



SIEBENQUELL

Born of a Story: An Answer from the Inspired Imagination



QUELLENANGABE: REINHOLD STECHER-KALENDER 2018

A fortnight ago, my colleague, Rosemarie Monnnerjahn, wrote an impressive reflection on the story of the Presentation of the Lord: »Born of the Light«. It contained these words.

**When the parents of Jesus
brought the child into the temple
to present him to the Lord,
the Spirit came upon the old
Simeon and he testified
to the light that his old eyes saw.**

**And I tremble:
What if I too am called
from the light,
called to be light,
to proclaim the light?
Loved and lured,
to live out all that I have been given?**

**In the darkness, to permit
to awaken, to nurture yearning?
A yearning that reaches into the eternal,
leads to the eternal?**

On question of her text resonated within me in a special manner: » What if I too am called from the light, called to be light, to proclaim the light?« I think it is particularly important during a time when many people are asking: »What can we do?«

However, lest we forget, a question is only a question if we are interested in the answer. Too often, »What can we do« is only a question in the grammatical sense and tends to express helplessness, a lack of perspective and resignation.

What can we do?

The story opens with an encounter. Mary and Joseph brought the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As a very young couple, they have already brought a child, a new, promising life into the world. Here in the temple, they now bring the offering of the poor, two turtledoves, but also the most precious gift of their lives: their child. Their expectations were quickly fulfilled.

At the threshold, two elderly people, Simeon and Anna, are waiting. Their expectations take a long time to be fulfilled. They have waited, says Luke, »because the most important thing in the world must not be sought, but awaited« (Simone Weil). When the disciple is ready, the Master comes.

*In a world of polarisation, the biblical story suggests to us an **Encounter of the Generations**. It can be mutually enriching. Those of us who are on the side of Simeon and Anna are in urgent need of the enthusiasm and vitality of a young generation who want to bring forth life and also want to present and demonstrate it. I think so often and so fondly of the young people who come to our annual Easter seminar and always leave us enriched with the projects they share.*

On the other hand, the patience, perseverance and persistence of Simeon and Anna have something to say about how we can keep hope alive when the fulfilment of our longing is a long time coming. They teach Mary and Joseph how people can persevere into old age. A long life is no excuse for being jaded, cold and resigned.

This calls to mind the play »I walk through Theresienstadt«. It was an evening in which the actor Roman Knižka read from the works and memories of prisoners, the OPUS 45 wind quintet played compositions by musicians from the camp, among others, and the students from the school also took part with texts and poems written during the workshops held prior to the performance. And these days, I am thinking of the survivors of the Shoah (Edith Eva Eger, Ruth Klüger, Eli Wiesel, Primo Levi), whose life experience and life lessons give us much to take with us into the gathering storm of the Trump era and the movement of a lack of alternatives for Germany.

What can we do?

This story is a temple story. Interestingly, however, it is not priests who receive the child, but two lay people. They hold no official office, but they are two bearers of God's light. Their eyes may be veiled by age, but they still shine with longing. And she, Anna, is the third prophetess in the New Testament, after Elizabeth and Mary. For Jesus does not belong to the institution, he does not belong to the priests, but to humanity. He is God incarnate in the creatures, in the life that ends and in the life that flourishes. He belongs to us, to all men and women. He belongs to the thirsty, to the dreamers, like Simeon; to those who know how to see beyond, like Anna; to those who are able to be enchanted by a newborn child because they perceive God as the future and as life.

We should not leave everything to the so-called professionals, be it in church, politics, society or industry. The people who walk the streets, the many initiatives undertaken by lay people (not only in the ecclesiastical sense), as well as the countless people who set signs of hope and have made a career out of humanity are the ones who receive, embrace and realise the life of this child and everything that Jesus stands for.

What can we do?

Simeon pronounces a prophecy with great words about Mary, three words that span the centuries to touch each one of us:

**»Behold, this Child is appointed to cause
the rise and fall of many in Israel,**

and to be a sign that will be spoken against...«

1. *The first word is fall. Christ does not come to destroy us humans, but our shadows, the inadequate life, the dying life, our world of masks and lies. What will be brought to fall is the disfigured life.*
2. *Secondly, the prophecy speaks of Christ as a sign that be spoken against, a sign of contradiction. Jesus, who contradicts our ways with his ways, our thoughts with his thoughts, also contradicts our false image we have of God, with the invisible face of an Abbas with big arms and a heart of light. Here is one who is the contradiction of everything that contradicts love.*
3. *Finally, Jesus is also here to raise many up. For Jesus, no one is lost for all time, no one is forever finished. It is possible to start anew and become new. Jesus is the hand that takes us by the hand. Here is one who repeats at every dawn what he said to Jairus' daughter: talit̄a kum, child get up! Young life, get up, rise, shine, take up the path and the fight.*

What can we do? We can do these things.

These are three words that give life breath. Simeon says to Mary: The divine life that grows in you will bring all this into the world and will give birth to salvation.

We can bring the divine life that her son, Jesus Christ, has made grow in us into the world and bring about salvation. We can make these three words our own, our promise to the world.

1. *We will bring about the fall of all that ruins life.*
2. *We will be a sign of contradiction vis-a-vis everything that contradicts love.*
3. *Wherever, presidents, politicians, parties and panic-inducers wish to tear down life, we will raise it up.*

In his book »Strength to Love«, (1963) Martin Luther King wrote:

»Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.«

**What if I too am called
from the light,
called to be light,
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What can we do? According to Luke's story, the answer is: much more than we thought. And born from Rosemarie's story, this reflection is born. As John Shea so beautifully put it: »And so there will never be an end to the telling.«

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Vallendar, February 13th, 2025