

## **The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

The Feast of the Presentation of Our Blessed Lady falls on the twenty first of November. Father Leonard Feeney in his little book **Saints to Remember** *from January to December*, writes of this beautiful Feast:

Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, the father and mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, presented her to God in the Temple to live there and to belong to God forever, when she was three years, two months and thirteen days old. Saint Joachim and Saint Anne sensed in the Blessed Virgin Mary from the moment of her birth that she was divinely great, and belonged to God and not to them. When her Father and her mother brought Mary to the Temple of Jerusalem and presented her there, Saint Zachary, a priest of the Temple and the father of Saint John the Baptist and the husband of Saint Elizabeth, received her. He took her by the hand and led her to the cloister of the virgins who dwelt in the Temple. There she stayed, adored God and prayed until she was fourteen years old. Then her first espousals to Saint Joseph were miraculously arranged by God, so as to give her a virginal husband to protect her in her virginal motherhood when she conceived her Divine Child and brought God into this world.<sup>1</sup>

It is not generally realized in the West, though it sometimes is in the East, that Saint Anne must have recently weaned Our Lady, who had been nursing for over two years. Msgr. John E. Steinmueller in his excellent *Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia Old Testament* which he wrote in collaboration with Sister Kathryn Sullivan, R.S.C.J under the entry "Nurse" writes:

The Hebrew child, like the children in the East today, was nursed till over two years of age (cf. 2 Mach, 7,27; 1 Sam 1,22f).<sup>2</sup>

These citations read:

So bending herself towards him, mocking the cruel tyrant, she said in her own language: My son, have pity upon me, that bore thee nine months in my womb,

---

<sup>1</sup> **Saints to Remember** *from January to /December*, by the Slaves of the Immaculate Hear of Mary , Saint Benedict Center, Still River, MA, 1997, p.111.

<sup>2</sup> **Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia Old Testament**, Msgr. John E. Steinmuellar and Sr. Kathryn Sullivan, R,S.C.J., Joseph Wagner, New York,1955, p.779.

and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age. (2 Machabeess, 7:27).

But Anna went not up: for she said to her husband: I will not go up till the child be weaned, and till I may carry him, that he may appear before the Lord and abide always there. And Elcana her husband said to her: Do what seemeth good to thee, and stay till thou wean him: and I pray that the Lord may fulfil his word. So the woman stayed at home, and gave her son suck, till she weaned him. (1 Kings (Samuel) 1:22,23.)

Did you ever see a young mother with a baby in one arm, holding a toddler in the other, and directing a third in front of her trying to cross a busy street. Thank God, most of the motorists give her a break, and she walks nonchalantly across the street, but I am always tied up in knots till she makes it safely. You can't admire these heroic girls enough, but it doesn't need to be that way

A girl can continue her normal marital life, but as long as she is nursing, it is impossible for her to conceive another child, If she nursed for over two years, she would have one tiny baby in her arms, and a three year old walking beside her, and crossing a busy street would not be a problem.

I suspect that this Catholic teaching from the Bible, is very little known in the Church today. For example at Boston College in the early forties, I had a class in ethics from the nicest Jesuit I ever had, Father O'Brien. When he was speaking about "rhythm" he never once mentioned it .But it This is clearly the teaching of the Bible, and given to us in the example of Our Lady in her Presentation in the Temple. It is a Catholic teaching that could rock both the Pro-Death and the Pro-Life Movements.

Brother Thomas Mary Sennott, M.I.C.M.

\*\*\*\*\*