

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
August 15, 2021 Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading: Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab

God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple.

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems. Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth. She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have salvation and power come,
and the Kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Anointed One.”

Responsorial Psalm: 45:10, 11, 12, 16

R. (10bc) The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

The queen takes her place at your right hand in gold of Ophir.

R. The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear, forget your people and your father's house.

R. The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

So shall the king desire your beauty;
for he is your lord.

R. The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

They are borne in with gladness and joy;
they enter the palace of the king.

R. The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

Second Reading: 1 Cor 15:20-27

Brothers and sisters:

Christ has been raised from the dead,
the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since death came through man,
the resurrection of the dead came also through man. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order:

Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end,
when he hands over the Kingdom to his God and Father,

when he has destroyed every sovereignty
and every authority and power. For he must reign
until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death,
for “he subjected everything under his feet.”

Gospel: Lk 1:39-56

Mary set out

and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,

where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,

and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
cried out in a loud voice and said,

“Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me,

that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your greeting
reached my ears,

the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed are you who believed

that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled.”

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And Mary said:

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly
servant. From this day all generations will call me
blessed:

the Almighty has done great things for me
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
and has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their
thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of
mercy, the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.”

Mary remained with her about three months
and then returned to her home.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

As we celebrate the Assumption of Mary, these questions come to mind: What does Mary mean to you? How should she affect your life? It was in 1950 that Pope Pius XII issued a Papal Bull making the assumption of Mary into heaven, official dogma of the Catholic Church. However, as early as the 5th century elements of this belief were beginning to be manifest in the church, and in subsequent centuries they were affirmed by Church theologians. For many, Catholics' reverence of Mary, and belief in her Immaculate Conception and Assumption into heaven are difficult to grasp and accept. We often are criticized for revering holy places and holy relics, but it may just be the absence of these that provides the most convincing evidence of Mary's Assumption. Is not the absence of Mary's body, or any part of it, a strong indication of her dormition? Should we not see portions of her body preserved and cherished in some holy place? But we do not. This doctrine, like all the mysteries of the Church, must be taken on faith. And it takes faith, albeit in our own reasoning, to disavow this doctrine. Either way we exercise faith. Which requires the greater faith, to believe as the Church teaches that she was taken bodily into heaven, or to believe that her body was ignored by those who loved and revered her?

As we see in this week's Gospel reading, and in other passages of Scripture, the Holy Spirit drew special attention to Mary's life of obedience and faith. Throughout the history of the Church, Mary has been honored with special attention and devotion. Is it the intent of the Holy Spirit, and of the Church to simply honor Mary, or is there an additional important dimension to this attention and devotion, namely that she is to be a model of discipleship for those of us who follow her example by putting faith in her son, Jesus? Paul VI in the encyclical *Marialis Cultus* suggests that Mary's life calls us to a grace filled life, where the indwelling of the Holy Spirit should bring about transformation into his image: "Devotion to the Mother of the Lord becomes for the faithful an opportunity for growing in divine grace, and this is the ultimate aim of all pastoral activity. For it is impossible to honor her who is 'full of grace' (Lk 1:28) without thereby honoring in oneself the state of grace, which is friendship with God, communion with Him and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is this divine grace which takes possession of the whole man and conforms him to the image of the Son of God. (cf. Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18")

In a passage which we can only quote in part here because of its length, Pope Paul VI says, "The Blessed Virgin's exemplary holiness encourages the faithful to 'raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth before the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues.' It is a question of solid, evangelical virtues; faith and the docile acceptance of the Word of God . . . generous obedience . . . genuine humility . . . solicitous charity . . ." Marian devotion should first and foremost be a following of her example and the obeying of her instruction, "Do whatever he tells you." (Jn. 2:5) In this way we truly honor both her and Jesus, the Lord of her heart. The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is a time for us to find hope through Mary's life and example. She has preceded us to heaven as testimony to that bodily resurrection to which all followers of Christ can look forward with joy. Her life and the brief biblical record of her recorded statements point us to a life of surrender to the Father, holiness through the Spirit, and devotion to her Son. We would be amiss if we did not include in our celebration of her Assumption a rededication to her life calling, the glorification and exaltation of her Son the Lord Jesus in and through our lives.

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INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading

1. What aspects of Mary's life did the Holy Spirit emphasize in this vision given to John?"

Second Reading

2. What affect does disbelieve in the resurrection have on people
3. What does it mean, practically, to be "in subjection"? How did Mary demonstrate this?

Gospel Reading

4. How does Mary's life demonstrate submission to God's will?
5. Why do you think the Holy Spirit caused this incident to take place and be recorded for posterity?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.