

A few days before most holy Mary reached the age of three years, She was favored with an abstract vision of the Divinity, in which it was made known to Her that the time of her departure for the temple ordained by God, had arrived, and that there She was to live dedicated and consecrated to his service. Her most pure soul was filled with new joy and gratitude at this prospect and speaking with the Lord, She gave Him thanks saying: "Most high God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, my eternal and highest God, since I cannot praise Thee worthily, let it be done in the name of this humble slave by the angelic spirits; since Thou, immense Lord, who hast need of none, dost look upon this lowly wormlet of the earth in thy unbounded mercy. Whence this great benefit to me, that Thou shouldst receive me into thy house and service, since I do not even merit the most abject spot of the earth for my place of habitation? But as Thou art urged thereto by thy own greatness, I beseech Thee to inspire the hearts of my parents to fulfill thy holy will."

At the same time Saint Anne had a vision, in which the Lord enjoined her to fulfill her promise by presenting her Daughter in the temple on the very day, on which the third year of her age should be complete. There is no doubt that this command caused more grief in Saint Anne, than that given to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. But the Lord consoled and comforted Her, promising his grace and assistance in her loneliness during the absence of her beloved Daughter.

Saint Joachim also had a vision of the Lord at this time, receiving the same command as Anne. Having conferred with each other and taking account of the will of the Lord, they resolved to fulfill it with humble submission and appointed the day on which the Child was to be brought to the temple. Great was also the grief of this holy old man, though not quite as that of Saint Anne, for the high mystery of her being the future Mother of God was yet concealed from him.

* (excerpted from: www.sacredheart.com)



The child Mary,
at the age of three,
ascending the steps of
the temple.

The Child Mary



Sweet Child Mary,
destined to be the Mother of God
and our sovereign and loving Mother,
by the prodigies of grace you lavish upon us,
mercifully listen to my humble supplications.
In the needs which press upon me from every side
and especially in my present tribulation,
I place all my trust in you.
Amen

MARY'S CHILDHOOD YEARS

*The sovereign Child was treated like other children of her age. Her nourishment was of the usual kind, though less in quantity and so was her sleep, although her parents were solicitous that She take more sleep. She was not troublesome, nor did She ever cry for mere annoyance, as is done by other children, but She was most amiable and caused no trouble to anybody. That She did not act in this regard as other children caused no wonder; for She often wept and sighed (as far as her age and her dignity of Queen and Mistress would permit) for the sins of the world and for its Redemption through the coming of the Savior.

In all things the Infant Queen was most gracious, perfect and admirable. Though She passed her infancy subject to the common laws of nature, yet did this not hinder the influx of grace. During her sleep her interior acts of love, and all other exercised of her faculties which were not dependent on the exterior senses, were never interrupted.

It was ordained, by the Most High, that the sovereign Child voluntarily keep silent during the time in which ordinarily other children are unable to speak. The only exception made was in regard to the conversation held with the angels of her guard, or when She addressed Herself in vocal prayer to the Lord. For in regard to interaction with God, the Author of speech, and with the holy angels, his messengers, when they treated in a visible manner with Her, this reason for maintaining silence did not hold good: on the contrary it was befitting, that, since there was no impediment, She should pray with her lips and her tongue; for it would not be proper to keep them unemployed for so long a time. But her mother never heard Her, nor did she know of her being able to speak during that period; and from this it can be better seen, what perfection it required in Her to pass that year and a half of her infancy in total silence.

When Mary reached the age of two years She began to exercise her special pity and charity toward the poor. She solicited alms for them from Saint Anne, the kind-hearted mother readily granted her petitions, both for the sake of the poor and to satisfy the tender charity of her most holy Daughter. At the same time she encouraged Her, who was the Mistress of mercy and charity, to love and esteem the poor. Besides giving what She obtained expressly for distribution among the poor, She reserved part of her meals for the same purpose, in order that from her infancy it might be said of Her more truly than of Job: from my infancy compassion grew with me (Job 31, 18). She gave to the poor as if conferring a benefit upon them, but as paying a debt due in justice, saying in her heart: this is my brother and master deserves what he needs and what I possess without desert. In giving alms She kissed the hands of the poor, and whenever She was alone, She kissed their feet, or, if this was impossible, She would kiss the ground over which

they passed. Never did she give an alms to the poor without conferring still greater favors on their souls by interceding for them and thus dismissing them relieved in body and soul.

Not less admirable were the humility and obedience to the most holy Child in permitting Herself to be taught to read and to do other things as other children in that time of life. She was instructed in reading and other arts by her parents and She submitted, though She had infused knowledge of all things created. The angels were filled with admiration at the unparalleled wisdom of this Child, who willingly listened to the teaching of all. Her holy mother Anne, as far as her intuition and love permitted, observed with rapture the heavenly Princess and blessed the Most High in Her. But with her love, as the time for presenting Her in the temple approached, grew also the dread of the approaching end of the three years set by the Almighty and the consciousness, that the terms of her vow must punctually be fulfilled, Therefore the child Mary began to prepare and dispose her mother, manifesting to her, six months before, her ardent desire of living in the temple. She recounted the benefits, which they had received at the hands of the Lord, how much they were obliged to seek his greater pleasure, and how, when She should be dedicated to God in the temple, She would be more her Daughter than in their own house.

The holy Anne heard the discreet arguments of her child Mary; but though She was resigned to the divine will and wished to fulfill her promise of offering up her beloved Daughter, yet the natural force of her love toward such an unequalled and beloved Treasure, joined with the full understanding of its inestimable value, caused a mortal strife in her most faithful heart at the mere thought of her departure, which was closely at hand. There is no doubt, that she would have lost her life in this fierce and vivid sorrow, if the hand of the Almighty had not comforted her: for the grace and dignity of her heavenly Daughter was fully known to her and had entirely ravished her heart, making the presence of Mary more dear to her than life. Full of this grief she said to the Child: "My beloved Daughter, for many years I have longed for Thee and only for a few years do I merit to have thy company; but thus let the will of God be fulfilled; I do not wish to be unfaithful to my promise of sending Thee to the temple, but there is yet time left for fulfilling it: have patience until the day arrives for the accomplishment of thy wishes."