

Week 8: *Obedience*

Read

- Dairy of St. Faustina 939: Satan can even clothe himself in a cloak of humility, but he does not know how to wear the cloak of obedience.
- John 15:14: You are my friends if you do what I command you.
- Proverbs 6:20-21: Observe, my son, your father's bidding, and reject not your mother's teaching; keep them fastened over your heart always.
- Luke 11:28: Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.

Pray

Choose just one of the passages listed above (or perhaps an alternate passage about obedience with which you are familiar). If you are inclined to do so, look-up the passage and read it in context. Or if not, sit quietly with your passage and see if new meaning or inspiration comes from it. Pray one decade of the Rosary, focusing on the mystery of the Presentation and the virtue of obedience. Ask to receive this spiritual gift. You can use *The Presentation of Our Lord* (attached) if needed, or enter into your own reflection. Look for and experience instances of obedience. Does the passage you chose give new light to your experience of the Presentation or to your understanding of obedience?

Enter into the Scene

Consider the person of Hannah (1Sam 1:1-2:11). Hannah is one of Elkanah's two wives. Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, has children, but Hannah remains childless year after year. She sometimes weeps and refuses to eat, grieving for the children she longs to have. In this state of misery Hannah goes to present herself to the Lord at the temple. In great bitterness she prays to God, weeping copiously she vows, "O Lord of hosts, if you look with pity on the misery of your handmaid, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the Lord."

Imagine how Hannah feels once she realizes that she is pregnant. Is she surprised or did she expect this? Is she excited or is she scared? Internally, does she ever waiver on the promise that she made to God? Is she ever tempted to think, "My Lord can't *really* expect me to offer him my only son?" Imagine Hannah after giving birth to Samuel. Imagine her holding her newborn son, brimming with maternal emotions, joy, and perhaps great sorrow also. Now, consider Hannah after Samuel is weaned. Imagine the long journey to the temple. Consider her sacrifice; quietly weigh it in your own hands and heart. Now read Hannah's response of praise to God (1Sam 1:27 – 2:11). What similarities do you see between Mary and Hannah?

Reflect

1. Why do you think the virtue of obedience is associated with the mystery of the Presentation? What instances of obedience do you notice in this mystery?
2. Read Leviticus 12: 2-8. How does the Holy Family adhere to the requirements of Levitical Law? Does this passage give you any new insight about the Holy Family (v.8, perhaps)? Do you find any aspects of the law a bit ironic or superfluous as regards the particular situation of the Holy Family?
3. Read Exodus 13:2. What are Mary and Joseph ultimately professing when they present Jesus at the temple? What does this have to do with obedience?



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.