

Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Homily of Bishop Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

November 21, 2023

Today, we celebrate the Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We celebrate Mary's complete surrender to God's plans for the salvation of the world.

Although Sacred Scripture does not mention presentation of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple, this belief is based upon very ancient Christian tradition and the Church has given it recognition by making it the object of a special Marian feast.

Our Lady was completely faithful to the will of God. Think of what she had to face: so much uncertainty, so many confusing and painful occurrences, so many devastating losses and tragedies.

Her presentation at the Temple reflected her special graces as the Immaculate Conception.

Her presentation at the Temple foreshadowed her "yes" and her Magnificat at the Annunciation,

The Church presents us today, within the context of the Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady's beautiful prayer, The *Magnificat*.

It is good for us to remember today that we pray the *Magnificat* every day in Evening Prayer/Vespers in the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Church wants us living the rhythm of the *Magnificat* in our daily lives.

Let's examine why.

Our Lady rejoices: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has looked upon his lowly servant."

In some translations, it reads: "My soul magnifies the Lord." What a powerful phrase that is for our daily faith.

We are often tempted “to magnify” our pride, our ego or some dimension of the seven capital sins. We are often tempted “to magnify” a grudge, a humiliation or a slight.

Mary teaches us to “magnify the Lord” which, of course, is the way to interior freedom, peace and holiness.

In his 2005 encyclical *Deus Caritas est/God is Love* 41, Pope Benedict XVI shows how the *Magnificat* reveals how Our Lady is the Woman of the Word of God.

He writes: “The Magnificat – a portrait, so to speak, of her soul – is entirely woven from threads of Holy Scripture, threads drawn from the Word of God. Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the Word of God: the Word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the Word of God.”

Mary is the Mother of the Church.

Mary is the Mother of the Eucharist and the Mother of the Redeemer.

Mary is the Mother of the Word of God, the *Theotokos*.

Our Lady teaches us that our souls are biblical harps, biblical harps that play the biblical notes of Adoration, Praise, Glory, Thanksgiving, Trust and Humility.

Pope St. John Paul II says it beautifully in *Mother of the Redeemer* (1987). He writes: “Now, at the visitation, when Elizabeth’s greeting bears witness to that culminating moment, Mary’s faith acquires a new consciousness and a new expression. That which remained hidden in the depths of the ‘obedience of faith’ at the annunciation can now be said to spring forth like a clear and lifegiving flame of the spirit. The words used by Mary on the threshold of Elizabeth’s house are an inspired profession of her faith, in which her response to the revealed word is expressed with the religious and poetical exultation of her whole being toward God. In these sublime words, which are simultaneously very simple and wholly inspired by the sacred texts of the people of Israel, Mary’s personal experience, the ecstasy of her heart, shines forth. In them shines a ray of the mystery of God, the glory of his ineffable holiness, the eternal love, which as an irrevocable gift, enters into human history.” (36)