

Sermon for Grace and Holy Trinity Church, Richmond, VA
The Presentation, February 2, 2020
The Rev. Bill Queen, "The Spirit's Quiet Work"
Luke 2:22-40

Love divine, visit us ... Love divine, enter our trembling hearts ... Love divine,
let us your life receive ... [~ Hymn 657]

today's Gospel story is the basis for the Feast of the Presentation, one of those
2nd tier Holy Days that only usually gets observed when it happens to fall on a
Sunday, as it does today; as Jesus is presented to God in the Temple, as
required by Jewish law, the story speaks more about the reactions of two
people, Simeon and Anna, to this child Jesus; and notice that the real main
character of the story is the Holy Spirit

we're used to seeing the Holy Spirit act in powerful and miraculous ways; on
the day of Pentecost, it comes looking like fire, roaring like the wind, and
enabling people to understand foreign languages; after Philip baptizes an
Ethiopian, the Spirit snatches him up and deposits him in a faraway city; and
throughout the Epistles, we hear accounts of people healing, prophesying, and
speaking in angelic tongues, all through the power of the Spirit

but in this story today, the Spirit is working in the quietest of ways; Luke says
of Simeon that the Holy Spirit had rested on him for some time, had revealed
certain knowledge to him, had guided him to the Temple on that day, and then
spoken, eloquently, through him

also in this story today is Anna, a prophet—and remember that a prophet is by
definition one guided by and speaking for the Spirit; she had the Spirit's gifts
of patience and faith, as she had spent decades praying and fasting in the
Temple; the Spirit had arranged, quietly, behind the scenes, that these two
elders would be there, in the right place, at the right time, to welcome the
child Jesus and to proclaim his true greatness and glory

based on what we learn from this story, I'd like to invite you to consider how
the Holy Spirit might be working quietly, behind the scenes, in your life; I'd
like to invite you to consider how the Holy Spirit might have arranged things

for you to be here, now, at this place, at this time, for you to continue the work of welcoming Jesus and of welcoming those who seek him

and I'd like to invite you to consider how the Holy Spirit might be working not just in your personal life individually, but also as you make decisions and undertake actions with your spouse, with your family, with your friends, in your vocation, in your avocations, and in your free time—because we know that the Holy Spirit moves more powerfully when we act along with other faithful people who are similarly following the Spirit's guidance

and, finally, I'd like to invite you to consider how the Holy Spirit might be working in our communal life here at Grace and Holy Trinity Church, as we make decisions and undertake actions together in the choir, in the Altar Guild, in Sunday School and Adult Formation classes, in committees, in planning groups, in the Vestry, in the Endowment Board, in the Discernment Committee, and, yes, in our parish Annual Meeting—because we know that the Holy Spirit moves most powerfully within the Church, with a capital C, this incarnate body of Christ on earth, and in every church, with a little c, each a part of that incarnate body of Christ on earth, as we act thoughtfully and prayerfully with other church people who are similarly following the Spirit's guidance

just as Jesus' parents returned to their own home town, where he grew strong and was filled with wisdom and with the favor of God, may we, here in our home town, as individuals, as families, as members of our neighborhood communities, and as members of this church community, with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, continue to grow strong and be filled with wisdom and with the favor of God