

Gospel for 30 December: Anna's Youthfulness

Gospel for the sixth day in the Christmas Octave, with commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 2:36-40*)

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God,

and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

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Commentary

A first consideration about something that seems quite secondary in this Gospel story, namely Anna's age. We are told that she was eighty-four years old. It is common to think that the best stage of our life is our youth or the time during which we successfully carry out our profession and to lament nostalgically the passing of the years.

We may even feel a certain contempt for the elderly and consider them to be of little use or see them as a burden. Today's Gospel passage teaches us just the opposite. The best moment in the long life of this woman, widowed at a young age, takes place near the end: the encounter with the Holy Family and meeting the Savior of the world. At eighty-four years old, she became an apostle of Christ and spoke about the Redeemer's arrival to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. Having lived for many years is not an obstacle to receiving God's call and fulfilling our mission in the world.

After Mary and Joseph presented the Child in the Temple, as prescribed by the law of Moses, they returned to their home in Nazareth, to continue living among other families, without standing out. Saint Josemaría liked to contemplate the naturalness with which the Son of God wanted to live

on earth, especially in the thirty years of his hidden life in Nazareth. And he spoke to us about the greatness of ordinary life, about how daily tasks could be sanctified and how they were a true path to holiness that ordinary Christians could tread.

The Gospel passage that we contemplate today concludes by saying that the Child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was in him. This is what we ask of God today for each of us: that the Holy Spirit may strengthen us in tribulations and illumine our thoughts with his wisdom, so that we take advantage of the abundant graces we receive from our Lord.

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