

12/30/2018

## “Looking for Jesus in the Least and Lowly”

Scripture: Luke 2:22-38

First Sunday after Christmas

**Theme: Christ is often revealed to us in and through those who are most often overlooked or marginalized.**

Christmas greetings! I hope your Christmas Day was a blessed one, and that you were able to experience the presence and love of Jesus. As proclaimed on Christmas Eve, we can rejoice and be glad, finding hope and peace in the realization that God is with us!

And as we continue to celebrate the Christmas Season this year, we can come to realize that **Christ is often revealed to us in and through those who are most often overlooked or marginalized** – in those whom we least expect are often on the margins of society, or our social network as we might say today.

We are reminded of the story of Simeon and Anna from Luke’s account of the gospel. . .

### Luke 2:22-38 NIV

<sup>22</sup> When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup> “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup> The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup> so that

*the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”*

*<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup> Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*

**† Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, discovered his long awaited Messiah in the baby Jesus. And Anna, a prophet, gave thanks and proclaimed God’s hoped for redemption.**

Neither Simeon nor Anna knew exactly who they were looking for. They may have known the prophecies about the awaited for and expected Messiah. Yet, there is no indication that either of them knew just when that would be, what he would look like, or who he might be with. They did not know how rich or poor, what background he would come from, powerful or lowly, or other such things about him.

All they really trusted in was a sign, a feeling, or a word from God.

Having been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah and so moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. And when Joseph and Mary brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon could see beyond the simple attire and humble demeanor of Joseph and Mary. He could see more than just an infant child. He could see the One sent from God.

And, Anna, having the spiritual gift of prophesy, could perceive and proclaim the redemption of Israel had come.

**† With hearts turned to God and seeking God’s righteousness (right way of living), we are led by God’s Holy Spirit to find Jesus in others, even the least and the lowly.**

I think it’s important to note that both Simeon and Anna were people of God. Both sought to follow God’s ways, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, were able to walk in those ways.

Rosalie Krajci<sup>1</sup> (from [ignatianspirituality.com](http://ignatianspirituality.com)) writes about “**Seeing Christ in Others**”. She says . . .

“Early in my spiritual journey, I frequently read how important it was to see Christ in others. In particular, I admired Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, who saw Christ “in the disguise of the poor.”

“Try as I might (and surely it was due to a prideful disposition), I was unable to picture Christ in anyone’s disguise. It was impossible for my imagination to make the leap toward seeing Christ in mere mortals whom I could hardly like, much less love. The only solution, I reasoned, was that I must behave in such a way that they could see Christ in me.

“One of my “ministries” was to visit an elderly neighbor, a survivor of Auschwitz. The strength of her character and ready sense of humor balanced her physical fragility and her constant memory of sufferings in that brutal place. Little by little, my visits became more frequent as I learned her history and relished her love of laughter. Many times, in my own loneliness, I would run over to her house, sometimes with a loaf of homemade bread, and find consolation in her company.

“And little by little, my sense of performing a mitzvah (an act of kindness) with its almost imperceptible grain of condescension, like Jack Horner’s Oh, what a good girl am I!, was being transformed by the honest affection of this woman. I no longer had to picture Christ in her so that I could love her. I saw her as lovable in herself. There was no edifying kind of play-acting or imagination necessary. She poured her love into me, and Christ became visible in that love.

“Thus does God gently open us to the mystery of how to love. Even I, who had gone through life holding herself off to the side, coolly observing others, was taught that Christ would respond to my clumsy efforts with an ever-warming spirit. I was taught the truth of the Gospel in the prayer of St. Francis, that it is in giving that we receive; it is in loving that we are loved.”

† **We, like Simeon, Anna, and Jesus himself, can receive and be a blessing to others.**

I remember one year in my early twenty’s getting around the city of Philadelphia without a car, walking and using public transportation. It wasn’t totally unfamiliar, as I had done so off and on, since I was a youth. And in those times, I encountered Christ on more than one occasion in persons living by simpler means and even on the streets.

Without establishing a long term relationship or even asking a lot of questions, a simple encounter was enough to realize the presence of Christ by exchanging God’s love and kindness in one way or another.

In the season of Christmas, we often think about St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus, with memories of making requests or getting presents under a tree. And, that's fine and good. Even better, I believe, is one great example of receiving and being a blessing by how Christ is revealed in others – even the “so-called” least and lowly – which was shared by CBS Evening News (12/14/18) of this year's Secret Santa. Here it is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZhE60s9e8>

**What a wonderful blessing. May we each be so blessed this Holy Season and through the new year! Amen.**

<sup>1</sup>(Rosalie P. Krajci, Ph.D., a Benedictine Oblate, is retired from two careers: language teacher and consultant in human resources management. Her third and most rewarding career is as a spiritual director and freelance writer. Rosalie and her husband raised seven children. Now widowed, she lives in the Finger Lakes area in upstate New York.)

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**Questions for Reflection:**

How do you look upon others? What do you notice first? How open to the Spirit's voice and leading are you?

How have you seen Jesus in others different from yourself; even the “least and lowly”?

How have you been blessed in your encounter?