and how you love them. And know now that God loves you at least that much. There is a generosity in such a connection, a generosity which invites belonging, and assures provision, and builds trust.

What did Mary feel when the Great Spirit overshadowed her? An intimacy certainly. A call on her person to respond by loving her pregnant body. The Holy One provided in that time of sudden change. She followed the angel’s prompt about her cousin, also pregnant and stayed several months with her – likely until John was born. As a young woman Mary realized the Holy One would provide and she could trust. +Jane pointed out that Mary’s experience was very much that of a prophet, like Moses, like Joseph and the coat of many colours, like Anna, who speaks after Simeon.

In the gospel, Anna and Simeon both share words of blessing with the infant Jesus, his parents, and also anyone else who was around and listening. Unlike Mary and Zechariah and Simeon’s canticles, Anna’s words are not spelled out by the author of Luke. But Sarah Hale, a writer in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century observed how Anna was closer to God in that she dwelt right in the Jerusalem temple while Simeon dwelt in the greater city of Jerusalem. Like for Samuel, the

prophet who grew up in the tabernacle with Eli after Hannah had weaned him, the temple was home and a devotional way of life for Anna for most of her life.

The *Luke 1-9* commentary in the Wisdom series further points out that Anna is one of a few female prophets mentioned in the New Testament. From her having felt the blessing of the face of Creator God all these years, from living day in and day out in a place of prayer, Anna's face likely shone like Moses's face when he came down from the mountain after conversing with YHWH.

Anna's words with the infant *Creator Sets Free* would be sung from her heart with a depth of welcome, wonder and joy that shimmers. In fact, her voice and prayer may have penetrated the spirit of the baby in a body memory which surfaced later when he visited and chose to stay in the temple twelve years later, until his parents came distraught, to take him with them. While Simeon spoke of what would be, I wonder whether Anna didn't speak to what she perceived in that moment about the infant in her arms.

So I close with a prayerful imagination of Anna's words that day, that were not recorded. These imagined words are set in the present as she held the infant Jesus in her holy arms. In our baptism, we are all anointed priest, prophet and royalty – heirs to the kin-dom or as the *First Nations Version of the NT* says: "You are now taking your place as mature children ready to share in the family blessing promised by the Great Spirit."

So I invite you to close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so, and imagine holding or lying beside an infant. Sense in your spirit, as a prophet, what Anna may have sensed with Mary and Jesus in the temple on that day of ritual.

*This child breathes with a spirit of compassion.*

*His light is energy to be shared with those who fear that peace may not come.*

*In heart, in mind, in soul this child's presence flows with the insecure, assures the weary and connects with the lost.*

*He lives that life may be more truthful.*

*He cries out that life may be more just.*

*His song is one of love for the broken.*

*His being is anointed by the Most High, and so, he is brother to all of Creation.*

*And you, Miriam, mother for all eternity, will continue to bless, in your spirit*

*the children of the world to pray for peace.*

*Your heart advocates for the downtrodden and*

*provides assistance to the needy who call on your name, now and forevermore.*

And now gently return this infant Jesus to his mother and open your eyes.

This year, may you know the tender heart of God our Mother, of Mary, Mother of God, of Christ, friend and redeemer of all Creation.