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November 21: Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple

Gospel for the feast of our Lady's Presentation in the Temple, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt* 12:46-50)

While Jesus was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my

mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Commentary

Today's liturgical memorial recalls an ancient and pious tradition based on a story from the apocryphal “Protoevangelium of James.”

According to this text, when the Virgin Mary was a very young girl, her parents, Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, took her to the temple of Jerusalem where she would stay for a time along with other girls, to be instructed in the traditions and piety of Israel.

It may surprise us that the Church offers us, on a day especially dedicated to Mary, a Gospel passage where Jesus seems to put her in the

background, as if ungrateful towards his Mother: “Who is my mother?”

But the answer comes immediately: “whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Our Lord highlights the most important teaching while at the same time giving Mary the best compliment possible: doing God’s will is the best way to imitate Jesus: “I have come to do your will, O God” (*Heb 10:7*).

Our Lord’s and Mary’s entire lives were dedicated to living in accord with what God wanted. The Mother of Jesus told the servants at Cana: “Do whatever he tells you” (*Jn 2:5*), which is a guide for our entire life. And we know very well what God wants from each of us: “this is the will of God, your sanctification” (*1 Thes 4:3*). This is what God is asking us to seek each day.

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