

**Notes from the Sermon on Sunday, February 4, 2024:**

***The Meeting of the Lord and Waiting***



**Scriptural Readings:**

Epistle: Colossians 3:12-16

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

**The Meeting of the Lord and Waiting**

**SUMMARY:** The Sermon began with the reading of Denise Levertov's poem, ***"Flickering Mind"*** (presented below)

**1) The Feast of the Meeting of the Lord:** We continue today to celebrate this Feast which marks the end of the Nativity cycle of Services - that began with Advent – and affirms Christ's humanity by acknowledging that He was brought to the Temple as a 40 day old male child to fulfill the expectations of the Law (as described in the Gospel description of St. Luke which was read).

But it also presents the figures of **Simeon the Elder and Anna the Prophetess** who participated in the life of the Temple and were waiting, having been prepared for this Meeting with the Lord by the Holy Spirit.

Simeon celebrated the completion of the period of waiting with the **Prayer** given his name that is incorporated at the end of Vespers each day and within the Thanksgiving Prayers after receiving Holy Communion ("**St. Simeon's Prayer**"):

*Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word.*

*For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people.*

*A light to enlighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of Your people, Israel.*

2) **WAITING IS BUILT INTO EVERY LITURGY:** One could say, in a sense, that every Divine Liturgy contains an element of this Feast and encourages us to "**await Your great and rich mercy.**" It was noted that this expression "**rich mercy**" implies that we are waiting for the action of God's presence and grace to "**fill**" or to "**flow**" within us.

3) **BUT WHO IS DOING THE WAITING?** We might often think that it is we are waiting for God to act, but as implied in Denise Levertov's poem, "**Flickering Mind,**" it is not God but we who are "absent" and "elusive" – not waiting very well. It is our minds which like a minnow "dart away" and wander "anywhere" and "everywhere." It is we who are inattentive and careless.

4) **GOD IS ALWAYS WAITING FOR US:** In his poem, "**The Other,**" R.S. Thomas speaks of prayer like the constant pattern of waves, continuously rising and falling, which God ("the Other") lets "break on him, not... for a few hours, but for days, years, for eternity." "Behold, He who keeps Israel," as affirmed in **Psalm 21**, "shall neither slumber nor sleep."

God is always alert and waiting for us.

5) **HOW DO WE BEGIN?** We are given some suggestions today from St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (3:12-16) which are both **broad and specific:**

- "Let the **word of Christ dwell in you richly**" - let it **flow within and fill you.**
- Put on "tender mercies, kindness, humbly, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another."
- "Above all these things put on love...and let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

6) **FINALLY,** the Greek word for "**waiting**" implies "**expectation**" and "**acceptance**" - with the sense that things will take place at the "**acceptable time**" (2 Cor 6:2).

Between us and God one might say that there is a mutual sense of waiting taking place:

- God is always prepared and waiting for us to be awake and attentive
- and we, like Simeon – being guided by the Holy Spirit – are always preparing for and "awaiting God's great and rich mercy."

*Flickering Mind*

by Denise Levertov

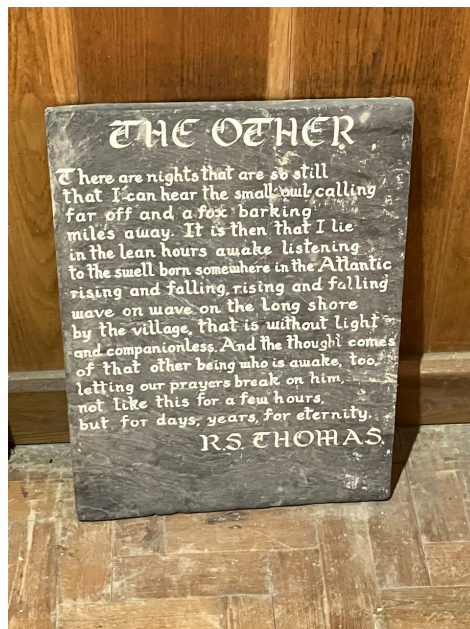
Lord, not you,  
it is I who am absent.  
At first  
belief was a joy I kept in secret,  
stealing alone  
into sacred places:  
a quick glance, and away—and back,  
circling.  
I have long since uttered your name  
but now  
I elude your presence.  
I stop  
to think about you, and my mind  
at once  
like a minnow darts away,  
darts  
into the shadows, into gleams that fret  
unceasing over  
the river's purling and passing.  
Not for one second  
will my self hold still, but wanders  
anywhere,  
everywhere it can turn. Not you,  
it is I who am absent.  
You are the stream, the fish, the light,  
the pulsing shadow,  
you the unchanging presence, in whom all  
moves and changes.  
How can I focus my flickering, perceive  
at the fountain's heart  
the sapphire I know is there?

Denise Levertov was born in England to a Welsh mother and a Russian Hasidic father. Her father, who had emigrated to the UK from Leipzig, converted to Christianity and became an Anglican priest. She moved to the United States in 1948, and in 1955 became an American citizen. By the time she died in 1997, Levertov had published nearly fifty volumes of poetry, prose, and translations. Levertov taught at Brandeis, MIT, Tufts, Stanford, and the University of Washington. It was at Stanford, where she taught for 11 years (1982–1993) in the Stegner Fellowship program, and where her papers are now housed, that Levertov converted to Christianity at the age of sixty. After moving to Seattle in 1989, she joined the Catholic Church.

## *The Other*

by R.S. Thomas

There are nights that are so still  
that I can hear the small owl  
calling  
far off and a fox barking  
miles away. It is then that I lie  
in the lean hours awake listening  
to the swell born somewhere in  
the Atlantic  
rising and falling, rising and  
falling  
wave on wave on the long shore  
by the village that is without  
light  
and companionless. And the  
thought comes  
of that other being who is  
awake, too,  
letting our prayers break on him,  
not like this for a few hours,  
but for days, years, for eternity.



from: St. Hywyn's Church, Aberdaron, Wales

***Colossians 3:12-16 (Epistle)***

12

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13

bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

14

But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

15

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.