



My Beloved Ones,

As we prepare to celebrate the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple this coming Sunday, we are faced with a profound question: would we give up our greatest gift for the glory of God? Many would admit that to part with a prized material possession—a car, or expensive clothes for example—would not be easy; but then, consider the life of the Holy Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna.

The Virgin Mary's father, Joachim was descended from King David, and her mother, Anna, was of the priestly tribe of Aaron. However, despite their piety, they were unable to bear children, and so were shunned in their community. When Joachim was turned away from the Temple and his offering rejected, this caused the couple great shame, and Joachim went to the desert to renew his prayers. Eventually, both Joachim and Anna were visited by angels, who announced that God had heard their cries, and that they would conceive a child who would be spoken of in the entire world. Out of gratitude, when the Theotokos was three years old, her parents brought her into the Temple, where she resided until she was betrothed to Joseph at the age of 12.

Some might wonder, why would those who prayed so deeply for a child, be so willing to give that child up? The answer of course, is that Joachim and Anna, in all their belief, understood that God had graced their faith, by allowing them to become part of something greater than themselves. St. Germanos Patriarch of Constantinople writes in his 8th Century Homily for the Entrance, in the voice of the Ancestors of God: *“Behold, Lord, accept her whom you gave. Receive her whom you provided. Accept her whom you assigned to destroy our bareness, overcoming through her the barrenness of the Law, you have ransomed us through her. House her who so well has housed us, her whom you have chosen, and have foreseen, and have blessed... You chose her as a lily out of the brambles of our unworthiness... Behold, to you we offer her [as our intercessor] and dedicate ourselves.”* Joachim and Anna understood that everything they had, including their only child, had been given to them by God.

As we approach that secular holiday known as Thanksgiving, let us meditate on the saintly dedication of these parents who showed their thanks to God, not by giving their worldly gifts, but their own flesh and blood. Perhaps their descendant and God thought of them above all when He spoke *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Matthew 6:19–21)

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