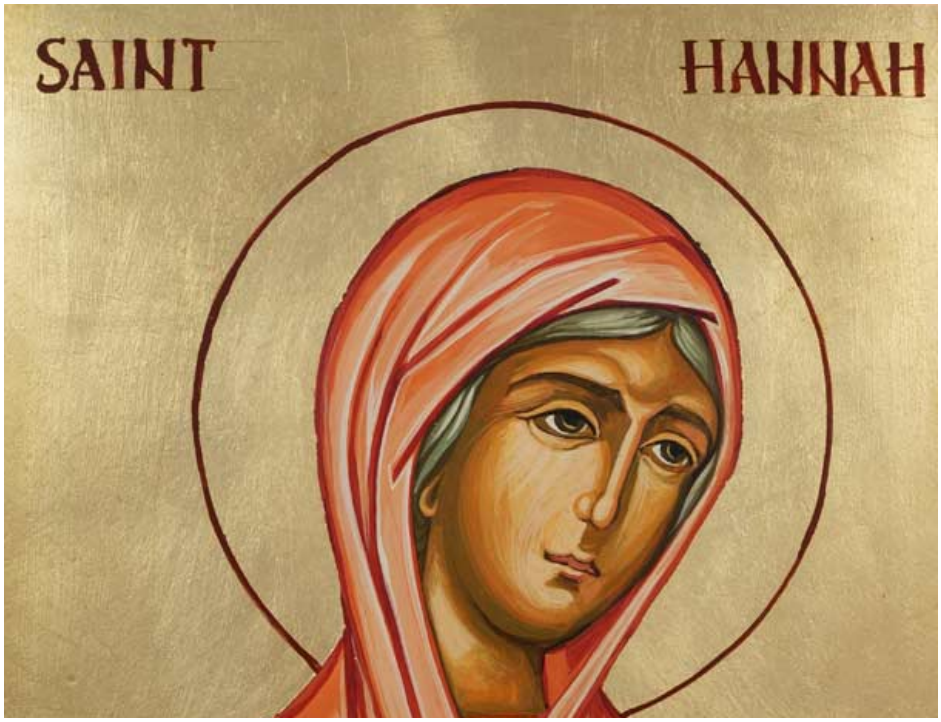
WALKING THE PATH OF ADVENT WITH THE WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

Anna's fidelity



There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2.36-38)

Only three verses in the Bible tell us about Anna, and yet we know many things about her: first we know she is a **prophetess**. Contrary to what is one may believe, the prophet is not a soothsayer who predicts the future. In greek the word indicates the speaker instead of a person, while the Jewish equivalent, *nabi*, also includes the meaning of being called and sent. **What Anna announces is based on a past**, the story of Israel and her personal story **and a present** that she is witnessing in welcoming the infant Jesus.

We also know about her family, her advanced age - eighty-four years - and her **story as a widow**, which was not an easy condition - as the scriptures often remind us describing the orphans and widows as the most disadvantaged groups to be protected - in which she lived surely more than half of her life. But beyond her past, we know that Anna is a faithful woman, in dialogue with God, day and night. It is this **deep and abiding relationship with God** that leads to watchful eyes that can recognize salvation when it occurs.

In this Advent season Anna teaches us that **despite the difficulties of our past, God never abandons us and we can choose to abide in Him**. This woman, a widow and a prophetess, is the image of fidelity in waiting. We look today with joy and gratitude at the road we have traveled, God reminds us that our life, at any time and at any age, is a blessing for us and for others to whom we can announce that the Christ Child was born. A special thought today for all of the **grandmothers and grandfathers** who continue to carry the light of faith in families.

(III week of Advent 2016)