

**Pageant 17 of the York Corpus Christi Play: The Purification of Mary**  
Modernized and edited by Christina M. Fitzgerald  
for performance in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 7, 2025

**CHARACTERS**

PRIEST  
ANNA THE PROPHET  
SIMEON  
ANGEL  
MARY  
JOSEPH

**PRIEST.** Almighty God in heaven so high,  
The maker of all heaven and earth,  
He ordained here all things evenly,  
For man he meant to mend his mirth.

In number, weight, and measure fine  
God created here all thing, I say;  
His laws he bade men should not tine,<sup>o</sup>  
But keep his commandments always.

*fail to maintain*

On the mount of Sinai full fair,  
And in two tables to you to tell,  
His laws to Moses took God there  
To give to the children of Israel,

That Moses should them guide always,  
And learn them leally<sup>o</sup> to know God's will,  
And that he should not it deny,  
But keep his laws stable and still.

*faithfully*

For pain that he had put therefore,  
To stone all them that keeps it not  
Utterly to death, both less and more;  
There should no mercy for them be sought.

Therefore keep well God's commandment,  
And lead your life after his laws,  
Or else surely ye must be shent<sup>o</sup>  
Both less and more, ilkone<sup>o</sup> on rows.<sup>1</sup>

*destroyed  
each one*

This is his will after Moses' law:  
That ye should bring your beasts good

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<sup>1</sup> *on rows* In order

And offer them here your God to know,  
And from your sin to turn your mood.

Such beasts as God has marked here,  
Unto Moses he spoke as I you tell,  
And bade him boldly with good cheer,  
To say to the children of Israel

That after diverse sickness sere,<sup>o</sup>  
And after diverse sins also,  
Go bring your beasts to the priest even here  
To offer them up in God's sight, lo.

*various*

The woman that has born her child,  
She shall come hither at the forty day  
To be purified where she was filed,<sup>o</sup>  
And bring with her a lamb, I say,

*unclean, defiled*

And two dove-birds for her offerand,<sup>o</sup>  
And take them to the priest of lay<sup>o</sup>  
To offer them up with his holy hand;  
There should no man to this say nay.

*offering  
law*

The lamb is offered for God's honor  
In sacrifice alonely<sup>o</sup> dight,<sup>o</sup>  
And the priest's prayer purchase sicker<sup>o</sup>  
For the woman that was filed in God's sight.

*exclusively / prepared  
securely*

And if so be that she be poor  
And have no lamb to offer, then  
Two turtledoves to God's honor  
To bring with her for her offerand.<sup>o</sup>

*offering*

Lo, here am I priest present always,  
To receive all offerings that hither is brought,  
And for the people to God to pray  
That health and life to them be wrought.

**ANNA.** Here in this holy place I say  
Is my full purpose to abide,  
To serve my God both night and day  
With prayer and fasting in everilk<sup>o</sup> a tide.<sup>o</sup>

*every / time*

For I have been a widow this three-score year  
And four years too, the truth to tell,  
And here I have tarried with full good cheer

For the redemption of Israel.

And so for my holy conversation  
Great grace to me has now God sent,  
To tell by prophecy for man's redemption  
What shall befall by God's intent.

I tell you all here in this place,  
By God's virtue in prophecy,  
That one is born to our solace,  
Here to be present securely  
Within short space,  
Of his own mother, a maiden free,  
Of all virgins most chaste soothly,<sup>o</sup>  
The well of meekness, blessed might she be,  
Most full of grace.

*truly*

And Simeon, that senior<sup>o</sup>  
That is so seemly in God's sight,  
He shall him see and do honor  
And in his arms he shall him<sup>o</sup> plight,<sup>o</sup>  
That worthy lede.<sup>o</sup>  
Of<sup>o</sup> the Holy Ghost he shall soothly<sup>o</sup>  
Take strength, and answer when he shall hie<sup>o</sup>  
Forth to this temple and place holy  
To do that deed.

*old man*

*to him / hold  
man  
from / truly  
hurry*

**SIMEON.** Ah, blessed God, thou be my bield<sup>o</sup>

And beat<sup>o</sup> my bale<sup>o</sup> both night and day.  
In heaviness my heart is held  
Unto myself, lo thus I say.

*defeat / misery*

For I am weak and all unweild,<sup>o</sup>  
My wealth ay<sup>o</sup> wanes and passeth away;  
Whereso<sup>o</sup> I fare<sup>o</sup> in frith<sup>o</sup> or field  
I fall ay down for feeble, in fay.<sup>o</sup>

*feeble  
constantly  
wherever / travel / forest  
truth*

In fay, I fall whereso I fare,  
In hair and hue and hide,<sup>o</sup> I say.  
Out of this world I would<sup>o</sup> I were,  
Thus wax<sup>o</sup> I worse and worse always  
And my mischief<sup>o</sup> grows in all that may.  
But thou, mighty Lord, my mourning mar;<sup>o</sup>  
Mar ye, for it should me well pay,<sup>o</sup>  
So happy to see him if I were.<sup>o</sup>

*skin  
wish  
grow  
affliction  
destroy  
reward  
i.e., were able*

Now certes<sup>o</sup> then should my game begin

*certainly*

And° I might see him, of him to tell,  
That one is born without sin  
And for mankind man's mirth to mell.°  
Born of a woman and maiden free,  
As witness David and Daniel,  
Without sin or villainy,  
As said also Ezekiel.

*if*

*cause*

And Malachi that prophet snell°  
Has told us of that babe so bright,  
That he should come with us to dwell  
In our temple as leam° of light.  
And other prophets prophesieth  
And of this blessed babe did mell,°  
And of his mother, a maiden bright,  
In prophecy the truth gan° tell,

*vigilant*

*ray*

*speak*

*did*

That he should come and harrow hell  
As a giant gradely° to glide,  
And fiercely the fiends' malice to fell  
And put their powers all on side.  
The worthiest wight° in this world so wide  
His virtues sere° no tongue can tell,  
He sends all succor in ilka° tide,°  
As redemption of Israel.  
Thus say they all,  
There patriarchs and their prophets clear:  
"A babe is born to be our fere,°  
Knit° in our kind° for all our cheer  
To great and small."

*readily*

*person*

*sundry, various*

*every / time*

*companion*

*joined / nature*

Ay, well were me for ever and ay°  
If I might see that babe so bright  
Ere° I were buried here in clay,  
Then would my corpse° here mend in might  
Right faithfully.  
Now Lord, thou grant to me thy grace  
To live here in this world a space,  
That I might see that babe in his face  
Here ere I die.

*always*

*before*

*body*

Ah, Lord God, I think may I endure,  
Trow° we that babe shall find me here;  
Now certes° with age I am so poor  
That ever it abates my cheer.

*believe*

*certainly*

Yet if kind<sup>o</sup> fail for<sup>o</sup> age in me,  
God yet may length<sup>o</sup> my life soothly,<sup>o</sup>  
Till I that babe and food<sup>o</sup> so free  
Have seen in sight.  
For truly, if I wist<sup>o</sup> release<sup>o</sup>  
There should nothing my heart disease;<sup>o</sup>  
Lord, lend me grace if that thou please  
And make me light.<sup>o</sup>

*nature / because of  
lengthen / truly  
child (with eucharistic pun)*

*should know / i.e., death  
disturb*

*happy*

When will thou come, babe? Let see, have done;  
Nay, come on tite<sup>o</sup> and tarry not,  
For certes<sup>o</sup> my life-days are near done,  
For age to me great woe has wrought.

*quickly  
certainly*

Great woe is wrought unto man's heart  
When he must want that<sup>o</sup> he would have;  
I keep no longer to have quart<sup>o</sup>  
For I have seen that<sup>o</sup> I for crave.

*what  
health  
what*

Ah, trows<sup>o</sup> thou these two eyes shall see  
That blessed babe ere<sup>o</sup> they be out?  
Yea, I pray God so might it be—  
Then were I put all out of doubt.

*think  
before*

**ANGEL.** Old Simeon, God's servant right,  
Bodeword<sup>o</sup> to thee I bring I say,  
For the Holy Ghost most of might,  
He says thou shall not die away  
To<sup>o</sup> thou have seen  
Jesu the babe that Mary bore,  
For all mankind to slake their care.  
He shall do comfort to less and more,  
Both morn<sup>o</sup> and even.<sup>o</sup>

*message*

*until*

*morning / evening*

**SIMEON.** Ah, Lord, gramercy<sup>o</sup> now I say  
That thou this grace has to me hight,<sup>o</sup>  
Ere<sup>o</sup> I be buried here in clay  
To see that seemly beam so bright.

*many thanks  
promised  
before*

No man of mold<sup>o</sup> may have more hap<sup>o</sup>  
To my solace and mirth always,  
Than for to see that [in] Mary's lap:  
Jesu my joy and savior ay,<sup>o</sup>  
Blessed be his name.  
Lo, now must I see, the truth to tell,  
The redemption of Israel,

*earth / fortune*

*always*

Jesu my Lord Emanuel,  
Without blame.

**MARY.** Joseph, my husband and my fere,<sup>o</sup>  
Ye take to me gradely<sup>o</sup> intent,<sup>2</sup>  
I will you show in this manner  
What I will do, thus have I meant:  
Full forty days is come and went  
Since that my babe Jesu was born.  
Therefore, I would he were present<sup>o</sup>  
As Moses' law says us<sup>o</sup> befor<sup>o</sup>,

*companion*  
*carefully*

*presented*  
*to us / previously*

Here in this temple before God's sight,  
As other women doth in fere,<sup>o</sup>  
So methinks good skill<sup>o</sup> and right  
The same to do now with good cheer,  
After God's saw.<sup>o</sup>

*company*  
*that which is proper*

**JOSEPH.** Mary my spouse and maiden clean,  
This matter that thou moves<sup>o</sup> to me  
Is for all these women bedene<sup>o</sup>  
That has conceived with sin fleshly  
To bear a child.  
The law is ledged<sup>o</sup> for them right plain,  
That they must be purified again,  
For in man's pleasure, for certain,  
Before<sup>o</sup> were they filed.<sup>o</sup>

*speaks*  
*together, in one company*

*declared*

*previously / defiled*

But Mary, bird,<sup>o</sup> thou need not so  
For this cause to be purified, lo,  
In God's temple.  
For certes<sup>o</sup> thou art a clean virgin  
For any thought thy heart within,  
Nor never wrought no fleshly sin,  
Nor never ill.

*(i.e., love; a term of endearment)*

*certainly*

**MARY.** That I my maidenhead has kept still  
It is only through God's will,  
That be ye bold.<sup>o</sup>  
Yet to fulfill the law iwis<sup>o</sup>  
That God almighty gan<sup>o</sup> express,  
And for an example of meekness,  
Offer I would.

*assured*  
*truly*  
*did*

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<sup>2</sup> *Ye take to me gradely intent* Pay attention to me carefully

<b>JOSEPH.</b> Ah, Mary, blessed be thou ay, <sup>o</sup> Thou thinks to do after God's will. As thou hast said Mary, I say, I will heartily consent theretill <sup>o</sup> Without doubt. Wherefore <sup>o</sup> we dress us forth our way <sup>3</sup> And make offering to God this day, Even likewise as thyself gan <sup>o</sup> say, With hearts devout.	<i>always</i>  <i>to that</i>  <i>for which reason</i>  <i>did</i>
<b>MARY.</b> Thereto <sup>o</sup> am I full ready dight, <sup>o</sup> But one thing, Joseph, I would you move. <sup>o</sup>	<i>to that purpose / prepared</i> <i>urge</i>
<b>JOSEPH.</b> Mary, my spouse and maiden bright, Tell on heartily, what is your grief?	
<b>MARY.</b> Both beast and fowl us must needs have, As a lamb and two dove-birds also. Lamb have we none nor none we crave; <sup>o</sup> Therefore, Joseph, what shall we do, What is your rede? <sup>o</sup> And <sup>o</sup> we do not as custom is, We are worth to be blamed, iwis, <sup>o</sup> I would we did nothing amiss As God me speed.	<i>seek</i>  <i>advice</i> <i>if</i> <i>indeed</i>
<b>JOSEPH.</b> Ah, good Mary, the law is this: To rich to offer both the lamb and the bird, And the poor two turtles <sup>o</sup> iwis. Our two dove-birds shall not be fird <sup>o</sup> For our offerand; <sup>o</sup> And Mary, we have dove-birds two As falls for us, therefore we go— They are here in a panier, <sup>o</sup> lo, Ready at hand.	<i>turtledoves</i> <i>rejected</i> <i>offering</i>  <i>basket</i>
And if we have not both in fere, <sup>4</sup> The lamb, the bird, as rich men have, Think that us must present here Our babe Jesus, as we vouchsafe <sup>o</sup> Before God's sight. He is our lamb, Mary, care <sup>o</sup> thee not; For rich and poor, none better sought. Full well thou has him hither brought,	<i>bestow, offer</i>  <i>concern</i>

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<sup>3</sup> *dress us forth our way* Set forth

<sup>4</sup> *in fere* Together

This our offering right.

He is the lamb of God I say,  
That all our sins shall take away  
Of this world here.  
He is the lamb of God verray<sup>o</sup>  
That must us fend<sup>o</sup> from all our fray,<sup>o</sup>  
Born of thy womb, all for our pay<sup>o</sup>  
And for our cheer.<sup>o</sup>

*indisputable*  
*defend / disturbance*  
*benefit*  
*gladness*

**MARY.** Joseph, my spouse, ye say full true,  
Then let us dress us forth our way.  
**JOSEPH.** Go we then, Mary, and do our due,  
And make meekly offering this day.

Lo, here is the temple on this hill  
And also priest ordained by skill,  
Power having.  
And Mary, go we thither forthy,<sup>o</sup>  
And let us both kneel devoutly,  
And offer we up to God meekly  
Our due offering.

*therefore*

**MARY.** Unto my God highest in heaven  
And to this priest ordained by skill,  
Jesu my babe I offer him  
Here with my heart and my good will  
Right heartily.  
Thou pray for us to God on hight,  
Thou priest, present here in his might,  
That this deed may be in his sight  
Accept<sup>o</sup> goodly.<sup>o</sup>

*accepted / graciously*

**JOSEPH.** Lo sir, and two dove-birds are here,  
Receive them with your holy hands,  
We are no better of<sup>o</sup> poor,  
For we have neither rents nor lands,  
Truly.  
But good sir, pray to God of might  
To accept this that we have dight,<sup>o</sup>  
That we have offered as we are hight<sup>o</sup>  
Here heartily.

*than*

*prepared*  
*called*

**PRIEST.** Oh, God and granter of all grace,  
Blest be thy name both night and day,  
Accept their offering in this place

That be here present to thee always.  
Ah, blessed Lord, say never nay,  
But let this offering be boot<sup>o</sup> and bield<sup>o</sup>  
Till all such folk living in clay,<sup>o</sup>  
That thus to thee meekly will hield;<sup>o</sup>

*advantage / help  
on earth  
incline*

That this babe, Lord, present in thy sight,  
Born of a maiden's womb unfiled,<sup>o</sup>  
Accept for their special gift  
Given to mankind, both man and child,  
So specially.  
And this babe born and here present  
May bield<sup>o</sup> us, that we be not shent,<sup>o</sup>  
But ever ready his grace to hent<sup>o</sup>  
Here verily.

*undefiled*

*support / destroyed  
take hold or*

Ah, blessed babe, welcome thou be,  
Born of a maiden in chastity,  
Thou art our bield, babe, our game and our glee,  
Ever soothly.<sup>o</sup>  
Welcome our wit and our wisdom,  
Welcome, our joy all and some,  
Welcome, *redemptour omnium*,<sup>5</sup>  
Till us heartily.

*truly*

ANNA. Welcome blessed Mary and maiden ay,<sup>o</sup>  
Welcome, most meek in thine array;  
Welcome, bright star that shineth bright as day,  
All for our bliss.  
Welcome, the blessed beam so bright,  
Welcome, the leam<sup>o</sup> of all our light,  
Welcome, that<sup>o</sup> all pleasure has plight<sup>o</sup>  
To man and wife.

*forever*

*ray  
who / promised*

Welcome, thou blessed babe so free,  
Welcome, our welfare<sup>o</sup> wealy<sup>o</sup>  
And welcome, all our sele,<sup>o</sup> soothly,  
To great and small.  
Babe, welcome to thy bieldly<sup>o</sup> bower,  
Babe, welcome now for our succor,<sup>o</sup>  
And babe, welcome with all honor  
Here in this hall.

*well-being / prosperous  
prosperity*

*sheltering  
aid*

ANGEL. Old Simeon, I say to thee

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<sup>5</sup> *redemptour omnium* Redeemer of all

Dress thee forth in thine array, <sup>o</sup>	<i>clothing (i.e., vestments)</i>
Come to the temple, there shall thou see	
Jesus that babe that Mary bore,	
That be thou bold. <sup>o</sup>	<i>certain</i>
<b>SIMEON.</b> Ah, lord, I thank thee ever and ay! <sup>o</sup>	<i>forever</i>
Now am I light as leaf on tree,	
My age is went, I feel no fray, <sup>o</sup>	<i>trouble</i>
Methinks <sup>o</sup> for this that is told me	<i>it seems to me</i>
I am not old.	
Now will I to yon <sup>o</sup> temple go	<i>that (i.e., over there)</i>
To see the babe that Mary bore,	
He is my health in well and woe,	
And helps me ever from great care.	
Hail blessed babe that Mary bore,	
And blessed be thy mother, Mary mild,	
Whose womb that yielded fresh and fair	
And she a clean virgin ay unfiled. <sup>o</sup>	<i>undefiled</i>
Hail, babe, the Father of Heaven's own child	
Chosen to cheer us for our mischance; <sup>o</sup>	<i>wrongdoing, sin</i>
No earthly tongue can tell unfiled <sup>o</sup>	<i>unpolished, in a rude manner</i>
What thy might is in every chance.	
Hail, the most worthy to enhance, <sup>o</sup>	<i>uplift, comfort</i>
Boldly thou bield <sup>o</sup> from all ill.	<i>protect (us)</i>
Without thy bield <sup>o</sup> we get grievance	<i>protection</i>
And for our deeds here should we spill. <sup>o</sup>	<i>die</i>
Hail, floscampy <sup>o</sup> and flower virginal,	<i>flower of the field</i>
The odor of thy goodness reflairs <sup>o</sup> to us all.	<i>spreads out</i>
Hail, most happy to great and to small	
For our weal. <sup>o</sup>	<i>wellbeing</i>
Hail, royal rose, most ruddy of hew,	
Hail, flower unfading, both fresh ay <sup>o</sup> and new,	<i>forever</i>
Hail, the kindest in comfort that ever man knew	
For great heal.	
And meekly I beseech thee here where I kneel	
To suffer thy servant to take thee in hand,	
And in mine arms for to heave <sup>o</sup> thee here for my weal, <sup>o</sup>	<i>take up / wellbeing</i>
And where I bound am in bale, <sup>o</sup> to bate <sup>o</sup> all my bonds.	<i>misery / abate, release</i>
Now come to me, lord of all lands,	
Come mightiest by sea and by sands,	
Come mirth by street and by strands <sup>o</sup>	<i>shores</i>
On mold. <sup>o</sup>	<i>earth</i>
Come halse <sup>o</sup> me, the babe that is best born,	<i>embrace</i>

Come halse me, the mirth of our morn,<sup>o</sup>  
Come halse me, for else I am lorn<sup>o</sup>  
For<sup>o</sup> old.<sup>o</sup>

*morning*  
*lost*  
*because of / age*

I thank thee, Lord God, of thy great grace  
That thus hath spared me a space,<sup>o</sup>  
This babe in mine arms for to embrace,  
As the prophecy tells.

*time*

I thank thee that me my life lent,  
I thank thee that me thus sele<sup>o</sup> sent,  
That this sweet babe, that I in arms hent,<sup>o</sup>  
With mirth my mind always mells.<sup>o</sup>

*happiness*  
*carried*  
*infuses*

Melled<sup>o</sup> are my minds<sup>o</sup> ay<sup>o</sup> with mirth,  
Full fresh now I feel is my force,<sup>o</sup>  
Of thy grace thou gave me this girth<sup>o</sup>  
Thus comely to catch here thy corse<sup>o</sup>  
Most seemly in sight.

*infused / thoughts / always*  
*strength*  
*protection*  
*body*

Of help thus thy friend never fails,  
Thy mercy as every man avails,  
Both by downs<sup>o</sup> and by dales,<sup>o</sup>  
Thus marvelous and much is thy might.

*hills / valleys*

Ah, babe, be thou blessed for ay,<sup>o</sup>  
For thou art my savior, I say,  
And thou here rules me, in fay,<sup>o</sup>  
In all my life.  
Now blessed be thy name,  
For thou saves us from shame,  
And here thou bield<sup>o</sup> us from blame  
And from all strife.

*ever*

*truth*

*protect*

Now care I no more for my life  
Since I have seen here this royal so rife,<sup>o</sup>  
My strength and my stinter<sup>o</sup> of strife,  
I you say.  
In peace, Lord, now leave<sup>o</sup> thy servant,  
For mine eyes hath seen that<sup>o</sup> is ordained,  
The health for all men that be livand,<sup>o</sup>  
Here for ay.

*mighty*  
*suppressor*

*give leave to, dismiss*  
*what*  
*living*

That health, Lord, has thou ordained, I say,  
Here before the face of thy people,  
And thy light has thou shined this day  
To be known of<sup>o</sup> thy folk that was feeble,  
For evermore;

*by*

And thy glory for the children of Israel,  
That with thee in thy kingdom shall dwell  
When the damned shall be driven to hell  
Then with great care.°

*suffering*

**JOSEPH.** Mary, my spouse and maiden mild,  
In heart I marvel here greatly  
How these folk speak of our child.  
They say and tell of great mastery  
That he shall do.

**MARY.** Yea, certes,° Joseph, I marvel also,  
But I shall bear it full still° in mind.

*indeed  
quietly*

**JOSEPH.** God give him grace here well to do,  
For he is come of gentle kind.°

*lineage*

**SIMEON.** Hark, Mary, I shall tell thee the truth ere° I go.

*before*

This was put here to wield° us from woe,  
In redemption of many and recover also,  
I thee say.

*protect*

And the sword of sorrow thy heart shall thir!°  
When thou shall see soothly° thy son suffer ill  
For the weal° of all wretches, that shall be his will  
Here, in fay.°

*pierce  
truly  
well-being  
truth*

But to be comfort again right well thou may,  
And in heart to be fain,° the sooth I thee say,  
For his might is so much there can no tongue say nay  
Here to his will.

*happy*

For this babe as a giant full gradely° shall glide  
And the mightiest master shall move on ilka° side,<sup>6</sup>  
To all the wights° that wone° in this world wide,  
For good or for ill.°

*truly  
each  
people / dwell  
evil*

Therefore, babe, bield° us that we here not spill,°  
And farewell, the former° of all at thy will,  
Farewell, star stablest, by loud and by still,°  
In soothfastness.°

*protect / die  
maker  
quiet  
truth*

Farewell, the royalest rose that is reigning,  
Farewell, the babe best in thy bearing,°  
Farewell, God's son, thou grant us thy blessing  
To fine° our distress.

*birth  
end*

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<sup>6</sup> *move on ilka side* Refers to the separation of the saved and the damned to God's right and left at the Last Judgment