When my children were a lot younger we used to play pass the parcel. The children all loved the randomness of the game, little did they know that at the end of the game they all got prizes, but I would throw in extra couple just to give that sense of randomness.

It is not by chance that the evangelist Luke gathers the generations in one place, in the temple of

God. One of the aspects of this story is the passing on to the new generations the story of God’s

love, God’s providence. It is the passing on of faith in God’s covenant, of God’s promise to be with

his people.

We can imagine the love with which Mary and Joseph bring their firstborn son to the Tempe; their anxiety for his health, his safety and his future; their desire to be good parents and to be worthy of the task they have been given for his nurture and his growth.

We can imagine their surprise when they meet these old people who suddenly appears out of nowhere: Simeon, who takes the child in his arms, and the elderly eccentric Anna, who pops out of the shadows to begin praising God in a loud voice.

What was a simple ritual to fulfil the law of Moses has become for this young family something

both strange and momentous. A simple family occasion becomes an earth-shattering revelation of

the presence of God.

Here we find more than just the handing of the message of God’s love and care for God’s chosen

people Israel. The announcement of Simeon: *‘Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my*

*eyes have seen your salvation’* proclaims to the world that the presence of God, the promise and

covenant of God with the Jewish people, is being passed on and given as a gift to the whole

world.

*‘You are dismissing your servant in peace.’ ---* Simeon has lived with the hope and longing for the freedom of his people, for the justice of God for his family and for his community, he had lived in hope and longing for an end to the suffering and bitterness of their oppression. Simeon, through the Holy Spirit, is granted that gift of being able to recognize the presence of God in this baby Jesus. And now he can give a great sigh of relief

Simeon’s words are a witness of faith.

What could he really know about how Jesus’s life would unfold? How could he imagine, as he gazes on this baby, the healing, the teaching, the preaching, the dramatic challenges to the status quo. Simeon didn’t know any of all that. He wasn’t granted the gift of seeing the events of the future. He was simply given the gift of recognizing the presence of God. And it was this recognition of God in the Christ -child which filled Simeon with peace.

He could let go---let go of his anxiety for himself and for his people, let go of his fear of the future

and his sadness for the present. He could let go of his disappointments of his past and simply

allow his life to be held in the love of God’s presence. As Simeon takes the child in his arms and

blesses him, Simeon himself is held in the loving arms of God and blessed.

Simeon knows that the future of this child and of his mother will be a rocky road, and yet, he is

filled with joy, his heart is full of blessing which overflows, and which he desires to share with this

young family. His mind and heart and body find that relaxation of true peace, of the true faith that

indeed all will be well because God is present.

Here is a lesson for us. Just as Mary and Joseph are willing to pass over their child into the arms of

this complete stranger--willing to receive his blessing, and willing for him to know the joy and

delight of holding this infant,-- so too they are willing to pass Jesus over to you and me. So that this great heavenly and grace filled game of pass the parcel can carry on.

We too are invited to hold the Christ child, to look with awe and delight on this infant. We are

invited, like Simeon, to look for the presence of God, and to feel ourselves to be held in the love of

God, to feel for ourselves that sense of peace that indeed all will be well simply because God is

present.

Like Simeon, we are invited to lay down any bitterness of the past, to let go of our fear of the

future, and to shift our focus from the sadness of the present to the light and hope of Christ.

This is a lesson for us as individuals as we make our way through life, which is at times uncertain,

at times painful, at times joyful, and always full of surprises.

As we look to our future--so uncertain, so different from what we had imagined a few years ago--

we are invited to do so without fear, with an eye to the good of others, and with a desire to bring

nations together in peace. We are called to pass on the comfort, hope and faith to others.

As we live our present moment, we pray that we may know the peace of Christ, and that we may

be given the gift of recognizing the presence of God with us, God for us, God within us.

Gracious God,