Blog
Religious Life



Wrought iron lanterns at St. Scholastica chapel, built in 1939 at Mount St. Scholastica Monastery in Atchison, Kansas (Helga Leija)



by Sr. Helga Leija

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"Lord, you can now let your servant go in peace, just as you promised" (Luke 2:29).

Simeon's words in today's Gospel are powerful and absolute. He waited a long time for the promise to be fulfilled. The Gospel mentions that the Holy Spirit was upon him, revealing that he wouldn't die before seeing the Messiah. A lifetime of waiting!

We've all been there — waiting for something significant: an event, an unfulfilled promise, a question waiting for an answer, a conflict in need of resolution, or a wound that needs healing.

Waiting can be tough, even when we know God keeps his promises. Will I have to wait forever? Can I hold on for the comfort of Israel? Can I rely on a promise alone?

Anna, like Simeon, waited for the promise of a Messiah. Because of that promise, she stayed in the temple day and night. Both waited their whole lives, expecting the fulfillment of a promise they didn't fully understand. A promise that unfolded gradually. They kept going to the Temple every day, faithful to that promise.

When they finally saw Jesus, they knew they were at the end of their lives. They could leave with peace in their hearts, having seen a light for revelation. They didn't question or try to control the Messiah. They simply gave thanks and bowed out — maybe both Simeon and Anna knew it was time for them to go.

I find comfort in Simeon's words, "Now you can let your servant go in peace ..." As my own community ages and discusses the future, waiting for God's promise, this reading reminds us to stay faithful to the promise, to keep doing what we were called to do, even if the promise isn't fulfilled in our lifetime. And if it is, it's a reminder that others might be the ones to see it through. I pray for the freedom to know when it is time for me to go in peace.

What if Simeon and Anna had been disappointed? They were promised a Messiah, but they didn't know the specific circumstances of the fulfillment. Could a mere child bring peace and glory to Israel?

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In religious life, letting go of ministries, leadership positions, appointments, can be one of the greatest challenges. Perhaps it's distrust in the younger generation or a lack of faith. Perhaps, it is because people do not fulfill our expectations and we become disappointed and scared to let go.

When we made our profession, we placed ourselves at God's service, surrendering control. But did we really? Why is it so hard to let go? "Expectations are premeditated resentments" as the saying goes. I can not go in peace if I hold onto my script for someone else's role in life.

I truly believe Simeon's eyes saw a light that revealed exactly what he needed at the moment. Maybe Anna experienced the same, each seeing different things. What did that light reveal about themselves? Whatever it was, the light shone right in and through them, opening them up to life.

Have you ever had a moment of revelation like that? For me, those moments haven't involved divine visions or light, but rather an assurance that I am in the right place at the right time. For some people, that moment can be at the birth of a child, knowing they were born “for a time like this" (Esther 4:14).

I had a moment of revelation one morning in chapel while chanting the psalms — we are Benedictine monastics, so we face each other in choir chapel. It was nothing special, but I knew with my mind and heart that I was in the right place, at the right time, with the right people. It is like finding the missing piece of a puzzle, but a hundred times better! That was my moment of revelation, the light that shone upon my waiting, my fidelity to God's promise despite difficulties.

The light of God, that light that reveals, is for us God's way of saying, "Here I am."

May our fidelity be the light that enlightens the nations. Today, on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, let's light the candle of hope for a fruitful religious life — one that keeps showing up at the temple, for our faith and for others we serve. May our life be a light that reveals the way to go in peace, allowing others to carry the promise into the future. And may our eyes behold the exact revelation that our heart needs for this moment in time.