



Advent Reflection for Thursday, December 1st

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Luke 1: 5-7

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Reflection by Dana Taplin:

My goodness, I can certainly relate to this passage: a couple getting on in years—or, as the king’s translators put it, *now well stricken in years*—unable to conceive, living blamelessly (but who can really say that of themselves?) or, at least, abiding by the civil laws and God’s commandments, as well as one can. Like Elizabeth and Zechariah, my wife and I were later blessed with a child. The situation of Elisabeth and Zechariah is so very common in the world, and not even their plight as a barren couple so much as just their ordinariness as regular folk descended from early leaders of the people, he belonging to and performing a role within a respectable social order, she living by God’s commandments and no doubt doing good in her family and community. It’s hard to make much out of the passage on its own without referring to what comes next. It seems clear that something big is going to happen to these ordinary people; otherwise why introduce them so early in an account of the life of Jesus? Why them versus any other ordinary married couple? Maybe because people with “good” lineage who follow the rules may receive what they had been hoping for as a divine reward. But that seems too easy and it draws too much from the well of self satisfaction. We don’t really know but I think it’s less a reward for good behavior and more the opportunity these older people present to take good care of a child who may go on to do important things in the world. Unlike Harry Potter, the child given to an absurdly unworthy couple, who still goes on to do big things. At least this passage validates the elderly couple who have led a good life together: few such will

be chosen to be the parents of a prophet but they are all good people whom God loves, whether they know it or not.

Dana Taplin lives in Windsor Terrace with his wife Michele and son Aaron and commutes by e-bike to the Department of Environmental Protection in Lefrak City, Queens. Dana is thrilled that Saya offered him a chance to return to his choirboy roots by joining our choir earlier this year.

