

ASCENSION Families

Week 7: *The Presentation*

Read

- Luke 2:22-40

Pray

Pray one decade of the Rosary each day, focusing on the Presentation. Travel with Mary and Joseph to the temple. Present yourself to God with the Holy Family. Or, wait longingly with Anna and Simeon; hold your infant Lord with them in complete joy and fulfillment. Receive the prophecy of Simeon with Mary; behold great joy and sorrow together. Prayerfully reflect on *The Presentation of our Lord* (attached), or enter into your own reflection.

Enter into the Scene

1. Enter the temple as Mary. Try to separate yourself from foreknowledge of this story; let each moment call you to wonder. Simeon sees you from across the temple and rushes forward to greet you and Joseph, pulling the infant Jesus into his own arms. Simeon is filled with the Holy Spirit and sings a beautiful prayer of praise to God the Father. Simeon blesses you and Joseph together, then he turns, looks earnestly into your eyes, and speaks to you alone. “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted, and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.” Mull over these words. What do they mean? Mary, though sinless and perfectly faithful, is not all-knowing. Perhaps she does not yet know the meaning of these words. Marvel with her. Notice that Simeon’s prophecy contains words of joy and sorrow together. Behold both truths together, not preferring one above the other. Is there a place in your own life in which Jesus is asking you to accept joy and sorrow together?
2. Repose yourself with Anna. The Scripture passage says that she had lived 7 years with her husband, was widowed, and from that point forward “she never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer.” Anna is now 84 years old, meaning that she has “lived” in the temple for as many as 60 years. Pause for a moment and reverence Anna’s devotion. Perhaps ask your Lord to ignite a similar devotion in your own heart. Imagine what Anna must have felt after 10 (or 30, or 50) years of prayer and fasting. Do people gossip about her, or look at her with pity or disdain? Does she ever second guess herself or her unique call to prayer? Marvel at Anna’s patience and persistence. Does she know exactly for what or whom she is waiting? How does she recognize Jesus when she sees Him? Has God ever called you to wait or persevere in a way that seems foolish to others?

Reflect

1. There is a lineage of Biblical stories in which parents are called to give/sacrifice their child for the salvation of all. Abraham offered Isaac to God on the mountain of Moriah (Gen 22: 1-19); Moses’s mother placed him in a papyrus basket and floated him (and all Jewish people) to salvation (Ex 2: 1-10); and Hannah offered her only son Samuel to the Lord at the temple (1Sam. 1: 24-28). Do you see any parallels between these parents and Mary and Joseph? In what ways does Jesus’s Presentation foreshadow future events in His life?
2. Simeon says to Mary, “and you yourself a sword will pierce.” What do you think he means by this? In what ways will Mary’s heart be pierced? Do you think it is possible to live joyfully and abundantly with a pierced heart? In what ways does your vocation call you to live with pierced heart?



Reflection: *The Presentation of Our Lord*

40 days after Your birth, Your parents bring You to the temple to present You to God the Father. Willingly You submit yourself beneath the very requirements You came to fulfill and transcend. Your parents, bowed in the posture of humble obedience, do not hesitate to observe all that the law prescribes.

Mary follows in the footsteps of Hannah, as she once gave her only son, Samuel, to her Lord. Your Mother comes to the temple to offer You fully to God, not in idle ceremony, but in complete trust. In the months since Your conception, You have become Mary's entire life and purpose. Retrospectively She sees that You have always been Her purpose, even since Her own immaculate conception. You are and have always been Her all in all.

She shows no hesitancy entrusting You back to the Father; there is no portion withheld from Her gift; there is no stain of attachment on Her faith. This is from Whom You came; She now offers You back with joyful trust. Perhaps Mary interiorly repeats the words She knows by heart, the prayer of Hannah, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord granted my request. Now I, in turn, I give him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the Lord."

Mary's words echo the joyful trust of her Fiat, but they also foreshadow her sorrowful experience at the foot of the cross. Mary and Joseph receive you; they must give you completely too. Your parents must bear you fully, upward and outward, to God and all mankind. How much easier would it be for Mary to keep You cloistered behind her skirt? How much safer for Your parents to hide in you in the Eden of their embrace.

Here, in the mystery of the presentation, Mary and Joseph come to the temple to present You, to give You rather than keep You, to share You rather than consume you. You are Your parents' entire purpose. By presenting You, they give themselves, fully and without reservation. By presenting You, they obey all that the law requires of them.

Not long after Your parents enter the temple, Simeon comes toward them. Perhaps he is a complete stranger to them, or perhaps he is someone they have seen before at a distance. Simeon comes with arms outstretched, ready to hold his infant Lord. This is the pinnacle moment of his entire life. The moment he has literally been living for. "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation..."

Mary and Joseph are amazed at this greeting. Mary treasures each little consolation of Your childhood, She stings them together in Her heart, like beads on a rosary. She will cherish them and return to them in desolation, remembering Her Father's goodness; remembering to fully trust in His plan.

Simeon continues, "This child is destined for the fall and rise of many ... to be a sign that will be contradicted." To Mary he adds, "and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." Mary beholds these words too, she accepts them with the same joyful resignation as the words of consolation. She does not fear the will of Her Father; she does not crave spiritual consolation over sorrow. With deep trust she receives them both.

The prophetess Anna now comes forward. She has spent her entire life in desire to see only You. She has fasted and prayed for decades, dwelling in the temple day and night. She now speaks in joyful praise, fulfilled. She reminds me of Mary, having given herself fully to help bear you and bring you to the world.

Mary, Mother of my Lord, show me how to love Jesus as fully as you. Teach me to follow Him in consolation and desolation together. Show me how to evenly behold promises of sorrow and joy without recoil or rejection. Jesus, fashion my heart after Simeon and Anna. Let me wait for You as they have; let me spend my life in desire to see You; let me fully trust in Your coming.