Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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“Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted” (Luke 2:35).

1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35

The end of the year 2021 will occasion the annual ritual of review and resolution. We look back over the past year, express either gratitude or regret, but also know at this point that we cannot change anything. But 2022 is not yet, and so it challenges us to affirm or change the trajectories of the past that could shape our future. Chance is beyond our control but the varied circumstance out of which many unforeseen events will emerge can still be influenced. What we want, we must work for; what we do not want, we must oppose.

Today’s Gospel story of the encounter between Simeon and the Holy Family offers us a glimpse of God’s view of history. An elderly prophet holds a child in his arms and sees the future. God’s promise to save his people will not come about by sweeping aside evil and breaking open history to the divine will, but by sending new life.

The baby Simeon holds and the humble couple before him reveal to his failing eyes a light no human hope or effort alone can kindle. Jesus will grow to maturity, formed by his parents in a village in the hill country of Galilee, a simple carpenter who, after a short ministry of preaching and confrontation with the status quo, will change the course not just of history but of human destiny itself.

It has been said that the precise weight of human hope is the weight of a sleeping child. His mother already knows the vulnerability of this life, and Simeon does not spare her the prediction of the heartbreak that will join her to the suffering of her son for the sins of the world. But the promise made is unstoppable and God’s purposes will be fulfilled. Simeon and Anna, who also waits to hold the child, are filled with joy.

We all carry across the threshold of the New Year the weight of the world’s children. The future we help create by our faith and courage is the world they will inherit, as blessing or burden. Let it be resolved that 2022 will be a year of grace.

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