The Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas

Gospel text (*Lk* 2:36-40): There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

"She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all."

Fr. Joaquim FLURIACH i Domínguez
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Today, Joseph and Mary have just celebrated the presentation rites of their first-born, Jesus, at the Temple in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph observe what the law says, because doing what God wants is a sign of faithfulness and love for God.

Since their Son —and God's Son— was born, Joseph and Mary have experienced surprise after surprise: the shepherds, the three wise men, angels... Not only external extraordinary events, but also interior ones, in the heart of people who have had some sort of contact with the Child.

Today Anna turns up. She is an elderly widow, who at a given moment decided to devote all her life to the Lord, with fasts and prayer. We are not making a mistake when we say that this woman was one of the "prudent virgins" of our Lord Jesus Christ's parable (cf. Mt 25:1-13): always faithfully watching over what seems to be God's will for her. And of course: when the moment comes, the Lord finds Her ready. The Boy fully rewards her for all the time she has dedicated to the Lord. Ask her; ask Anna if so much prayer, fasting and generosity were worthwhile!

The text reads that "she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38). Joy turns into determined apostleship: it is cause and effect. The Lord

is infinitely generous with those who are generous with him.

Jesus, God incarnate, lives a family life in Nazareth, like in all families: growing, working, learning, asking, playing... “Holy and daily routine”, where the souls of men grow stronger almost without realizing it. How important the little things of every day are!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “! Arouse yourself, O man; for you God has become man. Awake, sleeper, and arise from among the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee. For you, I repeat, God has become man.” (Saint Augustine)

- “Anna is a "prophetess", a wise and pious woman. Her long widowhood devoted to worship in the temple, and participation in the expectation for the redemption of Israel culminated in her meeting with the Child Jesus.” (Benedict XVI)

- “With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its encounter with the Savior. Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 529)