

The 1st Sunday following the
Epiphany
10 January 2021

Grace Episcopal Church
827 Church Street
Honesdale, PA

The Rev'd Edward K. Erb, rector rector@gracechurchhonesdale.org
570-241-2685

The First Week after Epiphany, 2021
Virtual Grace

Organ Prelude - *“Lord God, you now have set your servant free”* Hymn #499
Song 1, O. Gibbons / R. Vaughan Williams

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hello and welcome to “Virtual Grace”
from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA,
as we continue to celebrate the story of Christ’s birth.
We continue the story of the ‘after,’
skipping ahead to the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple,
just past the age of a one-month old,
normally celebrated on February 2nd - 40 days after Christmas.
Next week we will see him at age 12 ‘lost’ in the Temple with the Elders,
and then Baptized by John at age 29, and his Temptation in the Wilderness,
as we come to our observance of Lent in just over a month!

I’m Fr. Ed, the rector of our parish, and we’re glad you’re here in “Virtual Grace,”
not knowing when our doors will be open again for in-person worship
and the offering of the Blessed Sacraments.

We know so many people are struggling - financially, socially, personally.
It is our mission to aid any and everyone in whatever way we can,
to spread the Good News of Salvation
in whatever situation someone may find themselves.
We appreciate all the help, donations, best wishes and prayers
that have been offered to the Church.

If you, or anyone you know, are in any pastoral need at all, call me, 24/7.
I am more than ready to come to your spiritual aid and visit with a mask.

Especially today, we remember with horror the tragedies that occurred in
Washington this week, and we pray for all who have been affected by fear and
hatred.

Let us always remember that our salvation lies only
in our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, in this life and in the world to come.

CONFESSION & ASSURANCE of PARDON

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8,9

Let us confess our sins against God and our fellow sisters and brothers.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins through our savior Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthen us in all goodness, ✚ and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

COLLECT of the DAY

Let us pray...

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly pray that, as your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts by Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Hear words from the Old Testament book of Leviticus.

FIRST READING

Leviticus 12: 2b, 4, 6-8

The LORD spoke to Moses: If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be ceremonially unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. Her time of blood purification shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing, or come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed. When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. He shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement on her behalf;

then she shall be clean from her flow of blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, male or female. If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.

Here ends the Reading.

GRADUAL

Psalm 84: 1-8

How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.
Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.
Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.
They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.
Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.
Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.

SECOND READING

Luke 2: 21-28, 33-40

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 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 firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated 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; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided

by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God...

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed-- and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Here ends the Reading.

Simeon sang this song as he held dear the infant Jesus:

Lord, you now have set your servant free *
to go in peace as you have promised;
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, *
whom you have prepared for all the world to see:
A Light to enlighten the nations, *
and the glory of your people Israel.

MEDITATION

“ ”

Aware of hidden deity, the lowly Virgin brings
her newborn babe, with two young doves, her humble offerings.

You want to tick off God?

Tell Him, "No way!"

Round about 250 BCE - that is, before the Birth of Christ -

70 Greek Jews were brought to the famed Library of Alexandria, Egypt,

the world's single greatest archive of knowledge
as every book in the known world was copied on papyrus
and housed in the Library.

Emperor Ptolemy II ordered that even the Hebrew Scripture should be included.
So Simeon was brought with 71 other Hebrew scholars translating God's word.
Each Jewish scholar was given a certain portion of Scripture to translate.

Simeon was translating the portion of Isaiah's prophecy with the words,

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son" (Is 7:14)

He thought that if the learned Greeks read that, they would laugh at the Jews,
and not come to believe in the God Almighty,

so he took his quill and corrected the text to read, 'a young woman.'

Poof! An angel appears grabs his hand, and says,

"You *will* write what God has said!"

Simeon trembles and takes another sheaf of papyrus.

"And because you have been so brazen against God,
you shall see these words fulfilled.

Death will not be yours until you behold the Christ of God,

Poof. Angel disappears.

Thus, 250 years later - Simeon was, as Luke describes, an old man -

we have that same Simeon back home in Jerusalem

hanging around the Temple Mount,

prayerfully anxious for retirement – fulfillment and rest.

Thus the Song of Simeon we use at Evening Prayer and Compline -
makes sense at the end of our day:

"Lord, now you set your servant free to go as you promised.

For these eyes of mine have seen your Salvation."

Why is Joseph bringing Mary and the baby to Jerusalem?
Fulfilling the Biblical Law for a devout family.

Scholars suggest that not many people in the first century
observed the Laws of Moses, fulfilling righteousness.

There are certain prescribed, recommended, suggested,
rituals which even this lively priest wish others would engage.

As you've heard me say over and over again, our motto in the Episcopal Church is:
"All may; none must; some should."

There's Baptism;

And there's Communion; and Confirmation.

For some, there is Marriage and Ordination to Sacred Ministry.

There is even a personal Commitment to Christian Service.

Reconciliation of a Penitent.;

and Ministry to the Sick and the Dying.

The Seven Sacraments, but as the Catechism says,

"God's activity [in human life] is not limited to these rites." *BCP. p.861, adapted*

Besides the Book of Common Prayer and its current supplements,

there is the B.O.S. - The "Book of Occasional Services" -

or as we called the B.O.S. in seminary - "The Book of Spells".

There are things like The Blessing of Homes

(one of which I performed two weeks ago!)

celebrating the Anniversary of a Marriage;

The Renewal of Marriage Vows;

The Stations of the Cross, and so much more.

"All may; none must; some should." and I wish all would.

Scripture records that both Simeon and Anna were righteous and faithful,
and spent all their days with God.

Like them, may we allow God to be a part of all our lives,
each and every day of our lives,
each and every moment,
each and every movement.

I offer a hymn for Anna, Simeon, Mary and Joseph, and for all of us.

God be in my head, and in my understanding.
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking.
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking.
God be in my heart, and in my thinking.

and with Simeon we pray,

God be at mine end, and at my departing.

Hymn #694, Sarum, 1514

AMEN

Let us offer the words of our faith using the Apostles' Creed.

The CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection † of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Beginning today, we divide the Parish Directory and lift up a portion of our family each week.

Let us pray for God's people throughout the world.

PRAYERS, Form II, *adapted*

BCP, p.385

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Kevin, our Bishop; and for all ministers and faithful. Remembering those in our parish family: Sarah & Shawn; Jim; Dan; Duncan; Ann & Don; Jane; Cindy; Bill; Jane; Jess; Val; Suzanne & B.J.; Pray for the Church.

Silence

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people. Remember those around the world who have not heard of the love of God. Pray for justice and peace in our country, in our homes and abroad.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, those in prison, those separated from loved ones, for the sick, the crippled children, the disabled elderly and those suffering from Covid-19 symptoms. Pray for those in any need or trouble.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the departed, especially those who have succumbed to the virus, and those killed by violent acts. Pray for those who have died.

Silence

I ask your thanksgiving for loved ones, and the creative ways they and we have found to share our love, especially in this holy season. Pray for our families wherever they may be.

Silence

To sum up all these petitions, let us pray together in the words which Christ himself taught us, saying:

Our Father...

BLESSING

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with us, and remain with us always. *Amen.*

Organ Postlude -

“*Little’ Fugue in G*”

J. S. Bach