

Meditations: November 21, Presentation of Mary

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of our Lady's Presentation in the Temple.

- Mary, completely God's
- Being part of God's family
- Loyalty in big and small things

AN ANCIENT tradition recounts how our Lady's parents, Saint Joachim and Saint Anna, took Mary to the temple in Jerusalem. She was to stay there for some time in the company

of other young girls, to be instructed in the traditions and piety of Israel. The Old Testament tells us that something similar had been done long ago by the mother of the prophet Samuel, also named Anna, when she offered her son for the service of God in the tabernacle where his glory was manifested (cf. 1 Sam 1:21-28).

Afterwards, Mary continued to lead a normal life with Joachim and Anna. She remained in their care as she grew to adulthood. She was maturing as one of her own people, without doing anything extraordinary. As a good Jewess, she directed her entire existence towards the Lord, without knowing yet that she was to be his Mother. Today's feast celebrates Mary's complete belonging to God, her complete dedication to the mystery of salvation throughout her whole life.

“Just as the holy child Mary offered herself to God promptly and entirely in the Temple, so we on this day present ourselves to Mary without delay or reservation,”^[1] Saint Alphonsus Liguori writes. Our Lady, through her own life, shows us the way to her Son, so that our life too may be centered on Him. “Her hands, her eyes, her behavior are a living ‘catechesis,’ and always point to the cornerstone, to the center: Jesus.”^[2]

JESUS is speaking to the crowds. Suddenly someone comes up and says: *behold, your mother and your brethren are outside, asking to speak to you.* Our Lord replies with a question that He himself answers: “*Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?*” . . . *whoever does the will of*

my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother (Mt 12:46-50).

Christ's words here may surprise us. We could have the impression that our Lord is failing to give importance to his relationship with his mother. But a more careful look enables us to realize that the Master is highlighting our Lady's faithfulness to her vocation, which is the source of her intimacy with her Son. Saint Augustine remarks, putting these words on the lips of Jesus himself: "My mother, whom you proclaim blessed, is such because of her observance of the Word of God . . . because she faithfully cared for the very Word of God, who created her and took his flesh from her."^[3]

Our Lord's words teach us that the followers of Jesus can become part of his own family. We who want to share in Christ's life and do the will of God the Father are more than just

collaborators in a project for the good of society. “Becoming a disciple of Jesus,” the Catechism tells us, “means accepting the invitation to belong to the *family of God*, to live in conformity with His way of life: ‘For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother’.”^[4] Today we can ask Mary, who stands now in God’s presence, to obtain for us the grace we need to draw closer to her Son Jesus each day.

IN THE GOSPELS we see Mary’s readiness to respond faithfully to God’s will, beginning with her “yes” to the angel’s annunciation. “That ‘yes’ is the first step in a long list of examples of obedience – a long list of examples!”^[5] Perhaps the greatest example of fidelity is remaining at the foot of the Cross close to her

Jesus, offering Him the greatest consolation simply by her presence. The evangelists don't say anything about her reaction; they only point out that she remained there on Golgotha: "she was present there." Our Lady never thought of fleeing or distancing herself from this scene. She had discovered that the greatest happiness – this time mixed with immense pain – sometimes involves simply "being there" with her Son.

Mary's life was also marked by many other moments of daily fidelity not recorded in the Gospel. Her daily life would have been in many ways like that of most women of her time. And it was by sharing in these common tasks that Mary also fulfilled God's will. She sanctified both the small and big things of each day, putting love into everything she did. "A love to the end, so complete that she forgets about herself, happy just to be there where God wants her,

fulfilling with care what God wants her to do. That is why even her slightest action is never routine or empty, but rather filled with meaning.”^[6]

Thus Mary put into practice what Jesus would later tell his disciples: *One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much* (Lk 16:10). From the moment Mary was presented in the Temple, her whole life revolved around God. And thanks to her fidelity in small things, guided by the action of the Holy Spirit, Mary was also faithful in big things.

^[1] Saint Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, Part II, Discourse III.

^[2] Francis, Audience, 24 March 2021.

^[3] Saint Augustine, *In Ioannis Evangelium* 10,3.

^[4] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2233.

[5] Francis, Audience, 10 May 2017.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 148.

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