

November 21st is the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today's memorial finds its origin in a second century apocryphal source, the Book of James (Ordo). From that source, we learn that the grandmother of Jesus was named Anne and his grandfather was named Joachim. They were an elderly couple that very much wanted to have a child and prayed dearly to our Lord for that to happen.

Joachim went away quite saddened that he was not able to have a child. An angel came to him and instructed him to return to his wife. Together they conceived a child and they named her Mary. They recognized that Mary was a great gift from God and that which we receive from God we are called to give back to him. Thus, they brought Mary and presented her to the temple offering her back to God. According to the Book of James, which is not the gospel and therefore not in the bible, Mary was raised in the temple among religious. The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is held on the 21st of November because a Basilica was dedicated to her in Jerusalem in 543.

When we celebrate a Marian feast day, and there are quite a few throughout the liturgical year, we often see the same few readings. Rightly, the gospels focus on Jesus and not on Mary. So why does the church honor Mary with so many feast dates? First, we follow the example of Jesus. Jesus chose to be born human. Mary his mother is very much loved by her son. Mary was honored by God in being chosen to be the Mother of God. In honoring Mary, we take our example from God.

Mary is also more than simply the Mother of God. She is also the Mother of the Church. As she stood by the foot of the cross, John stood with her. Jesus said, "Behold your mother." This has a twofold meaning. In the narrow sense, he asked John to care for his mother. In the broader sense, he gave his mother to the church.

Mary has taken her role as Mother of the Church very seriously. She has appeared in time and history numerous times encouraging humanity to pray the rosary and to warn the world that prayer to God is ever necessary.

- At La Vang, Vietnam in 1798, during a period of Catholic persecution, refugees fled into the rain forest. Many became very ill. In the evening, the community gathered to pray the Rosary. One night, Mary appeared holding the infant Jesus. The persecuted refugees were comforted by the apparition and followed her advice to boil leaves from the trees for medicine. The ill were cured.ⁱ
- At Lourdes, France in 1858, she appeared to Bernadette and said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." She asked Bernadette to dig for water and this water has become the source of many miracles. Through Mary's eyes we are called to see in our sick brothers and sisters the face of Jesus Christ who by suffering, dying, and rising achieves the salvation of humankind.
- At Fatima, Portugal in 1917, Mary appeared to three children, Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta. Mary was concerned about the World Wars that would occur in Europe and the suffering caused by the rise of Communism. She called the world to pray for peace. We are all brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus and the inhumane suffering of war and oppression are always upsetting to God and to Mother Mary.

In countless situations around the world, Mary has appeared to call her children to prayer and repentance, to comfort them, and to encourage people to turn to her Son Jesus.

Mary who was presented at the temple as a child has always had a deep and abiding love for God. Like Jesus who loves us as brothers and sisters, Mary loves each one of us as Mother of the Church.

ⁱ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_La_Vang