

The Presentation in the Temple

"Behold this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also) that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good. Come, children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

- Luke 2:34-35, Psalm 33:11-12

Children are a tremendous responsibility. Not only do they need to be fed, taught, cared for and protected, they also need to be brought up in the Faith and given back to God. During the Baptismal Rite children are given a white gown symbolic of the newness and holiness of their soul now cleansed of original sin. Parents and godparents for their part, promise to raise them according to the teachings of the Church. They also promise to help them return to God with their souls as clean as they are at the moment of Baptism. Mary offered Jesus back to God without reservation. Her gift of her Son enabled His gift of Himself to me. How often do I try to control my children instead of leading them? How often do I put my own fears and anxieties on them?

Lord, help me to offer my children to You without reservation and no matter the cost even if a sword must pierce my heart as well.

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

...and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions.

And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: Because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

- Luke 2:45-46, 15:22-24

Losing my keys or wallet is one thing, but losing a child is completely different. Any parent who has simply lost sight of his or her child for a few unexpected moments knows the heart wrenching feelings that accompany that loss. Many parents have lost their children to accidents, crimes, or suicides. Many others feel the same loss with children who have run away, become addicted, or left the Faith. Mary felt the agony of loss when she realized Jesus wasn't to be found. She felt the agony of loss, but she was not overcome by it. Her hope remained strong.

Lord, help me to always hold on to hope. Help me to trust You even when I feel that I have lost You or You have left me. Give hope to those parents who are experiencing a difficult time with their children, especially those experiencing loss. Help them to turn to Your Mother for comfort. Mother of Hope, pray for us.

The Joyful Mysteries of Children



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The Annunciation

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and be called the Son of the Most High..."

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them.

- Luke 1:31-32, Isaiah 11:6

Children are a gift from God. A completely mysterious gift, but a gift nonetheless. The mystery of the Annunciation shows me how much God loves human life. My salvation did not begin with a celestial light show or trumpeted announcement throughout the heavens. It began with a pregnancy. The Word truly became flesh and entered the world the way I did. My God chose to become a helpless child in the arms of His Mother. For a while the Creator was nurtured at the breast of one of His creatures. Unless I become like a little child I cannot enter the kingdom. To be child-like is to be full of awe and wonder at everything God does. Small children are amazed at simple things like music, balloons, and bugs. I too need to look at life with that kind of awe. Children are a gift from God because they can teach me how God wants me to live, depending solely on Him and looking with wonder at all He does for me. Like the angel Gabriel children can be messengers from God.

The Visitation

"And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb danced for joy."

And when the ark of the Lord was come into the city of David, Michol the daughter of Saul, looking out through a window, saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord: and she despised him in her heart.

- Luke 1:43-44, 2 Samuel 6:16

I often wonder whether the Visitation was for Mary to visit Elizabeth or for Jesus to visit John. Watching children play can be a delightful experience. Their unchecked enthusiasm is beautiful in itself. How often adults subdue their love and zeal for life and each other out of pride. I often fear what people may say if they see me get really excited about anything. If I truly love God this sort of pride and fear should not exist. Not only did John leap unashamedly in his mother's womb, his mother was equally exuberant upon seeing her cousin. It is time that I become like a little child and truly allow myself to get excited and rejoice in others. I need to meet and greet my neighbors with child-like abandonment and leap with joy in my heart like John, cry out blessings like Elizabeth, and proclaim the greatness of God like Mary.

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The Nativity

...and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Be not solicitous therefore, saying, What shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.

- Matthew 2:11, 6:31-33

Having many things or objects does not make people happy. In today's society the one-with-the-most-toys-wins mentality prevails. Jesus was born into poverty but He did not want because He had the love of His Mother and the example and protection of His adoptive father. Children do not need things to make them happy. They do not need toys or computer games. They need parents who will love, teach, and protect them. No amount of money or number of goods will make any child happy and holy. Only love, sacrifice, good example, and protection can ensure that. Jesus was given gold, frankincense, and myrrh as symbolic gifts. Like many parents, Mary and Joseph probably saw them as nothing more than Christmas presents to store in the basement or give away in a few years. I need to stop giving my children so many gifts and start giving them God.