

**Sermon for the Christian Burial of James Walter Isenock, ★16.iii.1936 †27.xii.2007
Ev. Lutheran Church of St. James the Apostle / Brogue, Chancetown Twp., York Co., Penna.
Monday, 31.xii.2007, 11.00, Vigil of the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus
ELW Funeral Rite with Holy Communion – Setting 5
Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 8; Philipplians 2:5-11; Luke 2:15-38**

Jesu Juva!

**Alleluia! Jesus Christ is the firstborn of the dead; to Him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.
Alleluia!**

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the Second Chapter!

Glory to You, O Lord!:

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")

and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law,

he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word;

for mine eyes have seen thy salvation

which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,

a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him;

and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against

(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phan'u-el, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity,

and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Gospel of the Lord!

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ!

[Other Readings & Comments]

Two people appear and then disappear in today's Gospel, Simeon and Anna, people who have lived and seen much, people at the end of their earthly lives. Anna is a prophetess, a widow who lives in the Temple and who lives from alms of those who come to worship and offer sacrifice there. What did she prophesy, what Word from God did she hear in her praying and fasting all of those long years?

It must have had to do with her hope, the long-held hope that is fulfilled in the birth of this special Child. And then there is Simeon. He is sometimes depicted as a Levitical priest of the Temple, but Saint Luke tells no such thing. According to the Gospel, Simeon is no one in particular, or rather he *is* someone who very particularly and very emphatically longs for the redemption of Israel and who now finds his hope and all his longing fulfilled in this holy Child. Simeon is led by the Holy Spirit to visit the Temple at just that blessed hour.

Both Anna and Simeon are the happiest of people then and there, but they are never mentioned again in the Gospel. Their joy, and Simeon's prophecy and prayer are all that mattered to Luke and to the Church. They may have had interesting or dull lives up until that point, and

that instant may have been the last joy they knew in this life if they were made to suffer for their faith.

What matters to *us* on a dreadful day like *this*, good as the day must be because the LORD Himself made it, to be sure, and finding ourselves as we do, just a little like Simeon and Anna, in the LORD's House? We have not come to see a baby be Christened. We are not here to celebrate the beginning of a life, but rather to mark its end. We do remember a beginning, though, one that happens anew each day by God's grace through faith. We remember here and now that James Walter Isennock, as seemingly ordinary as Saint Simeon ever was, was born a child of God through Holy Baptism in a church like this, at a Baptismal font perhaps very like the one at the entrance to this church. We have come to remember that this very church was a place where he found joy and gave joy to

others with his dear Marilyn, a place where, even without her, he always managed that disarming grin on first greeting that could only grow into a smile. We gather here because he loved this place and the grace and mercy of God it signifies.

We are here because this was a place in which he found strength, strength to overcome despair, strength to overcome the hardest of all obstacles and the most implacable of all adversaries, our own stubborn self-will that will lead us to destruction if we let it. Jim learned to bridle the power of that will through the higher power of God's love for him and for all people in Jesus Christ. He helped others to learn that wisdom as well. He was a blessing to others, even as he had been blessed.

He spent his life protecting and defending others, providing for his family, overcoming adversity and

teaching his children how to do that by both word and example, doting on grandchildren and lavishing kindness on animals who were his faithful companions. He enjoyed some truly golden years of life with Marilyn and without so many obligations of work, but those years were filled with too many acts of generosity, kindness and moral courage to number. He did much for others, for his community and for his church. Our regret may be today that we did not do more for him. That is certainly my own. But Jim, Pop, Pop-pop left us one another to look after in his family and in this congregation, one another to love and to make up for wherever our love for him fell short. May the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son keep us each new day on that path, so that, over the changing seasons, our sadness may be transformed into the joy and strength we saw in Jim.

✠Amen.

Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made of us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. ✠Amen.



Gloria in Excelsis Deo!