

CATHOLIC LIFE EXPERIENCE – MARY

A very ordinary Jewish mother and her child are coming up the Temple steps to carry out the precept of the Law. Every male child must be offered to God, and every mother must be purified after the days are accomplished. Does Mary even think of refusing to go to the Temple? Does she claim to be above the Law, to have no need, as indeed she had not, of purification, just as her Son, God's only-begotten, had no need of being offered to His Father? No, she acts like all the other young mothers who doubtless were also there that morning. Surely we have here the very best example of "love to be unknown." She is in very deed unknown. A poor mother, the wife of an ordinary carpenter, she does not even stand out from the others as being wealthy. She offers only the two doves of the poor. Not only was she poor, but she was God's Poor One. The priests think she is a nobody – a no one – and those about her take no notice of her. Yet she is a Queen – the Queen of Heaven, and second only to her Divine Son.

And when Simeon takes the Child and speaks of His greatness, does she eagerly interrupt and assure him that she already knows all about it? Not a word is recorded from her. She listens reverently to Simeon and keeps silence, "keeping all these things in her heart." What a marvelous picture – and how different from our way of acting. How we will parade our virtues, our qualities, our talents, our achievements, our relationships with the great ones of the world, our knowledge of things – anything that will give us a little superiority! How few, even spiritual persons, are willing to be unknown and esteemed as nothing. How seldom will we allow those to instruct us whom we consider our inferiors. How few are those whom we consider our equals, and how fewer still are those whom we consider our superiors – in knowledge, in wisdom, in understanding, in holiness, in importance, and in all the rest. But how inferior to Mary were Simeon and Anna. How ready are we to criticize others – how the silence of Mary here does rebuke us! This whole incident breathes a reverence for God and His works that is hardly paralleled elsewhere.

You meet it all through Mary's life – the sense of her being constantly silent in the face of the mysterious workings of God's Providence. There is the finding in the Temple, and Mary was silent in the face of it. Her silence is not one of hurt or discomfort or failure of knowing what best to say. Nor was it one of incomprehension. It is the silence begotten of reverence that overtakes the holy soul of the presence of God. It is the direct fruit of a practical sense of the divine. Its sentiments permeate the whole life and all the actions of Our Lady, because they express the essential attitude of her soul.

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