

Epiphany 5, Feast of the Presentation  
St. Paul's/Resurrección, Mount Vernon, WA

February 2, 2025  
Rev. Paul Moore

## Roads

Two poems, one by a great poet and one by an amateur:

The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

I had a similar experience once.

The Right Road (*prm 1/23/2025*)

In the driver's seat I sat.  
Two tracks diverged before me, in the mountains high,  
And I, unable to see where either would end,  
(There being no sign to give me hint,)  
Until I chose, I cannot yet say how or why.

Where I went was not where I meant,  
But it was right.

We have all stood at crossroads, not sure of which path was "the right one," and without the knowledge to really choose with confidence. Yet we chose, and it made all the difference.

Mary and Joseph stood in the Temple that day. They went to comply with the law, which they did, but not without first encountering a crossroads, forcing a choice. Two prophets describe them. We do not have the words Anna spoke, but we know where her name comes from. It is the same as "Hannah," in the story of the birth of Samuel in I Samuel, chapter 1. Hannah was the preferred wife of a prominent man of Israel, but unable to conceive. She spent time in the temple praying and God answered her prayer. Her son Samuel was the last of the great judges of old, who oversaw the rise of the first kings of Israel. It made all the difference. It is also the same as "Anna," that in the apocryphal book of the Gospel of James, is identified as the mother of Mary, grandmother to Jesus. Though not mentioned in today's text, she may very well have been in the temple on that day, as well. Whatever the prophetess said, the people should listen. She's got good roots!

We do have the words of old Simeon. We sing his song as Cantic 17 in Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. It is beautiful in its elation, its sense of completion, and its timing. *It's one of my favorites, but we must never separate Simeon's song from the words that follow.* "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed-- and a sword will pierce your own soul too." We hear echoes of the first lesson today, where God's chosen one will purify Israel until her offerings on the altar are once again pure of heart. There are ripples of it in the Epistle lesson from Hebrews. Jesus suffered and learned obedience, *and* became for us a compassionate high priest. The road less taken is chosen at a price.

The fork in the road for Mary and Joseph is this: This Child is no ordinary child. Will you work with whom this child will become, or will you wish for a "normal" child, something regular and predictable, about whom the advice of grandparents and aunts and uncles would actually help? In short, will they take the road of working WITH the plan of God, or will they not? We know Mary's mind. She is the one who voiced those eternal words when the Angel first announced the coming of this child, "Be it with me according to your will." She chose the road less traveled, and it made all the difference.

How about us? What is our Road Less Traveled? What purifying fire is before us? How will it make all the difference?

There are several forks in the road before us really. At the last Vestry meeting, in response to a letter from the Bishop's Committee of Resurrección, the Vestry voted to officially seek unification of the two congregations. A committee has been formed to rework our parish bylaws to reflect this change. We could have continued as we were, dominant society group hosting a non-dominant society group, beneficently, to be sure, but ultimately on our terms (for we still make the rules, and they have not been included in our decision-making circles.) That is the road most traveled. But we have chosen another way. We will be integrating the functions of this community. We will be one in Christ, proclaiming to our community just what we believe the Body of Christ is: One where culture enriches rather than separates; one where people can be who they are and still fully belong.

At our Parish Meeting several weeks ago, we had a presentation from our intrepid and capable treasurer. We noted that our funding for Participants in Healing, our outreach giving, had to be cut so that our deficit would be manageable. Now, the Participants in Healing Committee will be presenting to us each quarter, a work that deserves our help. The road less traveled is the one that takes your hand and drives it just a bit deeper into your pocket to equip our community to reach out in the name of Christ.

Last week I announced my retirement, effective the end of June. The Senior Wardens of both congregations have been in contact with the Office of the Bishop. They will be seeking a clergyperson who can adequately meet the needs of one congregation with two ethnic centers. The easy road would be to find someone capable of reading the liturgy in either language. The road less traveled will lead you to someone who is bilingual AND bicultural.

That task will take the engagement of everyone. The easy road is to sit back and let others do the heavy lifting. The road less traveled is one of broad and energetic involvement across both communities, and full engagement of all your cross-cultural communication skills,

- Humility,
- Listening,
- Being a learner,
- Being observant,
- Watching and waiting,
- Inviting and accepting invitation
- Holy imagining,
- Conversation and communication,
- Tolerating the ambiguity of the unknown...

Two roads diverged in a wood, and we—we took...