

The Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary Juridically and Historically Considered.

The Feast of the Purification falls upon the fortieth day after Christmas, because, as Raban Maurus says, "by a precept of the Law, this was the time appointed for women bringing forth children to be purified. For this reason has this festivity been established in the Church, because it is certain that on this day the Mother of the Lord was purified; not because she needed any legal purification, inasmuch as she bore the Master Himself of the law but because Jesus came not to loosen but to fulfil the Law."

This feast is called by the Greeks, by the Ambrosian Church, and by the Venerable Bede, "Oblatio Christi ad Templum." Among the Latins it is called Purification; but the word has the meaning of oblation, offering. Du Cange, in his Glossary says that "women are said to be purified who go to the church after childbirth, and receive the blessing of the priest, which is ordained by the Old Law. Purification is the offering which is made to the priests by women who are purified after childbirth in the church." The Old Law cited above is to be found, first in Exodus, xiii, 12, and again, more explicitly, in Leviticus, xii 6.

But Mary conceived and brought forth the Lord according to the supernatural order—"aeterna permanens Virgo,"—"being ever a Virgin," and the law was manifestly intended to apply to those who conceived and bore children according to the natural order. Hence, neither Mary nor Jesus was bound by the Law; the one not having come under the conditions of the Law; the other, that is the Son, following, according to the law of nature, the condition, and being entitled to the immunity of the Mother. Well did Mary know this, for she was brought up in the Temple, the very atmosphere of which was the Law, and she had blessed and happy reason to remember the angelic visitation of March the 25th, and the miraculous event of December 25th. Well did Joseph know it, too; for still rang in his ear the angelic words: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

Still and withal, just as dutifully as they undertook a tiresome journey to Bethlehem at the first Christmas season, to gratify the pride of old Rome, and enroll themselves in the census, so now Mary and Joseph turn their faces toward Jerusalem, in obedience to a Law which bound them not. This is how St. Luke writes of it: "And after the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord. As it is written in the Law of the Lord: Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." The humility of this act is thus noticed by St. Thomas: "She was not bound to the fulfilment of this precept, but she voluntarily discharged the observance of purification. And therefore as Christ though not subject to the Law, submitted to circumcision, and to the other obligations of the Law in order to give an example of humility and obedience, and to approve the Law, and remove from the Jews the occasion of scandal: for these same reasons did He wish His Mother also to fulfil the observances of the Law, to which however she was not held."

A pathetic phase was there, too, in their observance of the veriest title of the Law. Their offering revealed the poverty in the world's goods of the blessed pair. The Law prescribes as follows: "And when the days of her purification are expired, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of the testimony a lamb of a year old for a holocaust, and a young pigeon or turtle for sin, and shall deliver them to the priest who shall offer them before the Lord, and shall pray for her. . . And if her hand find not sufficiency, and she is not able to offer a lamb, she shall take two turtles, or two young pigeons—one for a holocaust, and another for sin: and the priest shall pray for her, and so she shall be cleansed." But Mary's hand found not the sufficiency, for Joseph was a poor carpenter, and she his wife. So she offered what she could which was, as St. Luke testifies, "a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." The Evangelist does not say explicitly which of the two she offered, but it is not assuming overmuch to say that she offered that which from all time has been symbolical of beautiful love and purity—"a pair of turtle doves." The Evangelist says nothing of the offering of the five sicles prescribed in the third chapter of Numbers: "Thou shalt take

five sicles for every head, according to the weight of the sanctuary. A sicle hath twenty obols." But the presumption is that this part of the precept was complied with religiously.

There is a tradition to the effect that when the blessed Virgin went up into the Temple, she retired to that part of it which was strictly reserved for the virgins; that the Jews were horrified at what they deemed a sacrilege, and proceeded to eject her by force. In the tumult which ensued, Zachary, the father of St. John the Baptist, who went to her defence, was slain between the altar and the Temple.

They met in the Temple holy Simeon who "had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen Christ the Lord. And he came (led) by the Spirit into the Temple. And when His parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he also took Him into his arms, and blessed God." And he broke forth into that beautiful "Nunc dimittis," which Mother Church has since made her own in the touching service for the dying. The epilogue of that "Nunc dimittis" was the first solemn intimation to Mary that she would be the Mother of Sorrows. "And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His Mother: Behold, this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

Another figure in this beautiful scene was that of the aged Prophetess Anna, who, "at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord (i. e., acknowledged His Divinity) and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel." In the Menology of the Greek Church under the date of February the 3d, it is narrated that Simeon and Anna there and then gave up the ghost.

Some critics hold that Simeon was a priest, and he is represented as such in ancient pictures; but the more common opinion is that he was a simple layman. St. Luke says nothing about the priesthood of holy Simeon, though he is strictly precise in saying that Anna was a prophetess.

This much about the Law, and its observance by Mary and Joseph. A few words about the blessing of the candles (whence Candlemas), and the procession practised by the Church on this day; they will also introduce us to the origin and history of the feast.

The author of the Catechism of Montepesole says that the lighted candles are borne by the faithful in the procession and during a certain part of the Mass of this day, to show that they feel the gladness of Simeon when he took the Child Jesus into his arms, and predicted that He would be the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. The procession, observes the same author, signifies the journey of Mary up to the Temple. Baronius, in his Notes on the Martyrology (Feb. 2) says that Pope Gelasius I. instituted the Feast of the Purification towards the close of the 5th century. The idea of the festivity was suggested to him as an offset against the obscene "Lupercalian" games, which were instituted by Evander, and which took place in the month of February. Later, when the pestilence raged in Constantinople, during the reign of the Emperor Justinian, the celebration of the Feast of the Purification was introduced into the East.

Pope Benedict XIV., the greatest ecclesiastical critic and investigator that ever sat in the Chair of Peter, asserts that the procession of the Feast of the Purification, supposed by many to have been added to the ritual of celebration by Pope Sergius, dates much farther back than the 7th century. He observes that the celebration of the Feast, as now observed with procession and torches could not literally be derived from the "Lupercalia," because in those games neither torches nor candles were used.

Pope Innocent III., in a sermon on the Purification, says that the Christians dedicated to the Mother of God that rite of the pagans which they practised in honor of the Goddess Ceres, and which consisted in a nocturnal procession with torches around the cone of Mount Etna, typical of a search for Proserpine, who was stolen by Pluto. But with all respect for the authority (it is not a matter of faith) of Pope Innocent III. and Baronius; Benedict XIV. subscribes to the opinion that the procession of the Purification takes its origin from the "Amburbalia" of ancient Rome.

The "Amburbalia" were sacrifices celebrated by the Romans in honor of the infernal gods. When they had conquered the whole world they imposed a tribute upon the conquered, which was to be paid every five years. Having

received this tribute, they paraded the Eternal City, carrying in their hands lighted torches, which were supposed to be particularly acceptable to the infernal gods, who were the potent allies of the Roman armies. This was done in the month of February. Ildephonsus a writer of the 7th, century, says: "Which custom the Christian religion properly and piously changed; for in the same month—to wit, on this day—in honor of the Holy Mother and ever-Vir Mary, not only the clergy but all the people go around the churches, carrying torches, and singing divers hymns."

Benedict XIV. concludes: "And so, as we do not detract from Gelasius the praise due him for having abolished the "Lupercalia," though we denied that he substituted the Festivity of the Purification for the same; and though we do not give to Sergius the praise of having subrogated the procession for "Amburbalia" still we will not deprive him of the glory of having arranged the procession in good form, and having ordered that on this day, and on other feasts of the Blessed Virgin, a procession be made from the Church of St. Adrian (in Rome) to the Liberian Basilica of St. Mary Major." The "Liber Pontificalis" says: He (Sergius) ordained that on the days of the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Falling Asleep (the Assumption) of the Holy Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, and of St. Simeon, which the Greeks call Hypapant the litany (the procession) should leave St. Adrian's and that the people should go to St. Mary's."

Two brief considerations in conclusion. First: The stupendously magnificent ritual of the Catholic Church is not a compilation of pagan ceremonies; and though many usages of the Church have a sort of parallel in and can be traced to pagan rites, yet they do not bear the relation of effect to them as to their cause, but as a consequence, so to speak, sanctified and purified, traceable to an occasion. Hence, the Feast of the Purification, as celebrated with lights and processions, though dating from the "Amburbalia," is neither the effect nor the continuance of the same. The "Amburbalia" were the occasional cause, but not the primeval and efficient cause. This last was Mother Church, to whom all power is given in heaven and upon earth; and of this power it was but a trifling mite to sanctify and divert to a holy purpose, founded upon the truth, that which was once dedicated to unholy purposes which rested upon error.

And the second consideration is this: On the day of the Purification began in earnest, by anticipation, the sorrows of Mary. The uttering of that fall prophecy in her hearing was in itself a sword of grief; "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."—The Ave Maria.



MAIL CONTRACT.

SEALED TENDERS, addressed to the Postmaster General will be received at Ottawa until noon, on Friday 19th of February, 1886, for the conveyance of Her Majesty's Mails, on a proposed Contract for four years, fortnightly, each way, between Fort Alexander and Peguis, from the 1st of April next.

The conveyance to be made on foot, on horseback, or in a suitable vehicle. The Mails to leave Fort Alexander every alternate Monday morning and arrive at Peguis on the following Tuesday evening. Leave Peguis the following Wednesday, and every alternate Wednesday thereafter and arrive at Fort Alexander on the evening of the next day (Thursday), or if more suitable for persons tendering:

Leaving Peguis every alternate Monday morning and arrive at Fort Alexander on Tuesday evening. Leaving Fort Alexander on the following Thursday morning and arrive at Peguis on Friday evening.

Printed notices containing further information as to conditions of proposed Contract may be seen and blank forms of Tender may be obtained at the Post Offices of Fort Alexander, Peguis, Dynevor, and Selkirk, and at this office.

W. W. McLeod,
Post Office Inspector.
Post Office Inspector's Office,
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The College can accommodate a hundred students, of whom eighty may be boarders. The terms have been made as easy as possible. \$18 a month for boarding, and \$3 a month for those who take their meals in town and sleep in the college, beside a small additional fee, for a few dormitory articles, of \$2 a year; the whole to be paid half yearly in advance. The uniform consists of a frock coat, with trousers, necktie and felt hat, all black. Each student is to be sufficiently provided with other articles of clothing. The discipline of the College is strict in point of morality, is, as far as possible, paternal in character. The scholastic year opens on the third Wednesday of August and ends about the 20th of June. ST. BONIFACE, AUGUST 28TH, 1885.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Legislature of Manitoba.

RULES RELATING TO NOTICES FOR PRIVATE BILLS.

48. No petition for any Private Bill is received by the House after the first five days of the session.

49. All applications for Private Bills, properly the subject of legislation by the Legislature of Manitoba within the purview of "The British North America Act, 1867," whether for the erection of a bridge, the making of a railroad, turnpike road or telegraph line; the construction or improvement of a harbor, canal, lock, dam, or by or on behalf of the applicants, such notice to be, during four weeks, between the close of the next preceding session, and the time of the consideration of the petition, published in every issue of the "Manitoba Gazette," and in two other newspapers as aforesaid (one in English and one in French) and with one week from the appearance of such notice in the "Manitoba Gazette," a copy of said Bill, with the sum of one hundred dollars for each complete page or fraction thereof, shall be placed by the applicants in the hands of the Clerk of the House, whose duty it shall be to get the said Bill printed forthwith.

50. Before any petition praying for leave to bring in a Private Bill for the erection of a toll bridge is received by the House, the person or persons intending to petition for such bill shall, upon giving the notice prescribed by the preceding rule, also, at the same time, and in the same manner, give notice of the rates which they intend to ask, the extent of the privilege, the height of the arches, the intervals between the abutments or piers for the passage of rats and vessels, and mentioning also whether they intend to erect a draw bridge or not, and dimensions of the same.

C. A. SADLER,
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

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TERMS.—Entrance fee (once for all), \$5.00. Board and Tuition, per month, \$10.00. (A deduction is made when two of more of the same family are sent.) Music and use of Piano, per month, \$3.00. Drawing, per month, \$1.00. Bed and bedding, per month, \$1.00. Washing, per month, \$2.50. Payments to be made every two months in advance. Pupils coming from other institutions must furnish certificates of good conduct from the establishment they left.

Every pupil should be provided with sufficient underclothing, a plain toilet case, a table knife and fork, spoons and goblet, six table napkins and a napkin ring.

The uniform, strictly obligatory, is a black merino dress, and a mantilla of the same color, a straw hat trimmed in blue for summer, and a white hood for winter, a white veil of plain net. Parents are invited to inquire at the Institution for certain particulars before preparing the uniform. When desired it can be furnished in the establishment, as also articles for toilet, drawing and fancy work, but payment in advance is required. School books and stationery are furnished at current prices. Other books and letters are subject to the inspection of the Directress. No deduction for pupils withdrawing before the end of the two monthly term, unless in case of sickness or for other cogent reasons. Pupils receive visits of their parents, near relatives and guardians, on Sunday, between the hours of divine service and after Vespers, until 5:30 and on Thursday from 1 to 5:30 p.m. No other visitors are admitted unless they are recommended by parents or guardians.

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