

Laudario
(Preamble)

ANGELUS

Last Thursday, talking about yesterday's celebration of Candlemas and the events of Our Lord's early life we were commemorating, I pointed out that it is not really ~~the~~ a feast of Our Lady although people do think of it as such. But this is not to say that Our Lady has no place in the feast of Candlemas - the 'candle' part of it, which derives from a procession with candles around the city of Rome in the 5th to 7th Centuries, is in fact more closely associated with Mary and gave rise to the name of the feast (the Purification of the Bl. Virgin Mary) and the aspect of celebrating her on this day - possibly because these processions always ended in a church dedicated to her. So today, let's meditate on Mary's part in the events of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple. It's interesting, in the light of what I've been pointing out about the character of yesterday's kantata that the reading ^{at Mass} of St Luke's account of these events stops short with Simeon's song: let's read on: Q. So, the joy and happiness of the Presentation of Christ, celebrating the joy and happiness of His birth, has a dark side too. He is a light for revelation and glory, but also a sign of contradiction and failure. Mary will have her part to play in the darker side of Christ's life as well - when we come to Holy Week, we'll find her standing by His cross on Calvary when almost all His friends and disciples have fled in fear, disappointment and frustration, not understanding that this was His way to victory, success, the achievement of the salvation and the kingdom He promised them, told them about and was preparing them for. Mary understood: she knew that a sword of

suffering and sorrow would have to pierce her heart too - that she'd have to share in the suffering and contradiction that were to be her Son's. When she brought Him as a child to the Temple of God, it was for herself also a dedication to the service of God, with all that would demand. She hadn't any need, according to the law, to go to the temple for purification - it was something she voluntarily took on herself, to be in the company of her Son. When she brought Him to God's house, it was God himself coming into His own - for the temple, as a sign of God's presence among men now lost its significance because His presence was already in the world in the person of Christ. Mary, who carried him within her for 9 months and was to live the greater part of her life literally in his presence, was in this sense already a greater and more important temple of God. And this meant staring her life entirely into His, in sorrow as well as joy - the cross as well as Nazareth and His resurrection. She learnt from Simeon in the temple what her privilege would involve - and she accepted it with strength and dedication. Let us reflect on this scene and its meaning for Mary now while we listen to her praise in music and pray to her for her intercession for us with Her Son.

R21 Music Ave Maria (Victoria).

PRAYERS.

There is, I think, an important lesson about Christian life to be learnt from the scene of the presentation of X^t. in the temple. It's not shared in

yesterday's feast, which has another purpose. But it comes out in the continuation of the Gospel we read; and it needs to be repeated again and again, and perhaps especially in this age of the Church in which we live. Christ's life, and Mary's, were not all rosy and smooth. Contradiction, suffering, death are realities of human life and always will be — it's unwise to try to deny them, pretend they don't exist, or can be done away with by science or philosophy. These were the conditions Christ accepted, and through which He brought us redemption.

Mary shared them too. Too often these days, one gets the impression that all that needs to be done in the Church is get rid of some old-fashioned rules and some of the extremists (conservative or liberal) and everything will be lovely and easy. But Christ's life, which is a sharing of His life, will never be a easy thing — there'll always be contradictions. Just as there'll always be persecutions of the Church & Christians — it's no good pretending they don't exist. Each of us, in his own way & time, has to take up the cross of Christ and follow Him.