

February magazine

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Our Lectionary begins February with the great Gospel reading from St Luke describing the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, which includes the famous ‘Nunc Dimittis’ or ‘Song of Simeon’. This text has become very much a part in Evening Prayer, Vespers, and Compline and is often said at funerals as part of the commendation.

This elderly man Simeon, who had devoutly worshipped at the Temple for decades now announced he could ‘depart’ as he had seen the Messiah and held Him in his arms. He no longer feared death.

Such a concept was unknown in Israel; death was a thing to be feared and each new day was looked upon as a gain. But now everything changed. Simeon had seen the Saviour and was now ready to die joyfully and peacefully.

When working with the dying I consider it a great privilege to share precious time with them and hopefully by prayer and sacrament instil a sense of peace and hope to banish the fear of death.

I remember seeing a gentleman who knew he was dying who during a final exploratory operation felt an angelic presence who reassured him that he was going to Heaven. He awoke from the operation full of hope and completely at peace, and like Simeon, rejoiced. He told his daughter who rather than rebuking or correcting him, also experienced the same joy, and I remember going back to my office after seeing him weeping with joy too.

Dying physically is something we cannot escape from but what can happen is that we can find peace in our heart and not fear because Jesus Christ gives us this peace.

Like Simeon, we are all called to rejoice and tell of this peace, to let it be the light in the darkness for those who fear, not just death, but all the other fears that haunt throughout life.

If you have fears, about anything, and you would like to find comfort and peace, don't suffer alone, get in touch.

Every peace to you all.

Rev James