



Homily Notes/Meditation to observe 2011 *Pro Orantibus Day*

Dedicated to Divine Service

Reading: Lk 21:1-4

When Jesus looked up He saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and He noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.”

Purpose and Outline:

(a) Tradition tells us that as a young child, the Blessed Virgin Mary was presented by Sts. Joachim and Anne in the Temple where she devoutly prayed and diligently worked; (b) In Old Testament times devout Jews offered their children to God to serve in the Temple in Jerusalem; (c) Our Lady is the standard-bearer for all those who wish give themselves completely to God by hidden lives of prayer and sacrifice, especially cloistered, contemplative religious; (d) The contemplative life is a powerful witness to the rest of the Church of being “dedicated to divine service” for the Kingdom of God and is worthy of our financial and prayerful support.

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Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple of Jerusalem. It is an ancient and very trustworthy tradition that Our Lady was solemnly offered in the Temple to God at the age of 3 by her parents, Sts. Joachim and Anne.

Devout parents should never fail by heartfelt prayer to consecrate their children to God, to His divine service and love, both before and after their birth. Some among the Jews, not content with this general consecration of their children, offered them to God in their infancy, by the hands of the priests in the Temple, to be brought up in quarters attached to the Temple, attending the priests and Levites in their sacred ministry. There were special divisions in these lodgings for the women and children dedicated to the divine service (I Kings 6:5-9). We have examples of this special consecration of children in the person of Samuel, for example.

It is very probable that the holy prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna, who witnessed the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, as we read in the Gospel of Saint Luke (2:25 ff.), had known the Blessed Virgin Mary as a little girl in the Temple and observed her truly unique sanctity.

The Gospel tells us nothing of the childhood of Mary; Her title Mother of God, eclipses all the rest. Where, better than in the Temple, could Mary be prepared for Her mission? Twelve years of recollection and prayer, contemplation and sufferings, were the preparation of the chosen one of God. The tender soul of Mary was adorned with the most precious graces and became an object of astonishment and praise for the holy angels, as well as of the highest contentment for the adorable Trinity. The Father looked upon Her as His beloved Daughter, the Son saw her as one truly “set apart” and prepared to become His Mother, and the Holy Spirit embraced her as His undefiled Immaculate Spouse.

Here is how Mary’s day in the Temple was apportioned, according to Saint Jerome. From dawn until 9:00 in the morning, she prayed; from 9:00 until 3:00 in the afternoon she applied herself to manual work; then she turned again to prayer. Mary was always the first to undertake night watches, the one most applied to study, the most fervent in the chanting of Psalms, the most zealous in works of charity, the purest among the virgins, her companions, the most perfect in the practice of every virtue.

The consecration of Mary to God presented all the conditions of the most perfect sacrifice: it was prompt, generous, joyous, unregretted, without reservation. How agreeable it must have been to God! May our consecration of ourselves to God be made under Her patronage, assisted by Her powerful intercession and united with Her ineffable merits.

On this day Our Lady appears as the standard-bearer for all those who completely give themselves to God by hidden lives of prayer and sacrifice. The Blessed Virgin Mary is the perfect model for cloistered, contemplative men and women religious who freely offer themselves as they give their “whole livelihood” to the Lord as did the poor widow in today’s Gospel. By their prayers and sacrifices they unite themselves to Christ’s perfect sacrifice on the Cross for our salvation.

The cloistered and monastic life is a powerful sign to the rest of the Church of the embracing of what ultimately matters in life: perfect union with God. On *Pro Orantibus* Day, the Church encourages all the faithful to show both spiritual and financial support for this special vocation. Each of us ought to do what we can to encourage young people to consider this unique calling and to support those who have responded to this particular vocation to be “hidden in Christ.”

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Eternal Father, we honor the holiness and glory of the Virgin Mary. May her prayers bring us the fullness of Your life and love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

—From the Collect for the Memorial of the Presentation of Mary