

A special musical offering for the Feast of  
**The Presentation of Our Lord**  
Sunday, February 2, 2025  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
by James Layton

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*Ich habe genug*, BWV 82  
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Today's special observance is known by several different names across all of Christendom: the Purification of Mary, the Meeting of the Lord, the Feast of the Holy Encounter, Candlemas, and in the Episcopal Church, the Presentation of Our Lord. It commemorates the presentation of the infant Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem by his parents Joseph and the Virgin Mary. According to the Gospel of Luke, they did this exactly forty days after his birth in accordance with two ancient Jewish customs and requirements of the Torah: the ritual purification of women post-childbirth, and the redemption of a firstborn son. According to Jewish tradition as described in the book of Leviticus, a woman who gave birth to a male child was considered "unclean" or "impure" for forty days, requiring a ritual of purification thereafter. Therefore, its annual liturgical commemoration takes place exactly forty days after Christmas. While rituals of purification and thanksgiving for their child are what took Mary and Joseph to the temple that day, today's observance is best remembered for who they encountered there and what he said to them.

Many Episcopalians are familiar with the text of the Song of Simeon, known in Latin as the *Nunc Dimittis* (Luke 2:29-32). It is a staple part of the ancient monastic office of Compline and of the quintessentially Anglican office of Choral Evensong, and those who sing or attend these services regularly have sung or heard this text countless times. To some, the *Nunc Dimittis* and its frequent partner the *Magnificat* (Song of Mary) are almost as ubiquitous as the Lord's Prayer. Yet, like the Lord's Prayer, it is easy to overlook the origins of these texts and to forget their places within the lectionary and the church year. The *Nunc Dimittis* is at the epicenter of the Feast of the Presentation and is the observance's chief contribution to scripture. According to the Gospel of Luke, Simeon was a devout Jew who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. He was in the Temple of Jerusalem when Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus there, and upon seeing him, Simeon took the child into his arms and famously prayed:

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel.” (The Book of Common Prayer, 1662)

Candlemas is a northern European name for the feast because of the procession with lighted candles at the mass on this day, reflecting Simeon's proclamation of “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” The feast is among the most ancient observances of the Church, with records of its celebration dating from the fourth century in Jerusalem.

The German Lutheran church celebrates it as *Mariae Reinigung* (Purification of Mary), and Johann Sebastian Bach composed three complete cantatas for the occasion. The one offered today, *Ich habe genug*, BWV 82, was premiered on this day 298 years ago (February 2, 1727) in Leipzig, Germany, most likely at either Thomaskirche (where Bach is buried) or Nikolaikirche. It sets a libretto by poet Christoph Birkmann, and while the German text is not a direct translation of the *Nunc Dimittis*, it is a very close paraphrase of it. In singing this cantata, I have the task and honor of portraying Simeon himself—a responsibility I do not take lightly.

In contrast to Bach's other cantatas for this observance, BWV 82 stresses the desire to escape earthly misery and be united with Jesus. As such, I cannot help but think of the text within the context of the life and death of my late mother, Monica Layton. Many of you in attendance today knew her well and were familiar with her battle with aggressive metastatic ovarian cancer. You'll also know that her chief coping mechanism was her faith. When her disease reached a turning point and it was made clear to her that it would never go away, her confidence in the afterlife enabled her to look death straight in the face without a hint of fear or uncertainty. She and I had many conversations about what we both knew would eventually happen, and while one would expect these conversations to be frightening and devastatingly sad, we both found them comforting. When she talked about her death, she might as well have been praying the *Nunc Dimittis* herself.

In the interest of the flow of the service, the order in which I sing the movements of the cantata today is different from their order in the composition, but since I'm using the memory of my mother and her death as the subtext, I think this order is more appropriate. As you read the translation on the pages to follow, you'll notice that the text begins with calm anticipation, gradually gets more woeful and agonizing, then finally ends with a sense of calm and a tangible peace. This is an accurate depiction of the final week of her life. Even amid her suffering and agony, she was able to maintain a sense of hope and assurance, ever confident that she would soon be released from it. In this sense, death is a beautiful thing. We need only have the faith to see it that way.

May we all feel enabled to follow the examples of Simeon and of Monica Layton and greet our own death as a welcome release from the stresses of this life and “depart in peace” to the next. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

## Text and Translation

### PRELUDE

#### No. 1 Aria

*Ich habe genug,  
Ich habe den Heiland, das Hoffen der  
    Frommen,  
Auf meine begierigen Arme genommen;  
Ich habe genug,  
Ich hab' ihn erblickt,  
Mein Glaube hat Jesum ans Herze  
    gedrückt;  
Nun wünsch' ich, noch heute mit  
    Freuden  
Von hinnen zu scheiden.*

I have enough,  
I have the savior, the hope of the pious,  
taken into my eager arms;  
I have enough,  
I have seen him,  
and my faith has pressed Jesus to my  
    heart;  
now I wish, even today, joyfully  
to depart from here.

### OFFERTORY

#### No. 4 Recitative

*Mein Gott! wann kommt das schöne:  
    Nun!  
Da ich im Friede fahren werde  
Und in dem Sande kühler Erde  
  
Und dort bei dir im Schoße ruhn?  
Der Abschied ist gemacht,  
Welt, gute nacht!*

My God! when shall I hear that beautiful  
    word: Now!  
When shall I depart in peace  
and both here in the cool sand of the  
    earth  
and there with you in your womb rest?  
I have made my farewell,  
world, good night!

#### No. 5 Aria

*Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod,  
Ach, hätt' er sich schon eingefunden.  
Da entkomm' ich aller Not,  
Die mich noch auf der Welt gebunden.*

I happily anticipate my death,  
Ah, if only it had already taken place.  
Then I would escape all the distress  
that still binds me to the earth.

**COMMUNION**  
**No. 2 Recitative**

*Ich habe genug,  
Mein Trost ist nur allein,  
Dass Jesus mein und ich sein eigen  
möchte sein.  
Im Glauben halt' ich ihn,  
Da seh' ich auch mit Simeon  
Die Freude jenes Lebens schon.  
Laßt uns mit diesem Manne zieh'n!  
Ach! möchte mich von meines Leibes  
Ketten der Herr erretten;  
Ach! wäre doch mein Abschied hier,  
  
Mit Freuden sagt' ich, Welt, zu dir:  
Ich habe genug.*

I have enough,  
My consolation is this alone,  
that Jesus is mine and I shall be His.  
  
In faith I hold him,  
and with Simeon, I also see  
the joy of the afterlife already.  
Let us with this man go!  
Ah! may the Lord save me from the  
chains of my body;  
Ah! were the time of my departure but  
here,  
with joy, world, I would say to you:  
I have enough.

**No. 3 Aria**

*Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen,  
Fallet sanft und selig zu!  
Welt, ich bleibe nicht mehr hier,  
Hab' ich doch kein Teil an dir,  
Das der Seele könnte taugen.  
Hier muss ich das Elend bauen,  
Aber dort, dort werd' ich schauen  
Süßen Friede, stille Ruh.*

Fall asleep, you weary eyes,  
fall gently and blissfully closed!  
World, I wish to remain here no longer,  
for indeed there is no part of you  
that could be of use to my soul.  
Here my misery grows,  
but there, there will I see  
sweet peace, quiet rest.