

Women of the Church
Month 14
Anna the Prophetess

Anna lived at the time of Jesus' birth. She was a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. This tribe was part of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was lost to the Assyrians in 722 BC. It is said to be "thought provoking" that an identifiable descendant of Asher ended up in a city dozens of mile away and centuries later with her faith intact (Dovle-Nelson ncregister.com).

The account of Anna and her prophecy can be found in Luke 2:36-38. According to the Scripture, Anna was advanced in years; she had lived with her husband for seven years and then as a widow until she was 84. Like Simeon, she spent her days in the temple. She was known for worshipping with prayer and fasting.

Shortly after his birth Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple for purification or presentation to the Lord. The couple first met Simeon, who strongly sensed that the baby was the promised Messiah. Then they encountered Anna, who was instantly struck by the presence of the baby Jesus. She seemed to mystically realize that the child was the hoped for Messiah. Anna gave great thanks to God and then shared and spoke the knowledge of this child with many others who were awaiting redemption (Doyle-Nelson).

Anna appears to be a woman who has lived a full life and who is still living fully with a "keen vision and clear heart" (Mitchell). Anna's family name, Phanauel, means "face or vision of God" and her tribe name, Asher, means "happy or blessed". Anna is called prophet, one chosen to hear and receive messages from the Lord and proclaim them to others. She is blessed with vision of God (Mitchell).

The Catholic Church commemorates Anna as a saint, with her feast day being celebrated on February 3. She is also often referenced or honored in the season of Advent. Anna's words were filled with joy and were authoritative. She would have spoken as one who knew the truth of this child Jesus and as one who eagerly wanted to tell everyone about him (catholicdailyreflections.com).

References:

<https://www.ncregister.com/site/print/55834>

<https://catholic-daily-reflections.com/2019/12/29/the-prophetess-anna-2/>
Who Does He Say You Are? By Colleen Mitchell 1989

Reflections

Although the account of Anna in Scripture is brief, it provides for much thoughtful reflection.

--Anna was a woman with a praying heart who trusted God. She spent all of her time in the temple worshipping God in prayer and fasting. Anna chose to serve the Lord. Her prayer was persistent and she showed a total dependence on God.

-How can I cultivate prayer practices in my life?

-What things distract me from focus and dependence on God?

-In what ways can I be more persistent in prayer?

--Anna was a woman of patience and vision. She prayed in the temple for many years with great anticipation. Anna knew that something was about to happen and she waited in

unwavering hope for that. She dedicated her life to God, fasting from things that could cloud her vision of His presence, so that she would be ready when He revealed himself. And when he did, she instantly recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

-In what ways can I be patient and hopeful in my life?

-What things can I do to have clearer vision about God's presence in my life?

-How can I better recognize Jesus in different aspects of my life, whether small or big?

--Anna experienced the joy of Jesus and shared the good news of his birth with those she knew. She was transformed by her recognition of the baby Jesus, openly rejoicing and giving thanks. Anna offered the realization of her hope to others, others who were waiting, others who were uncertain, others who needed to hear that salvation had come.

-In what ways can I regularly rejoice and give thanks to/for Jesus in my life?

-How can I proclaim and share Christ to others in my life?

Prayers/ Devotions

Scriptures Helpful in Understanding Anna the Prophetess

Luke 2:22-24 Leviticus 12 Luke 2:36-38

Isaiah 52:9 Psalm 17:5-6

Joshua 19:24 2 Kings 17:6, 18

1 Corinthians 16:13 Colossians 1:11-12 Hebrews 12:1-3 1Peter 4:10-11

Prayers:

"Lord, may I always remember the reason for Christmas. May I always keep the joy of Your coming among us at the center of my celebration. You, dear Lord, are the greatest Gift ever given. I thank you for Your life and I pray that you will help me share the Gift of Yourself with others. Jesus, I trust in you."

<https://catholic-daily-reflections.com/2019/12/29/the-prophetess-anna-2/>

"Dear Jesus, surprising Savior, I want to be a woman of vision, a woman who sees you in action, recognizes your presence, and has the courage to offer the hope you bring to those waiting to know you. Help me, Lord, to become this woman.

Give me the grace to give up the things that cloud my heart and that keep me from a hope wholly dependent on you. Help me to recognize the surprising ways you speak. Teach me to sense with confidence you hand at work. Give me the gift of a disciplined heart, Lord, so that I can have a clear vision, know my purpose and live it fully. Teach me to rejoice with a thanksgiving that becomes a proclamation of your presence to those around me.

Make me, Lord, a prophetess, whose life is spent looking for you to move, listening intently to your voice, and seeing you at work. Make me a woman who hopes in you above all else and whose hope is forever renewed by seeing you present in my life in the most unexpected ways. Give me a heart that goes out rejoicing and proclaiming your praise to the hearts in my midst who are still waiting to know you.

Make me a woman of vision, God, with a heart that sees and a clear purpose to proclaim you. I am waiting Lord, with a hope that can be satisfied only in you. Amen."

Who Does He Say You Are Colleen C. Mitchell.

Practical Applications

--Just as Anna was a woman of vision and prayer, so can we be!

Think about a vision you have; it may be for the world, your community, a friend, family member or yourself. Explore the “discipline” of prayer—different types, methods, times, etc. Develop a prayer plan for yourself based on this vision. Implement the plan. Journal on your experiences a couple times each week.

--Anna was “in tune” to the coming of the Savior. She immediately recognized Jesus as Messiah. We too can develop an enhanced awareness of God’s presence and movement in our lives!

Think about ways you might “notice” or become “in tune” to God in your life. Make a conscious effort to do this each day. Find a small tablet of paper and have it near you as much as possible. Keep a running list of the ways you notice God in your life for the next week to several days. At the end review this and journal how God is showing himself to you.

--It seemed Anna could not wait to share the news of Jesus’ birth with others around her. We can share Jesus in many different ways to those around us!

Choose one or two ways you feel you can share Jesus with others. This may take different forms—it may be by speaking directly about Him, it may be by sharing a Scripture passage, it may be by praying with another person, it may be by modeling one of Jesus’ traits—such as care for another. Try to share Jesus in at least one way each day for the next week. Journal about this experience.