

# The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament,  
Paris, Wednesday, November [19], 1862<sup>2</sup>

The most Blessed Virgin presented herself to the service of God at the age of three. She consecrated herself to the service of God totally, without condition, and, thirdly, she remained in the Temple like a pure host. Since the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin is celebrated the day after tomorrow, we shall talk about this beautiful feast.

[...]

God was drawing her with his love. David, the ancestor of the Blessed Virgin, said: *I rejoiced because they said to me, "We will go up to the house of the Lord."* (Ps 121:1) She rejoiced, as we will, when we go to heaven. In her visit, she preceded her parents; love has wings. Everyone must have noticed this little girl, so good and pure, especially when she climbed the stairs of the temple, built on a mountain, Mt. Mello. Why did she run ahead? To arrive sooner, to be the first to kiss the sacred rock.

We did not have the joy of giving ourselves at three years old, perhaps not even at seven. Why? We've always been limited; we've always lagged behind, even stopping along the way. We came to the Good Lord only when the sun had passed mid-day. What must we do? Like the traveler who stopped on the way, we must hurry toward the Good Lord, to arrive hopefully at the final hour (cf. Mt 20:1-16). We must hasten our steps, take the wings of the dove in the desert (cf. Ps 54:7), review the course of our life, and, out of love, give to the Good Lord what we had not really given him in the past. At least, let's do like the saints, like the Blessed Virgin herself. Let us rejoice that the Good Lord found in her a soul who offered him her earliest affection, a heart and mind that pleased him. He never found any stain in her, for she was pure and immaculate. If we did not give ourselves to God like the most Blessed Virgin, she is our sister in Adam; she gave herself in our place. When we have a relative serving an important person, we say: At least, my brother or sister can serve that person as he deserves. That is how we must celebrate the feast of the saints. The Good Lord has what he deserves. Instead of being jealous of what they did better than us, we must rejoice, because we love the Good Lord.

[...]

My poor Daughters, did you ever experience the joy of a pilgrimage? I have had that joy. I'm foolish to speak about myself, but I understand the joy of the most Blessed Virgin. When I was small, it saved me. In our region, there is a famous place of pilgrimage, Our Lady of Laus. Now, Our Lady of LaSalette is more recent and closer. People are going there; the whole of Provence is going. Our town is fifteen leagues away from Our Lady of Laus in a straight line: twenty leagues by road. On big feasts all walk there, not riding in a carriage – pilgrims would never dare go by carriage. This walk takes about a day and a half.

The Good Lord gave me this grace. After my First Communion I used to go there every year, on foot, of course. How good and tender is the Blessed Virgin – I would have walked through fire to obtain

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<sup>1</sup> Number 464. *La Présentation de la sainte Vierge*. Father Eymard found the source of this meditation in an age-old tradition.

<sup>2</sup> The copy of Raulin gives November 15. November 15 was a Saturday, and Father was coming on Wednesday and Sunday since the middle of October. And especially, Father mentions twice during his instruction that they were on the day before the vigil of the feast. Therefore, the 15th was changed to the 19th, Wednesday, the day before the vigil of the 21<sup>st</sup>.

permission to go to Our Lady of Laus. I would think about it six months in advance, and six months after. When we caught sight of the bell-tower on the mountain, how happy we were! Some slipped away from the caravan to arrive a half-hour earlier, to kiss the ground at the sight of the bell-tower of this magnificent church. Why? Because the Blessed Virgin is good and we received graces. She is our Mother<sup>3</sup>. Although the journey was hard, it was always a beautiful moment!

From the age of twelve, that pilgrimage was my joy. There were others, too, later on. You must have had similar experiences. There are places of pilgrimage in every region. These small havens, these houses of our Mother are everywhere. In Provence, there is Our Lady of la Garde. One has to prepare to reach there, passing through deserted areas, not through cities. We visit these places and then leave; but when the most Blessed Virgin went to the Temple, she remained there and said: I am the servant of the Lord. I have some idea of her joy. Accompany her!

[...] At that time the Blessed Virgin consecrated herself to God,<sup>4</sup> [...] my poor Daughters; she vowed her love.

**By the vow of poverty** she consecrated herself to God, keeping nothing for herself, [...]. Love makes no sacrifices; if any, love is happy and contented. Her poverty was simple, so that no one noticed it.

**The secret is to work out one's perfection without drawing attention**, without anyone saying: Here is someone really determined to become perfect. This would be very unfortunate. It is a temptation for anyone to allow treasures of grace and merit to be seen externally. Usually, when the Good Lord wants to make a great saint, he begins by allowing external faults to remain; such as a harsh character, so that people who don't love God will see them, and even those who do love God will still see them. Take note, therefore, that if a saint were living among you, you would not notice it. The apostles didn't know that our Lord was the Messiah. They even found fault with him; he paid too much attention to the poor, to undeserving children (cf. Mk 10:14); he wasted time eating with tax collectors and sinners (cf. Mt 9:11). When they could dismiss the sinners and children, they did so. When he was with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:27), they were hungry, and they grumbled that he was taking too long. Our Lord's body was visible; if they had known that he was the Messiah, they would have fallen at his feet.

I notice this in many saints. The brother of St. Francis de Sales, who was his co-adjutor, corrected him and found fault with him. St. Vincent de Paul's brothers called him a simpleton because he was too slow and scrupulous, and could never make a decision. St. Alphonse of Liguori's fellow religious said the same thing about him. This was the mist/cloud that God purposely allowed. Why? To deepen the humility of any who work close to him.

The Blessed Virgin was the most humble of all the little girls who served in the temple. Every time that one wants to serve the Good Lord more than others, others will be jealous. The most Blessed Virgin suffered much. The most Blessed Virgin made the vow of poverty. It was only right that the mother of the one who would have a manger for a crib, and straw for a bed, should begin like that. Mary was the beginning of Jesus, the dawn of Jesus.

**What else was needed? The vow of obedience.** [...] She was obedient in will and mind; she did not always receive commands, and so there was no direct obedience needed. The most Blessed Virgin always acted in the spirit of obedience. When the law was vague, her soul was always in a state of obedience,

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<sup>3</sup> In the manuscript, we find this note at the bottom of the page: *The Blessed Virgin is very good at Laus: we can see her there...* (This expression was defended by our venerable Father.)

<sup>4</sup> Even if, historically, we cannot attribute these acts to the Blessed Virgin, nevertheless we can benefit from the religious values that St. Peter Julian wanted to teach.

like our Lord who never did anything of his own will. It was only right that since she was to be his mother the Blessed Virgin should convey to him by her mother's milk the spirit of poverty and obedience which she practiced. My good Sisters, perhaps you don't know that virtues are rooted in the soul and in the body. Virtue resides in the soul; in the body, it becomes a second nature. [...]

The Blessed Virgin practiced obedience in an ordinary way, drawing no attention to herself. Perfection consists in not being noticed externally, and internally to be aware of one's wretchedness in humility. [...]

The most Blessed Virgin [...] consecrated her heart to the exclusive love of God. **Poverty consecrated her body; obedience, her will; and love, her heart that became a host. All was completely for service.** [...] Like a pure flame, she consecrated herself to God. When God created the world, he must have been happy upon seeing the Blessed Virgin. The Trinity must have been glad, after the flood and all the evils of the human race, upon seeing its re-creation by Mary and Jesus. That was the first time that God was loved on earth like never before, first by her and later by Jesus, God and man.

The first broken link was reconnected to the throne of God by the most Blessed Virgin, because *whoever is in Christ is a new creation*, says St. Paul. These links are hearts; it was only right that this link be so pure and holy that God could look at it with complacency in his good and holy Mother [...]

The most Blessed Virgin made an act of perfect love with her entire soul and entire life. Imagine a circle that surrounds the world and encloses it. The most Blessed Virgin is that circle of fire and of love.

**This strong self-gift needs a name. Call it the vow of virginity.** My good Sisters, to be pleasing to God, this vow of chastity, this vow of virginity had to be perfect. [...] Virginity takes in the entire created world and offers it as a holocaust to God. The most Blessed Virgin had to be the first pure and lily-white soul to make this vow of virginity and love, in order to be consumed totally on the altar of holocaust. [...] She mirrored the holiness of God. Thus she is compared to the lily of the valley, unsullied by the pollution of the world, to the lily among thorns. How happy God must have been to see this dawn announcing the rising of the sun of justice (cf. Mal 3:20) and love. She was the temple that he had made for himself.

What must you do? **Should you not be the first to imitate the Blessed Virgin, to continue her way of life?** She was waiting for the Lord who had not yet come. Now that he has come, he remains in the Cenacle. You remain in his presence to continue the life of the most Blessed Virgin. [...] Like her, you must be totally taken up with our Lord. [...] You must serve him as do the angels and the saints in heaven. Mary's love was greater, endowed with freedom and homage. However, we must make this gift while we are yet pilgrims on earth. The homage of love is reserved for heaven; here on earth it must be the homage of your virtue. The purpose of the three vows; poverty to set us free; obedience to help perseverance; chastity, for pure love. Let us kneel alongside the most Blessed Virgin, what then? The Blessed Virgin will accept you as her daughters, loving you even more. The heavenly Father will be pleased to see his daughters next to her; and the Holy Spirit will rejoice over you who are his temples. Thus you will make God reign in others. This then is a lovely feast day; spend it well.

On this day, all the clerics – the young aspirants to the priesthood and those at various levels of formation and the priests themselves – renew their clerical vows by saying: ***The Lord is my portion and my inheritance*** (cf. Ps 15:5); truly you will reward me by the gift of heaven, my eternal inheritance, yourself. Feed your mind with this; don't try to be too spiritual. See the mystery and what it involves. In this way you will see things more clearly and you will encounter the person of the most Blessed Virgin.

**Points for reflection:**

St. Peter Julian takes an age-old legend and uses it as the basis of this meditation on the vows, to expose the deeper meaning of our vocation. He also gives witness to his own Marian devotion since his childhood. What was your Marian devotion since your childhood? How does it affect your Marian devotion of today, and your idea of the religious life?