



**Helpful Resources to Celebrate**  
***2009 Pro Orantibus Day***  
***("For Those Who Pray")***  
**November 21, 2009**  
**Memorial of the Presentation of**  
**the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**Compiled by the INSTITUTE ON RELIGIOUS LIFE**  
***Available online at***  
**[www.cloisteredlife.com](http://www.cloisteredlife.com)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Pro Orantibus Day* (“For Those Who Pray”)  
Scheduled for Nov. 21, 2009**

Chicago, IL--Catholics throughout the world are encouraged to honor the cloistered and monastic life on *Pro Orantibus Day*, which is Saturday, Nov. 21, 2009.

“The primary purpose of *Pro Orantibus Day* (“For Those Who Pray”) is to thank God for the tremendous gift of the cloistered and monastic vocation in the Church’s life,” noted Fr. Thomas Nelson, O.PRAEM., National Director of the Institute on Religious Life. “Since the lives of these women and men religious dedicated to prayer and sacrifice is often hidden, this annual celebration reminds us of the need to support their unique mission within the Body of Christ,” he added.

In 1997 Pope John Paul II asked that this ecclesial event be observed worldwide on the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s Presentation in the Temple. It is a special day to thank those in the cloistered and monastic life for serving as “a leaven of renewal and of the presence of the spirit of Christ in the world.” It is also intended to remind others of the need to provide spiritual and material support “for those who pray.”

As Pope Benedict XVI noted in an *Angelus* message marking last year’s occasion, “Let us thank the Lord for the sisters and brothers who have embraced this mission, dedicating themselves entirely to prayer and living on what they receive from Providence. Let us pray in our turn for them and for new vocations, and let us work to support monasteries in their material needs.”

The nationwide effort to publicize *Pro Orantibus Day* is coordinated by the INSTITUTE ON RELIGIOUS LIFE, a national organization based in Chicago. The IRL was founded in 1974 by Rev. John A. Hardon, S.J., and is comprised of bishops, priests, religious and laity who support and promote the vowed religious life.

Visit [www.cloisteredlife.com](http://www.cloisteredlife.com) for more information.

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## **Bulletin Announcements to observe *Pro Orantibus* Day**

### ***To be inserted the weekend of November 7-8, 2009:***

On November 21, the Church will celebrate *Pro Orantibus* Day (“For Those Who Pray”). The faithful around the world are encouraged to develop their own way of commemorating the day and honoring cloistered women and men religious at Mass and in other special ways, such as by offering up special prayers, by making visits to monasteries and cloistered convents, or by sending cards or letters to contemplative communities.

*Pro Orantibus* Day is intended to be a moment of thanksgiving and solidarity involving the entire Church. For as Pope Benedict XVI said in his *Angelus* message marking last year’s event, “Let us thank the Lord for the sisters and brothers who have embraced this mission, dedicating themselves entirely to prayer and living on what they receive from Providence. Let us pray in our turn for them and for new vocations, and let us work to support monasteries in their material needs.”

[Here mention any specific ways the parish or parishioners can commemorate this event. Also, note any cloistered convents or monasteries within the (arch)diocese.]

For more information visit [www.cloisteredlife.com](http://www.cloisteredlife.com).

### ***To be inserted the weekend of November 14-15, 2009:***

This Saturday, November 21, is *Pro Orantibus* Day (“For Those Who Pray”), honoring cloistered and monastic life. It is a day of thanksgiving, solidarity and support for religious women and men who offer their entire lives in contemplative union with Jesus and interceding for the salvation of the world.

Pope John Paul II established this worldwide ecclesial event in 1997, to take place on the Memorial of Our Lady’s Presentation in the Temple, as a way to provide support to “the Church’s vanguard on the road to the Kingdom” who need spiritual and material support. He wanted to stimulate greater interest “in this silent, separated life as a leaven of renewal and of the presence of the spirit of Christ in the world.”

Special promotion of this annual celebration is being coordinated in the United States by the INSTITUTE ON RELIGIOUS LIFE (IRL).

[Here mention any specific ways the parish or parishioners can commemorate this event. Also, note any cloistered convents or monasteries within the (arch)diocese.]

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## **Novena in Preparation for the Feast of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**By Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.**

*(Novena to take place from November 12-21)*



### **Meditations and Prayers**

#### **Days 1, 4 and 7:**

Mary, Mother of God, tradition tells us that when you were 3 years of age, your parents, Joachim and Anne, took you to the Temple in Jerusalem to fulfill their vow. The holy couple offered you to God by the ministry of the priest in charge, who invoked the blessing of God upon you and your parents. How fervently your mother and father thanked God for having given you to them and begged Him to accept the offering which they were making! They then left a small offering of silver required by the Law of Moses.

What a beautiful example for parents to imitate! Their children also belong to God, for they are His gift. Teach parents to care for their children as God's sacred trust, to guard them from sin and to lead them in the way of virtue. May they consider it to be the greatest privilege bestowed upon them by God to dedicate their sons and daughters to His holy service. Help them to become worthy of this blessing through their own prayers and good example.

Mary, my Mother, your first presentation to God, made by the hands of your parents, was an offering most acceptable in His sight. Let my consecration of myself to God be made under your patronage and assisted by your intercession and in union with your merits. Amen.

## **Days 2, 5 and 8:**

Mary, Mother of God, already in your childhood you dedicated yourself to the love and service of God. Led by divine inspiration to His house, you prepared yourself for your sublime dignity of Divine Motherhood in silence and solitude with God. Though the designs of God were unknown to you, you, nevertheless, detached your heart from the world in order to give all your love to God.

I can picture you alone with your God, following with devotion the life led in common by the virgins of God's house. You were trained there with other girls, under the care of holy women, and with deepest reverence you assisted at the sacred functions. But the true sanctuary in which you dwelt with God was not the palace of worship at Jerusalem but the immaculate temple of your heart.

You may have remained in the Temple till the age of twelve. When you later returned to your home, you were under the loving care of your mother, Saint Anne. With her you loved to sing the psalms and canticles of the inspired authors of your nation. From Anne you heard the touching story of the chosen people. You learned to read the sacred books by yourself and tried to penetrate their hidden meaning. You often discussed the coming of the Messiah, since you knew He would be of your race and family.

I cannot even imagine the heavenly beauty that adorned your innocent soul as you were being prepared by the Eternal Father to be the Mother of His Divine Son and the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. The wisdom and power of God was constructing a living temple for the Savior of the world.

Mary, my Mother, you were laying the foundation of that hidden life in which, by the practice of the highest virtues, you were to reach that sublime degree of holiness to which you were predestined as Mother of the Son of God and Mother of all the souls for whom He was to die. Attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, you diligently gathered up all His lessons, preserving them in your soul with zealous care. Amen.

## **Days 3, 6 and 9:**

Mary, Mother of God, may the perfect gift of yourself to God through love in your presentation in the temple be an inspiration to me. You loved God with your whole heart and mind and strength. Obtain for me the grace to love God with my whole heart—so that all the love my heart is capable of may be consecrated to Him, and all other affection subordinated to the love I owe God.

Help me to love God with my whole soul—so that all the faculties of my soul may be consecrated to Him, and that I may make use of them only to make Him known, loved and served.

Help me to love God with my whole mind—so that my mind may be habitually occupied with God and that I may value His good pleasure above everything else above my convenience, above all earthly treasures, above all knowledge and friendship, above health and life.

Help me to love God with my whole strength—so that I may consecrate undividedly, unreservedly and continually to His service, my life, my health and all I am and have.

Mary, my Mother, pray that the love of God above all things and detachment from the world and its false pleasures, may also make my soul the temple of the living God. After your example, I desire to be known to God and unknown to men, to possess God and to be forgotten by creatures. May God dwell in me and may I live to Him alone through frequent Holy Communion and still more frequent prayer so that God may direct my whole life—my thoughts, words and actions—to His greater honor and glory. Amen.



**Liturgy Planning Guide**  
to observe *Pro Orantibus Day*

**Memorial in honor of the Presentation  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary**  
*Saturday, November 21, 2009*

**Introductory Rites**

*Processional Hymn*

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*Opening Prayer*

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**Liturgy of the Word**

*First Reading*

Rev 3:1-6, 14-22

*Psalm Response*

R. *I will seat the victor beside me on my throne.*

*Gospel Acclamation*

*Gospel Reading*

Lk 19:1-10

*Homily*

See *Homily Notes*

*General Intercessions*

See *General Intercessions*

**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

*Preparation of the Gifts*

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*Preface*

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*Holy, Holy, Holy*

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*Memorial Acclamation*

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*Great Amen*

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*The Lord's Prayer*

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*Communion Hymn*

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**Concluding Rites**

*Prayer after Communion*

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*Blessing and Dismissal*

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*Recessional Hymn*

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## **Prayer in Support of the Cloistered Life**

Eternal Father,

We praise and thank you for those sisters and brothers who have embraced the gift of the cloistered and monastic life. Their hidden presence in our world is indispensable to the Church's life and mission.

As we celebrate the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, let us honor the holiness and glory of the Blessed Virgin. May she intercede so that many young people might dedicated themselves entirely to prayer and to living on what they receive from Providence.

May all of us always be mindful of the spiritual and material needs of those who commit their lives to seeking God by fixing their gaze on those things which are eternal.

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.





## Homily Notes/Meditation to observe 2009 *Pro Orantibus Day*

### “A Matter of Firm Believing”

By Rev. Brian Mullady, O.P.

**Feast:** Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**Readings:** Rev 3:1-6; 14-22; Lk 19:1-10

#### **Purpose and Outline:**

(a) Tradition tells us that Our Lady spent her youth in the Temple among the virgins in a kind of cloister, growing constantly in her understanding of the mysteries of God; (b) The virtue of faith is necessary for any Christian vocation, but it is especially necessary for, and shines in the life of, the enclosure characteristic of the cloistered and monastic life; (c) Cloistered religious are not only models of faith and how the knowledge of God can change the world for others, but they must be passionate to understand it themselves; (d) Assiduous study of Sacred Truth is not inimical to the spiritual life because the more one understands about Christ, the more one can love Him.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Blessed are you, O Virgin Mary, for your firm believing; all that the Lord promised you will come to pass through you.” Today we celebrate the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple. She jumped up the steps and did not look back because she was so attracted by the Lord even at a young age. Tradition tells us that she spent her youth in the Temple among the virgins in a kind of cloister, growing constantly in her understanding of the mysteries of God. This preparation was completed when by an act of faith in response to the words of the angel, she conceived the Word in her body.

Mary’s time spent in the Temple was a fit preparation for her spiritual marriage with the persons of the Trinity. Her enclosed life is a fit model for the enclosed life of cloistered religious. “The monastic life of women has therefore a special capacity to embody the nuptial relationship with Christ and be a living sign of it: was it not in a woman, the Virgin Mary, that the heavenly mystery of the Church was accomplished?”<sup>1</sup> Her experience being among the virgins, listening in silence and faith to the Word of God, was a wonderful seedbed for the final catechesis she would hear from the lips of the angel announcing the incarnation of the Messiah. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will over-

shadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35). As she was raised in faith and increased in faith, she conceives in faith and her whole life is lived as the fruit of this faith. “In this light, nuns relive and perpetuate in the Church the presence and the work of Mary. Welcoming the Word in faith and adoring silence, they put themselves at the service of the mystery of the Incarnation, and united to Christ Jesus in His offering of Himself to the Father, they become co-workers in the mystery of Redemption.”<sup>2</sup>

The virtue of faith is necessary for any Christian vocation but it is especially necessary and shines in the life of the enclosure characteristic of the cloistered and monastic life. Since “the cloister is especially well suited to life wholly directed to contemplation,”<sup>3</sup> faith is the foundation of the contemplative life. Though it is certainly true that contemplation is completed in love for the Beloved, it is impossible to love what one does not know. Or if one has a mistaken idea of the person one loves, one loves a creation of one’s own imagination and not someone who is real. Such love would be false love.

The virtue of supernatural faith involves conclusions of the intellect. It is like science because it entails assent to propositions that are firmly held and increase the knower’s experience of the world. It is unlike science because, since it is about God, He who cannot be contained or limited by any human thought or definition, so also it demands an action of the will by which the believer trusts in the revealer’s word. Faith, then, also demands grace. “Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by Him” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 153). Though faith is a grace and demands interior aid by God on a daily basis to be lived, “believing is an authentically human act” (*CCC*, no. 154). St. Thomas Aquinas and the First Vatican Council with him, thus define faith as “an act of the intellect assenting to divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.”<sup>4</sup>

Today it is popular to play off the contribution of the intellect and will against each other as though they were at war. To think too much diminishes love and to love means that one abandons thought. Not only is this contrary to the whole idea of faith it does not reflect ordinary spousal love in marriage. Is the bridegroom or bride less loving when they want to know all they can about their spouse? Are they not in denial or living a fool’s love if they create a false image of their spouse? Is love based on such denial real?

Vatican II teaches that Christ is the “Mediator and fullness of all revelation.”<sup>5</sup> Knowing Him is the culmination of all wonder, which led the philosophers to search for the truth and the Jews to see the glory of God in the completion of the law. His human nature is a tool by which we arrive at divinity and prepare ourselves for the final knowledge which is the vision of God. “Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below ... so faith is already the beginning of eternal life.” (*CCC*, no. 163) The knowledge of faith allows one to adopt the perspective of Christ and to see time through eternity and not eternity through time. This is the proper way of knowing because it is God’s way of knowing and He is the author of all truth.

The enclosure is often thought of as merely excluding evil influences of the world on the contemplative religious, as a place to hide from life. Though it is true that the enclosure is meant to reduce distractions from contemplation, nothing could be further than the truth. The difference between the world outside the monastic cloister and the enclosed world within is not the difference between good and evil. It is rather the difference between the everyday world of reason which unfolds according to calendar year and the eternal world of God which underlies all that is in that world and gives it meaning. Fascination with this world must permeate all the contemplative is and does. This is centered on fascination with Christ.

Cloistered religious therefore are not only models of faith and how the knowledge of God can change the world for others, but they must be passionate to understand it themselves. Faith is not just a series of propositions that one learns. Otherwise, people who get an “A” on a theology test would be believers. Nevertheless, understanding and assent to the propositions of the articles of the Creed are essential to have a right understanding of the Beloved. Given the nature of each religious institute a basic knowledge of catechesis and theology is essential to be a good lover. Assiduous study of Sacred Truth is not inimical to the spiritual life because the more one understands about Christ, the more one can love Him. St. Teresa of Avila preferred accuracy to piety in her confessors.

In her treatise on woman’s education, St. Edith Stein (a Jewish convert to Catholicism who later entered a Carmelite monastery and was eventually martyred at Auschwitz) is clear that by only being open to grace can the soul of woman be finally freed from the preoccupation with self which limits her full experience as a person. All of woman’s, and I would say man’s, positive tendencies can be spoiled because of the weakness of Original Sin. Only concentration on Christ and the high-mindedness which it engenders can cure this. “Thus, everything points to this conclusion: woman can become what she should be in conformity with her primary vocation only when formation through grace accompanies the natural inner formation. Because of this, religious education must be the core of all woman’s education.”<sup>6</sup>

“And Mary kept all these things in her heart” (Lk 2:51).

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#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, *Verbi Sponsa*, no.4; <sup>2</sup> Ibid; <sup>3</sup> *VS*, no. 5; <sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 2, 9; *Dei Filius*, 3: DS 3010; <sup>5</sup> *Dei Verbum*, no. 2; <sup>6</sup> Edith Stein, *Woman*, ICS Publications: Washington, DC, p. 120.



**Rev. Brian Mullady, O.P.**, a nationally-known Dominican priest, retreat master and spiritual director, is the theological consultant to the INSTITUTE ON RELIGIOUS LIFE. Father writes for *Pastoral and Homiletic Review* and *Religious Life* magazine and has done several series for ETERNAL WORD TELEVISION NETWORK (EWTN).



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As we celebrate the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, let us honor the holiness and glory of the Blessed Virgin. May she intercede so that many young people might dedicated themselves entirely to prayer and to living on what they receive from Providence.

May all of us always be mindful of the spiritual and material needs of those who commit their lives to seeking God by fixing their gaze on those things which are eternal.

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.

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## General Intercessions to observe *Pro Orantibus* Day November 21, 2009

**Presider:**

Trusting that Our Heavenly Father is always faithful to His promises, let us turn to Him with childlike confidence and unwavering trust.

**Reader:**

Let us together unite our voices as we respond: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

- For Pope Benedict XVI, and all our bishops, that they might courageously shepherd the souls entrusted to their care, we pray to the Lord...
- For world leaders (*may add specific names*), that they may always respect and protect religious freedom and other inherent rights of those they govern, we pray to the Lord...
- For all Christians, that they may come to a greater appreciation of the gift of prayer, and willingly support those who dedicate their entire lives to prayer and contemplation, we pray to the Lord...
- For consecrated men and women in convents and cloisters, monasteries and hermitages, that their silent prayer and hidden sacrifices might supply the grace needed to transform our world, we pray to the Lord...
- For those who may be discerning the Lord's call in their lives, especially young people, may they be open to consider the cloistered or monastic life so that they might live for God alone, we pray to the Lord...
- For Christian families, the source of all priestly and religious vocations, that they may encourage young people to rejoice in doing God's will, we pray to the Lord...
- For those who have died (*especially . . .*), that they may experience the fullness of God's glory as they undertake their mission of intercession, we pray to the Lord...

**Presider:**

Loving God, giver of all good things, bless Your Church and give us an abundance of vocations to the cloistered and monastic life as a visible signs of the Kingdom that is yet to come. Grant this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.