



## The Thankfulness of Joachim and Anna

Have you ever been so happy about a gift you have received that you just couldn't wait to repay the person who gave it to you? Sometimes you can repay a gift. Sometimes, the gift is so monumental that there isn't a sufficient way to say thank you properly and you need to just be thankful. If you remember our story in the September issue about the birth of the Theotokos, you know exactly why Joachim and Anna, her parents, were so grateful to have been blessed with a child. They were so thankful that they made a pledge to repay God as best they could by offering to have their daughter serve Him in the temple as soon as she was able.

There isn't anything in scripture about the events of the day that the little virgin Mary was presented at the age of three in the Temple. So how do we know so much about it? There is a document written in the second century, just after Jesus had risen from the dead and the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, called the Protoevangelion of James where much detail is given about the life of the Theotokos.

It tells us that the parents of the blessed virgin were so happy to have had their baby that they made a pledge to God that she would be offered to His service by being brought up in the temple.

When she was old enough, they dressed her in her finest clothes like a little princess and gathered all of the little girls from her neighborhood, who escorted her in a parade, carrying candles all the way to the Temple from her home. It is said that little Mary followed along joyfully, not crying for her parents, or even looking back at them.

When the temple came into view, she ran ahead of her escorts, up the 15 steps, which was remarkable for just a little girl of three, and straight into the arms of the High-priest Zachariah.

Do you recognize that name? Zachariah is the man who would later become the father of John the Forerunner!

Zachariah blessed her saying, "It is in you that He has glorified your name in every generation. It is in you that He will reveal the Redemption that He has prepared for His people in the last days."

It seems that he was blessed by God to know exactly who she was and what her special mission would be because then, Zachariah did something that only God could explain. He brought the little girl into the Holy of Holies which ordinarily would have been forbidden because this was a very special place in the temple where the only high priest was permitted to enter, and only once every year. Imagine!

The little girl who would soon contain God within herself as His mother would herself be contained within the only place on Earth where only He was said to live!

When she came out, it is said that she received a very special blessing by the Holy Spirit and she began to dance with joy to the delight of all who saw her.

While young Mary lived in the temple, her parents visited her there very often until they departed into eternal life. She remained happily in the temple, serving God until she became betrothed to Joseph and begin preparation for her vocation as the Mother of God.

*So now, ask yourself: What gifts has God given me for which I am most thankful?*

How is it possible for me to repay Him for his goodness? Perhaps you have been blessed with good health. You can show God you appreciate that by doing some kind of service to the Church, or to a neighbor, or friend!

*Here is a little worksheet you can use to help you to remember your blessings and to be thankful for them. But remember, there is just no way to sufficiently repay God for all of His abundant blessings but is always appropriate to offer God a thankful and generous heart!*

## Thankfulness Worksheet

My Blessings

What I can do to show God how much I appreciate them?

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- Written by Lynne Wardach