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Presentation of our Lady: Magisterium, Saints, Poets

A selection of texts for Mary's Presentation in the Temple.

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VOICE OF THE MAGISTERIUM

from Catechism of the Catholic Church

490 To become the mother of the Savior, Mary “was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.” The angel Gabriel at the moment of

the annunciation salutes her as “full of grace.” In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.

491 Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.

492 The “splendor of an entirely unique holiness” by which Mary is “enriched from the first instant of

her conception" comes wholly from Christ: she is "redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son." The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love."

493 The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God "the All-Holy" (Panagia), and celebrate her as "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature."

from Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, on the 50th Anniversary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception (February 2, 1904):

18. If anyone desires a confirmation of this it may easily be found in the

dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. For leaving aside tradition which, as well as Scripture, is a source of truth, how has this persuasion of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin appeared so conformed to the Catholic mind and feeling that it has been held as being one, and as it were inborn in the soul of the faithful? "We shrink from saying," is the answer of Dionysius of Chartreux, "of this woman who was to crush the head of the serpent that had been crushed by him and that Mother of God that she had ever been a daughter of the Evil One" (*Sent.* d. 3, q. 1). No, to the Christian intelligence the idea is unthinkable that the flesh of Christ, holy, stainless, innocent, was formed in the womb of Mary of a flesh which had ever, if only for the briefest moment, contracted any stain. And why so, but because an infinite opposition separates God from sin? There certainly we have the origin of

the conviction common to all Christians that Jesus Christ before, clothed in human nature, He cleansed us from our sins in His blood, accorded Mary the grace and special privilege of being preserved and exempted, from the first moment of her conception, from all stain of original sin.

20. Whoever moreover wishes, and no one ought not so to wish, that his devotion should be worthy of her and perfect, should go further and strive might and main to imitate her example. It is a divine law that those only attain everlasting happiness who have by such faithful following reproduced in themselves the form of the patience and sanctity of Jesus Christ: "for whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren" (*Romans* viii., 29). But such generally is our

infirmity that we are easily discouraged by the greatness of such an example: by the providence of God, however, another example is proposed to us, which is both as near to Christ as human nature allows, and more nearly accords with the weakness of our nature. And this is no other than the Mother of God. "Such was Mary," very pertinently points out St. Ambrose, "that her life is an example for all." And, therefore, he rightly concludes: "Have then before your eyes, as an image, the virginity and life of Mary from whom as from a mirror shines forth the brightness of chastity and the form of virtue" (*De Virginib.* L. ii., c. ii.)

VOICE OF THE SAINTS

"THERE never has been, and there never will be, any offering of a pure creature greater and more perfect than that which Mary made to God, when she presented herself in the

temple to offer him, not spices, nor calves, nor talents of gold, but her whole self as a perfect holocaust, consecrating herself as a perpetual victim in his honor. Well did she understand the voice of God, which even then called her to dedicate herself wholly to his love, with these words: *Arise, make haste, my love, and come.*

"They thus went on their way, accompanied by only a few of their relations, but by hosts of angels, as St. George of Nicomedia asserts, who attended and ministered to the immaculate Virgin, as she went to dedicate herself to the Divine Majesty. How beautiful are thy steps, oh Prince's daughter! Oh, how beautiful, how pleasing to God, as the angels sung, are thy steps, as thou goest to offer thyself to him, oh great and chosen daughter of our common Lord! God himself on that day, says Bernardino de Bustis, celebrated a

great feast with the whole celestial court, when he beheld his spouse conducted to the temple. For he never saw a creature more holy and more beloved offering herself to him. Go, then, said St. Germanus, Archbishop of Constantinople, go, oh queen of the world, oh mother of God, go joyfully to the house of the Lord, to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit that will make thee mother of the eternal World."

Saint Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, part II, discourse 3.

"For over thirty years God has been putting into my heart the desire to help people of every condition and background to understand that ordinary life can be holy and full of God. Our Lord is calling us to sanctify the ordinary tasks of every day, for the perfection of the Christian is to be found precisely there. Let's

consider it once more as we contemplate Mary's life.

"We can't forget that Mary spent nearly every day of her life just like millions of other women who look after their family, bring up their children and take care of the house. Mary sanctifies the ordinary everyday things—what some people wrongly regard as unimportant and insignificant: everyday work, looking after those closest to you, visits to friends and relatives. What a blessed ordinariness, that can be so full of love of God!

"For that's what explains Mary's life—her love. A complete love, so complete that she forgets herself and is 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 vain but, rather, full of meaning. Mary, our mother, is for us

both an example and a way. We have to try to be like her, in the ordinary circumstances in which God wants us to live."

Saint Josemaria, from *Christ is Passing By*, no. 148

VOICE OF THE POETS

Hail, Mary, sweetest daughter of Anne!

Love attracts me to you anew.

How can I describe your decorous bearing?

And your dress? And the beauty of your face?

Your dress was modest,
far removed from any extravagance,
your step is solemn, neither headlong
nor flagging;

your conduct is thoughtful, lightened
by youthful liveliness;

and greatest prudence towards
mankind.

You were gentle and respectful
towards your parents;

humble in spirit in the highest
contemplation;

agreeable was the speech which
came forth from your gentle soul.

You are the pride of priests,

the hope of Christians,

the fruitful plant of virginity;

through you, in truth, the beauty of
virginity is widespread.

Blessed are you among women and
blessed is the fruit of your womb!

John of Damascus (675-749)

The Immaculate Conception

A dewdrop of the darkness born,

Wherein no shadow lies;

The blossom of a barren thorn,

Whereof no petal dies;

A rainbow beauty passion-free,

Wherewith was veiled Divinity.

John Bannister Tabb

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